

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

Minutes for Tuesday December 3, 2024

4:00 PM First Floor Conference Room,

Human Services Building with Zoom Link Option Available

Attendance:

Trude Arnette, Tara Buckley, Ellen Cohen, Thomas Fichter, Dr. Charles R. Ford, Jr., Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Ivan Kaplan, Dustin Knoblauch, Honorable Lourdes Lucas, Caitlin Mejia, Erin Murphy, Kathleen Peterson, Dr. Lester W. Richens, Raymond Santiago, Lynn Seaward, Kaitlyn Silagy, Christine Talbot, Trapani, Desiree Whyte, Elizabeth Williams.

I. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING'S ACT

Honorable Lourdes Lucas called the meeting to order and read the open public meetings act. She thanked those in attendance and welcomed the group. Judge Lucas indicated that it was a honor to have the opportunity to serve as the new YSC Co-Chair with Prosecutor Raymond Santiago. She stated that she is relatively new handing juvenile matters in the Family Division and is still in a bit of a learning curve. A motion was made, seconded, and carried (Santiago: Gerhardt) to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2024, Youth Services Commission meeting.

II. YSC Co-Chair Report / Prosecutor's Office Update

Prosecutor Raymond Santiago greeted the group and indicated he also found it an honor to serve as the new YSC Co-Chair with Judge Lucas. He stated he was a defense attorney for 20 years and is in his second year as the Monmouth County Prosecutor. Prosecutor Santiago referred to Thomas Fichter to provide an update on activities.

Tom reported that he attended training on the restorative justice model that Mercer County is utilizing in high schools with the hopes of replicating it in Monmouth. Tom indicated that they hope to start in the new year with some programming at Monmouth Regional High School as a school-based mediation program for conflict resolution. Relative to their cyberbullying program, Tom stated that there had been a down tick in the number of referrals by school resource officers for station house adjustments and the court for their cyberbullying program and it had not run the program for a few months. He stated that cyberbullying is still a persistent problem, it is still going on however, there are fewer charges in the recent months for it. He shared that there are plans for a cyberbullying program in Asbury Park and Long Branch Middle School and High School. Christine Talbot stated she and Katie Wardlow had attended restorative conferencing training for use of the practice as a diversion however, it did not get off the ground. Christine inquired whether there was intention by the courts to revitalize this effort. Ellen Cohen stated several years ago through a contract with International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), several Monmouth County individuals received training to facilitate restorative conferences and there was an investment in this area. The training energized the group and there was interest in the practice, however there were sustainability challenges for implementation, as different trainers left their job positions or agencies. Ellen indicated that the family navigator program also had a component in

the grant to do restorative practice training for a school as was done with KYDS. Tom indicated he could not speak to the question on the court's interest on restorative practice conferences and differentiated that their focus is on a school based, youth peer led approach. Prosecutor Santiago stated that it is being implemented in 6 schools in Mercer County, and that he watched a presentation on it, and stated wow this actually- worked.

III. Division of Child and Youth Services Report

Dustin Knoblauch reported that there was going to be a CIACC Youth Forum meeting tomorrow on Dec. 4th from 10-11:30 am hosted by Long Branch Middle School. She emphasized how valuable it is to listen directly to the youth, to gain their perspective on the issues they are facing and their service needs.

Dustin stated that there was a Monmouth County CIACC Education Partnership Committee presentation on "Problematic Sexual Behavior (PSP) and Human Trafficking" that is being held Friday, December 6, 2024, from 9-1 pm at Monmouth Cares in West Long Branch. Registration is required.

Dustin Knoblauch reported that on January 22nd and February 5th, Monmouth County CIACC is hosting a free training on "Foundations of Trauma, Resilience and Healing Centered Environments" from the DCF Office of Resilience. All are welcome to attend, and more details will follow. Foundations of Trauma Resilience and Healing-Centered Cultures will help you and your organization develop a rich understanding of trauma, resilience, and healing-centered practices.

The youth behavioral health contracts under the Division of Child and Youth Services were highlighted. Site visits were conducted at Monmouth Medical and Catholic Charities and meetings have been held with several of the other agencies. Dustin stated that she is working on an inventory of where the programs are and looking at the specific districts who are not using the community-based programs. The need for early intervention was emphasized. The value of Monmouth Medical Center's Child Family Crisis Clinicians to keep youth out of the hospital emergency rooms was reported. Dustin Knoblauch stated that youth crisis police training took place which helped them identify which program best to call in different situations.

Dustin stated that the next Positive Youth Development Hub meeting is scheduled for January 10th. She reported that she attended the Project Heal meeting in Asbury Park which, Montclair University is consultant for. The credible messenger program and restorative justice in the community using restorative practice circles was part of the discussion there.

