The Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee - Update

The Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee had its first meeting on October 24, 2016. Senator, Greg Smith, who is the Victims Representative, was elected Chairman and the Honorable Delia York, Judicial Representative, was elected as Co-Chair.

Information on the Juvenile Justice Oversight Committee will be available online at the DOC website at the following link: http://www.doc.ks.gov/juvenile-services/committee

Foster Care High Needs KanCare Workgroup

The Department for Children and Families formed the Foster Care High Needs KanCare Workgroup to aid in identifying and addressing the health and well-being needs and services of children in out of home placement who are experiencing placement instability and YRCII, PRF or acute care hospitalizations. The workgroup is made up of various professionals from the following agencies: Department for Children and Families, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services, Kansas Department of Corrections, Unite Health Care, Sunflower Health Care, Amerigroup Health Care, St. Francis Community Services, KVC Health Systems and various community mental health centers and PRFT’s. The Workgroup has been meeting regularly since early July 2016. Analyzing data has been a key aspect of the workgroup along with working down to determine what the root causes of these high needs youth are.

2016 DOC-Juvenile Services Training Schedule

New Officer YLS/CMI Training:

- Location: KJCC, 1430 NW 25th Street, Topeka, KS
- Dates: Tuesday December 13
- To Enroll: Email michelle.montgomery@doc.ks.gov

The Juvenile Justice Corner

By Jim Johnson, Program Consultant

DOC Juvenile Community Based Services

Commonly referred to by the juveniles at the Kansas Juvenile Correctional Complex as the “Job Lady” and the “Gear Up Lady”, Stephanie Gregory and Abigail Phelps work with juveniles placed at KJCC to help them be successful upon release from the juvenile correctional facility. Both previously worked as Juvenile Corrections Officers and later as Corrections Counselors. Together, they make up KJCC Reentry Team. They typically meet every juvenile within their first couple of weeks of admission for an initial career assessment and reentry evaluation which starts the process of shaping and developing a long range plan for the juvenile upon discharge.

Juvenile reentry and aftercare services have emerged as critical components of comprehensive program planning and will apply research on “what works” and “evidenced based practices” to reentry outcomes for youth in the justice system. Adolescent offenders often have a variety of needs such as substance abuse issues, histories of abuse or neglect, involvement in the child welfare system, learning disabilities, or the inclination to give up, quit, or drop out of school or work. All these needs or barriers to employability and employment need to be addressed to create an opportunity for a successful transition from the juvenile correctional facility to the community.

When the Juvenile Justice Authority merged some services with the Department of Corrections in 2013, KDOC adult reentry staff began working with Corrections Counselors at the juvenile correctional facilities to provide training and mentorship. So far, it appears to be a success, so that reentry services could be made available to juveniles being released. KDOC had partnered with the National Institute of Justice and had developed the Office of Juvenile Justice Development Specialist (OJDS) training for Kansas. KJCC then expanded reentry program planning by adding the two reentry positions at KJCC. Both Gregory and Phelps as well as five other KJCC staff currently serve as certified OJDS Specialists.

There are a wide variety of reentry programs available at KJCC. Some provided in group settings, while all are offered on an individualized basis. Programs offered include:

- Career Interest Assessments, Reentry Evaluations, Topeka Literacy Council, Kansas Kids Gear Up, Kansas Driver’s License Prep, FAFSA Registration, Selective Service Registration, Work Opportunity Tax Credit, Photo Identification, Department of Commerce (resources available), Vocational Rehabilitation Services (can refer if applicable), GEAR UP staff (if/when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP), to UP staff (if/when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP), to UP staff (if/when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP), to UP staff (if/when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP), to UP staff (if/when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP), Release Resource Packet (to take with them upon discharge), Basic Employability Skills Training (through Kansas Workforce Centers), Financial Literacy, Job Workshops, Career Fairs, College Information, Resume Building, Mock Interviewing (and packets), Big Brothers/Big Sisters (Shawnee and Sedgwick Counties P3 program), Leisure Planning Packets, College Enrollment (KKGU Members), Job Applications or other Resource Information as needed. However, even with all these programs, both Gregory and Phelps agree that there is no replacement for one on one interaction with a juvenile with the application of Motivation Interviewing techniques.

