

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

Special Meeting -September 2, 2025, at 3:00 PM (virtual via zoom)

Minutes

Attendance:

Trude Arnette, Myra Carter, Stephanie Cella, Achille Dejean, Thomas Fichter, Dr. Charles Ford, Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Ivan Kaplan, Dustin Knoblauch, Honorable Lourdes Lucas, Dr. Lester W. Richens, Raymond Santiago, Lynn Seaward, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Elizabeth Williams

Ellen Cohen, Kathleen Peterson, Desiree Whyte

CALL TO ORDER: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING’S ACT Honorable Lourdes Lucas called the meeting to order and read the Open Public Meeting’s Act statement.

YSC Review Team

Trude Arnette stated that her report was somewhat lengthy but provides information on the time and attention given to this matter and an overview of the process. Trude reported that documentation provided by the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County regarding the Family Crisis Intervention Unit and Wrap Around Program -Plan of Correction was reviewed and discussed on Tuesday, August 26, 2025. The following individuals participated in the meeting: Trude Arnette, Ellen Cohen, Thomas Fichter, Jennifer Hoffer, Dustin Knoblauch, Judge Lourdes Lucas, Kathleen Peterson, Raymond S. Santiago, Desiree Whyte, and Elizabeth Williams.

The Division of Child and Youth Services provided a summary of the items that needed to be addressed based on the YSC monitoring site review. A comparison of the contracted level of service versus the actual level of service was included as well as the items the Agency was requested to report on. Referral numbers, youth engagement and level of service for both WRAP and FCIU services are significantly below target. Turnover in staff and challenges filling staff vacancies contributed to the low level of service and delays in service implementation.

The goal/issue outlined for the WRAP Program in the corrective action plan were as follows:

- To increase WRAP individual and group participation
- To expand WRAP group offerings
- To strengthen intake and connection to WRAP
- To increase WRAP referrals

The goal/issue outlined for the Family Crisis Intervention Unit in the corrective action plan were as follows:

- To increase FCIU youth engagement
- To strengthen FCIU school/community presence
- To expand FCIU outreach
- To increase FCIU referrals

Next to each issue was the corrective action, responsible party and timeline. A section on monitoring and evaluation was also included. Feedback from the YSC review team at the meeting indicated that the action plan submitted by MHA was vague and did not provide specific details.

With the corrective action plan a monthly update (dated: August 21, 2025) was provided. The August monthly update for the Family Crisis Intervention Unit highlighted their marketing and outreach to engage the community and schools. Meetings were held with staff at the YMCA, Family Based Services Association, Morning Glory, and the Mercy Center to discuss FCIU services; and indicated follow-up that is planned. There was outreach to seven schools (for 5 schools, the outreach indicated, “no response; will follow up within two weeks”; for 1 school the outreach indicated, that they “requested information and expressed interest in meeting once school resumes”; and 1 school invited FCIU to present at a meeting in early September). FCIU staff participated in National Night Out and Back to School events. The August report indicated that FCIU received 7 referrals, and 5 youth were admitted to FCIU, and another intake was pending for next week. Feedback from discharged youth and families was included in the update.

For the WRAP program, a five-week WRAP group was completed (3 youths completed all sessions, and 1 youth attended all but one session). At group completion, 5 youths reported improved ability to make positive decisions even when experiencing intense emotions; and that the youth demonstrated the ability to identify at least three strategies to manage anxiety and apply coping skills when overwhelmed. During August, 3 youth were referred to WRAP individual (in home/ in community service). One youth was admitted, 1 parent declined service, and 1 intake was scheduled).

It was noted that historically, service utilization trends lower during the summer, with projected increases in the fall as the school year begins. The YSC Review Team recommends that we continue to monitor the implementation of the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County’s corrective action plan and require monthly updates. Measurable increases to the level of service provided for both the Family Crisis Intervention Unit and the WRAP program need to be demonstrated.

Monmouth County will be issuing a Public Announcement Request for Proposals (RFP) led through the competitive contracting process for the Family Navigator Program. It is recommended that we also integrate the Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit and the Adolescent Early Intervention Services with a focus on truancy reduction and parent child conflict resolution (WRAP) programs into the RFP that will be issued.

This will allow us the ability to continue monitoring the MHA's corrective action plan in place for this year and open the door for other applicants interested in applying for these services. This recommendation would not preclude the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County from responding to the RFP.

A motion was made, seconded and carried (Arnette:Gerhardt) to move forward with the YSC Review Team's recommendations outlined in this report -To continue to monitor the corrective action plan implementation and require monthly progress updates that demonstrate measurable increases to the level of service; and to integrate the Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit and the Adolescent Early Intervention Services & Parent Child Conflict Resolution Program (referred to as WRAP) into the RFP being issued for the Family Navigator Program for the period January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026.

A roll call vote was taken. (See attachment)