Prosecutor Santiago stated he attended a workshop at the JDAI conference on My Brothers Keeper program in Essex County that included the Deputy Mayor in Newark. He has asked for data to see if it is helpful. Judge Lucas indicated the JDAI conference was amazing. Restorative Justice in the community with credible messengers is very impactful.

IV. YSC Administrator's Update

Ellen Cohen expressed her thanks to both Judge Lucas and Prosecutor Santiago for taking on the YSC Co-Chair leadership positions and her thanks to both Desiree Whyte and Dustin Knoblauch who helped this past year during the transition period.

Ellen stated that the Monmouth's 2025 JDAI Innovations application in the amount of \$120,000 was approved by the Juvenile Justice Commission. The 2025 JDAI Innovations award notice, grant conditions and certified assurances were issued. The documents have been prepared for signature by the Director of the Board of County Commissioners.

The Board of County Commissioners executed the NJ JJC grant application for calendar year 2025 and approved the 2025 Comprehensive Youth Services Plan Update in the amount of \$1,055,394 at their October 24, 2024, meeting.

For the YSC minutes, the electronic vote on the YSC Proposal Evaluation Committee's recommendations for the 2025 Partnership, Family Court Services funds and JDAI Innovations was memorialized. There were 12 yes votes and 2 votes to abstain.

Ellen shared sad news regarding the recent passing of Judge Coogan, who served many years on the Youth Services Commission.

V. Education Update

Dr. Lester W. Richens reported that the Superintendent of Schools Office has oversight of 53 school districts, as well as charter schools and some private schools in Monmouth County. He indicated that they are conducting mid-year financial budget reviews. In January they will begin monitoring of 20 school districts on areas such as quality accountability, finance, personnel, instruction, organization, and governance. Dr. Richens reported they have been busy with school threat assessment training and indicated that a training on the Sandy Hook project was taking place at the AG building tomorrow. Dr. Richens indicated that he serves on the county threat assessment team. The reunification committee with the Sheriff's Department and Emergency Management finds transportation their biggest concern. Dr. Richens shared that artificial intelligence was a focus of discussion at the Monmouth County Principals Association meeting and its impact on education and how it will be used in schools.

VI. Status Report on Various Points in the Juvenile Justice System

Station House Adjustments / Juvenile Arrests

Thomas Fichter indicated that there was nothing at this time to report. Once Station House Adjustment reports are collected, the information will be shared.

Juvenile Detention Alternatives

Ivan Kaplan reported that there were 8 full holiday thanksgiving meals delivered to families of youth on detention alternatives. Ivan indicated that he also planned to deliver fruit baskets to 15

families around the holidays at the end of the year. He noted that he had just returned from an install of a youth on electronic monitoring. Judge Lucas thanked Ivan for doing a great job.

Probation Division

Caitlin Mejia stated they were having their 3rd commencement program for 32 youth, who have successfully completed their term of probation. She reported that Probation Officer Sheri Bouldin is retiring at the end of the year after 30 years of service to the courts and probation.

Her caseload will be transferred to Probation Officer Teresa Villarroel. Caitlin reported that the individualized services for youth on probation through IEP Youth Services, Inc. include activities, services, incentives, and food. Probation is utilizing the structured response grid, and hope to reduce the number of violations of probation filed. Caitlin shared that most youth are doing well. She indicated that she welcomes the credible messenger program and provided a brief update on the gun violence reduction initiative and has found individuals with lived experience to have an impact.

VII. YSC Planning Committee

Trude Arnette reported that Ellen was informed by Safiya Baker at the JJC that Monmouth was the first county to get our 2025 Youth Services Plan Update and 2025 Comprehensive Funding Application for the State Community Partnership Grant and Family Court Services funds into the Juvenile Justice Commission. We were informed by Jennifer Hoffer that the JJC completed their review of Monmouth's 2025 Youth Services Plan Update and 2025 Comprehensive Funding Application. The feedback received from Jennifer was that it was perfect...great job! This is good news. Thank you to all members of the Youth Services Commission who participated on the YSC Planning Committee or provided information that assisted in the completion of our 2025 Youth Services Plan Update and grant application. The 2025 Youth Services Plan Update is posted on the county's website under the Division of Child and Youth Services for public access. Trude stated we will wrap up this year and start all over in 2025 and will be looking for new folks to join the planning committee.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Richens shared that Neptune High School Choir will be performing at the Rockefeller Center Christmas Tree Lighting in NYC. He also shared that the Forestdale School in Rumson was recognized as a national Blue Ribbon School.

IX. OLD BUSINESS

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

XI. ADJOURNMENT- The next meeting of the Monmouth County Youth Services Commission is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 4:00 PM**