

# North Carolina's Juvenile Reentry Reform Task Force

## MEETING MINUTES

### OPENING

The sixth meeting of North Carolina's Juvenile Reentry Reform Task Force was called to order at 10:00am on July 20, 2016 at 3010 Hammond Business Place, Room 144, Raleigh, NC 27603 by Billy Lassiter, Deputy Commissioner for Juvenile Justice.

### PRESENT

Task Force Members, Subcommittee Members, and Guests: Nakisa Arsefnia, Kenya Beyah-Murphy, Sadric Bonner, Wendi Bowen, Austin Braxton, Duane Cogdell, Emily Coltrane, Debbie Dawes, Maxine Evans-Armwood, Tamara Flinchum, Cynthia Floyd, Karla Farabow, Dale Floyd, Vernita Griffith, Michelle Hall, Buddy Howell, Rachel Johnson, Billy Lassiter, Brian Matlock, Lubaba Mitchell, Candice Moore, Michael Moore, Peggy Nicholson, Danya Perry, Ken Perry, Keith Philipson, Cindy Porterfield, David Pozun, Robin Rugh, Jean Steinberg, Brian Stewart, Jesse Tall, Angela Taylor, Lois Watkins, Ricky Watson, Jessica Williams, and Eric Zogry

### OPEN ISSUES

After reviewing the agenda, Deputy Commissioner Billy Lassiter opened the meeting with project updates. Mr. Lassiter announced that North Carolina had been invited by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to apply for continuation funding under the FY 2016 Second Chance Act Comprehensive Statewide Juvenile Reentry System Reform Implementation Program. He reported that Dr. Jean Steinberg, Reentry Reform Program Director, led the development of the proposal, which was submitted to OJJDP in July. OJJDP anticipates making awards in late September.

Mr. Lassiter's comments were followed by an overview of reentry reform implementation efforts by Dr. Jean Steinberg. Dr. Steinberg opened her remarks by reviewing the purpose of the Second Chance Act (SCA), which provides funding to state, local, and tribal governments and nonprofit organizations to develop and implement reforms to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for people returning from state and federal prisons, local jails, and juvenile facilities. Dr. Steinberg reminded the Task Force members of North Carolina's success in receiving SCA funding: North Carolina was one of six sites to receive a \$135,000 planning grant to develop its package of reforms (October 1, 2014-September 30, 2015); the State was one of three planning grant sites to be awarded an implementation grant totaling \$1.4 million (October 1, 2015-September 30, 2016); and the State was offered the opportunity to apply for additional funds totaling \$1 million to continue its reform implementation efforts (October 1, 2016-September 30, 2017).

Dr. Steinberg explained that North Carolina's reentry reform initiative is built on four principals that research has demonstrated works to reduce recidivism:

- Supervision, service, and resource allocation decisions should be based on the results of validated risk and need assessments.

- Programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes should be adopted and effectively implemented; data should be used to evaluate the results and direct system improvements.
- A coordinated approach across service systems should be used to address youth's needs.
- System policies, programs, and supervision should be tailored to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.

Dr. Steinberg also reviewed the four objectives of the reentry reform strategic plan -- (1) the Juvenile Justice Section (JJS) will deliver risk and needs-driven case planning and service linkage, and employ effective supervision practices; (2) the JJS will deliver effective and developmentally appropriate programming, including education and workforce development services, that target criminogenic needs; (3) the JJS will engage and strengthen families of youth involved along the juvenile justice continuum, including reentry; and (4) the JJS will document the effect of its reentry reform strategy on recidivism, education, employment and behavioral health outcomes -- and the key tasks associated with each objective. With respect to implementation activities undertaken since the Task Force's last meeting in October 2015, Dr. Steinberg noted that staff attended the SCA national conference in December 2015; technical assistance providers from the National Reentry Resource Center within the Council of State Governments conducted a site visit in January to assess North Carolina's reentry system and provided recommendations for improvements; and the Task Force's four subcommittees continued to work to further develop and implement key tasks of the reform initiative.

Dr. Steinberg turned over the meeting to Ms. Cindy Porterfield, Director of Community Programs, who reported on the activities of the Increasing Family Involvement Subgroup under Key Task 5 (implement a family engagement and strengthening strategy). Ms. Porterfield opened her remarks by presenting information about the importance of family engagement in the juvenile justice process, based on the work of the Vera Institute. This includes evidence of the positive impact of family engagement on youth outcomes. The Vera Institute promotes a three-pronged strategy including: (1) identification of family members, (2) engagement, and (3) empowerment. The subgroup has adopted the strategy in its approach to the development of its family engagement model. Ms. Porterfield distributed and reviewed a handout containing 10 recommendations developed by the subgroup and submitted for the Task Force's review. She also distributed two draft work products from the subgroup including the *Parent Questionnaire: Reentry Experiences* and the *Statement of Expectations and Rights for Parents with Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth*. She invited Task Force members to provide feedback on the recommendations and draft materials. Ms. Porterfield reported that, based on recommendations from NRRC, the subgroup developed a vision statement for family engagement within JJS, developed a formal definition of "family," and initiated a complete policy review as a means to develop a family engagement model that encompasses the entire juvenile justice continuum. In the short-term, Ms. Porterfield noted that the subgroup plans to discuss the point at which the supervising court counselors should start to work with families (e.g., pre-disposition), the process for obtaining feedback from parents about their experiences, the process for families to file grievances, and the JJS's process for responding to grievances, changes to visitation policies to improve family engagement, and the development of performance and quality improvement measures to assess JJS's efforts to engage families. In the long-term, Ms. Porterfield noted that the subgroup plans to explore the development of family engagement advocates inside or outside of JJS, an examination of peer review documents to

