

Kent and Sussex County Community Advisory Board Meeting

March 17, 2015

In Attendance:

John Stevenson, DYRS, Stevenson House

Kendall Wicks, Sr., DYRS, Stevenson House

Alison McGonigal, DYRS

Dawn Garnett, DYRS, Stevenson House

Charlitta Shamburger, DYRS, Community Services

Maria Edgerton, Aim4Excellence, McCormick Center

AGENDA:

PbS: We are now a participant in PbS (Performance Based Standards), a tool to measure our performance in relation to best practice and standards. As a result, we have been looking at our isolation numbers. We put our youth in their room more than the national average, however; our youth stay in their room for less time. When two youth get into a fight, they will spend about an hour in their room and their time out is complete. We have an extended time out unit; an unoccupied unit that only requires one staff to monitor residents on time out. We have just implemented having youth serve time out outside of a room. The youth will initially go into a room and if compliant within 10 minutes, will come out of room and serve remainder of time out sitting in a chair facing the wall. If youth is not compliant within 10 minutes, he/she will serve entire time out in room. Staff has been receptive and youth have complied. PbS has identified our area of focus and improvement to be related to fighting.

Stop the Violence Campaign: We are implementing this campaign as part of our effort to reduce the number of fights that are occurring in our facility. We are looking at creative activities to improve this area of concern also identified by PbS. We have asked the youth to come up with a mantra; we will select the top three and have youth vote. We are working on establishing a youth committee so youth can be involved and have input in the campaign. An assembly to kick start the campaign is scheduled for March 27th. We are hoping the campaign will help to reduce the number of restraints and isolation.

We have had a lot of gang activity as well as regular school yard type fights. Our PbS data showed that 65 to 70% of fights occur in the classroom often because of the mixture of youth.

Special Programming

We have secured a contract with Courageous Hearts to provide a therapeutic equestrian program for our youth. Six youth were selected to participate in the four week program that started last Friday, 3/13/15. Youth are selected based on need, who we feel will benefit the most from the program. The program takes place in our large recreation yard. Once youth enter the yard, outside of aggressive behavior or an escape attempt, our staff are not to talk to the youth or engage the horse. The feedback from both youth and staff has been very positive thus far. Mr. Pippin stated that he once audited a facility that ran a program called A Boy and His Dog. Maria Edgerton mentioned LEAP program that also uses dogs for therapeutic purposes.

Sentenced Youth

We currently have a sentenced youth almost 18 years of age with mental health issues and a propensity for violent behavior. The youth has over the years been placed unsuccessfully at several in/out of state programs. Since the youth has had the most success while at SHDC, we are allowing him to serve his sentence here. Once he turns 18, he will be able to apply for adult mental health services and live in a group home type setting. In the meantime we are working to prepare him for independent living with the focus on education and life skills. Thanks to a cooperative Judge, our staff is able to escort the youth outside of the facility without mechanical restraints. Our staff has taken him to various sites to complete job applications, to obtain an official ID and to family functions. We are doing everything we can to prepare him for a successful transition.

Community in Schools

Mr. Stevenson and SHDC Principal Takiyah Bell recently met with representatives of Community in Schools, a private nationwide organization that works with youth in public and private schools. The organization would provide an on-site resource person to work closely with our case managers to provide services to qualifying youth. The services would follow the youth from intake to discharge and into the community. Ms. Bell stated that often when our youth leave us they have no idea who to contact or where to go for educational guidance and services. Our youth would definitely benefit from this service and grants are being sought to pay for the program.

New Administration

Mr. Stevenson is retiring from the state service effective the end of the month. He has accepted a position with the State of MD in the same line of work. He stated that Stevenson House is the best place he has ever worked; however, an YRC position at Ferris was the best job he ever had. He thanked everyone for their support over the years and added that he will miss Stevenson House and all those associated with it. Mr. Pippin thanked him for coming to Stevenson House and doing such a wonderful job. Ms. McGonigal stated that he has been a tremendous asset to SHDC and the Division. She added that he is a great advocate for the kids and that this will be a

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very significant change for us. She does not worry about SHDC because of the strong leadership team here that continues to impress her. The Director's office is in possession of a cert list and they will seek someone to come in and carry on.

Mr. Pippin stated that he never sees anything in the media about SHDC or the Division. He would like to see an article to clear up misconceptions and asked if we could invite a reporter to the next Community Advisory Board meeting.

Mr. Pippin also asked about the time capsule. We are waiting for the Public Information Officer to schedule an event to open the capsule.

Mr. Pippin expressed displeasure over the employee of the year's response when asked why she received the honor. He added that he is more than happy to give the award money but would appreciate a thank you.

Xc: File