identify innovative family engagement practices that staff may be currently using, and the development of family support groups as a way to obtain feedback from families with juvenile justice experience. The subgroup is also currently exploring what role juvenile justice staff may play in informing parents and youths about expunction. Representatives from the Office of the Juvenile Defender and the Youth Justice Project noted that juvenile expunction is complicated (e.g., receiving a juvenile expunction may disqualify a person from receiving one as an adult), and expressed interest in assisting the subgroup with discussion of the issue. Ms. Porterfield welcomed their participation on the subgroup and their feedback on the subgroup's recommendations and draft work products. Deputy Commissioner Lassiter invited feedback from meeting attendees on all materials distributed by the subgroup.

Dr. Steinberg reported on the work accomplished under Key Task 1 (increase the reliable use of North Carolina's risk and criminogenic needs assessment), Key Task 2 (implement a comprehensive service plan), and Key Task 3 (implement a service matching tool). With respect to Key Task 1, Dr. Steinberg noted that the North Carolina Assessment of Juvenile Risk of Future Offending had been re-normed through an internal validation study. Results of this study suggested the need to adjust from three risk levels to five. The re-normed tool with five risk levels was implemented on April 1, 2016. Under Key Task 2, Dr. Steinberg reported that a benchmark assessment of the pilot comprehensive service plan was completed, and focus groups with court counselors who had piloted the service plan were conducted. Information gathered through these efforts suggested that the piloted tool was deficient in content and functionality, leading to the conclusion that it needed to be completely overhauled. As an alternative to developing and testing a new tool, the Comprehensive Service Plan Subgroup and an internal JJS group comprised of court counselors reviewed and evaluated three commercially-available, well-tested comprehensive needs assessment tools with the capacity to generate a service plan. Following this assessment, the Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) was recommended for implementation. Dr. Buddy Howell, noting the utility of the YASI but having concerns about its functionality relative to the current needs assessment instrument, indicated that he would provide written feedback on the YASI.

Duane Cogdell, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Juvenile Justice Section, reported on the Workforce Development and Education Subgroup's progress on Key Task 4 (implement a workforce development and education strategy). He noted that the subgroup had developed a workforce development policy statement, and identified activities to be accomplished, including: (1) developing a minimum set of student outcomes for all youth placed at a YDC or short-term residential setting, (2) aligning with the Department of Public Instruction policies leading to the review and acceptance of DPS educational plans which offer students existing a YDC or short-term residential placement several options for ongoing educational attainment, (3) establishing a standardized career assessment instrument for all youth in YDC's and short-term residential settings, (4) establishing linkages for ongoing community support services for youth placed at a YDC and short-term residential setting (e.g., partnership with Community in Schools North Carolina), and (5) establishing the Transitional Services Committee to review the work of transitional teams and address challenges and barriers for services for youth and families in transition. The subgroup drafted a transitional services questionnaire which will be administered in August 2016 to gather information about transition planning and availability of services to meet the needs of youths exiting from short-term residential facilities.

Due to time limitations, Dr. Steinberg tabled the status update on the process and outcome evaluation (Key Task 6). This topic will be discussed at the Task Force's next meeting.

#### NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Danya Perry, Community in Schools of North Carolina (CISNC) Vice President of Support Services, presented on the development of the Youth Development Transition Support Program that was developed in the proposal for continuation funding from OJJDP. CISNC staff have established very strong relationships with school districts across the state and have proven to be highly effective advocates for youth at risk for school failure. Modeled on CISNC's evidence-supported program, the Youth Development Transition Support Program aims to serve youths released from Youth Development Centers and short-term residential facilities by engaging schools, community-based partners (e.g., businesses, the faith community, social services), and social supports (e.g., mentors, tutors) to ensure that youths are placed in the educational setting that is best suited to their needs. The program will assist youths and their families for up to 12 months post-discharge. Mr. Perry reported that JJS and CISNC will partner over the next year to develop and pilot the program in four communities.

#### AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING

We anticipate updates from subcommittee directors/key task leaders, consisting of a review of work accomplished to date and recommendations for changes in policy and practices.

#### ADJOURNMENT

In closing remarks, Deputy Commissioner Billy Lassiter welcomed participation of additional partners, particularly from the business community, on the Task Force and on subgroups. He adjourned the meeting at 12:30 pm. The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for Monday, October 17, 2016. Subgroups will continue to meet in the interim.

Minutes submitted by:           Debbie Dawes, MPA  
Approved by:                    Jean Steinberg, Ph.D.