To help in this process, Key’s staff request transcripts and/or grade cards for each student each semester. Key’s staff monitor the required credits and required core subjects. As transcripts come in, Key’s staff examine the students’ grades, attendance and amount of credits earned. When students have low grades, attendance is poor or the earned credits are less than 2.625 a semester, Key’s staff call school counselors, teachers, community supervision officers, GEAR UP staff when the student is enrolled in GEAR UP, to help resolve issues and develop individual plans to help students. Key’s staff will follow the students for eight semesters if/when parental excuses are captured prior to the youths’ transition to parental custody or student reaching the age of 18 when they must have their own release.

Referrals to GEAR UP or iGRAD can be made by the student him/herself, by the parent, by the school or by the youth to Community Supervision Officer.

Questions on iGRAD can be addressed to penny@keys.org.

For more information on GEAR UP click here . . . .

For more information on Kansas GEAR UP click here . . . .
Youth Prisons Don’t Work. Here’s What Does

October is Youth Justice Action Month, so let’s take stock of what we’ve learned about our juvenile justice system just this year. About 50,000 youth are caught in a system that disproportionately imprisons African Americans and Latinos. Some teens, including Dequan Jackson, are kept behind bars not because they are a danger to society but Read more . . .

No Second Chance: Why Juvenile Offenders Stay Locked Away

Markell trudged into Courtroom 12 in a jail jumper, shackled at the wrists, waist and ankles. The 25-year-old was there to be sentenced — again — for his involvement in a September 2008 murder, a crime committed when he was 17. This day marked the 3rd time the judge would decide his fate. Previously sentenced to 25 years, the U.S. Supreme Court deemed unconstitutional to sentence a juvenile to mandatory life without parole, calling it cruel and unusual punishment. The nation’s highest court acknowledged that kids can change. Read more . . .

Neuroscience Suggests the Justice System May Be Too Harsh on Young Adults

For a long time, the United States’ justice system has been notorious for its proclivity for imprisoning children. Because of laws that grant prosecutors and judges discretion to bump juveniles up to the category of “adult” when they commit crimes deemed serious enough by the authorities, the U.S. is an outlier in locking up kids, with some youthful defendants even getting life sentences. Naturally, this Read more . . .

Human Trafficking


1. Ensure law enforcement is trained in anti-trafficking
2. Create public awareness campaigns reflecting diversity
3. Provide support services to all trafficking survivors
4. Increase funding to investigate more labor trafficking
5. Help survivors get on track for success in work and life

AG & U.S. Attorney Announce Indictments & Arrests in US and Mexico on Sex Trafficking

A 21-count indictment was unsealed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York charging 7 defendants with sex trafficking, conspiracy and related offenses. The indictment, which was returned under seal on Sept. 15, 2016, alleges that the defendants are members of an international sex trafficking organization which operated in Mexico and the US from 2000 - 2016. 14 victims of the charged sex trafficking organization are identified in the indictment. Read more . . .

15 Things We Learned in Hutch About HT

Communities sometimes deny human trafficking and the sexual exploitation of young girls happens where they live. Movies and music glamorize pimp culture and there’s a real demand for sexual services. But those “women” who advertise themselves as 18, 19 or 20 on places such as Backpage or Craigslist are likely to be 16 years old, or 14, even as young as 12. Lt. Travis Rakestraw, Wichita Police Department Exploited and Missing Child Unit Commander, spoke on the dangers of human trafficking happening in the shadows. Read more . . .

Lawmakers to Tackle Human Trafficking – Foster Care Connection

Lawmakers in Texas address sex and human trafficking, as child and adult victims are children in and out of the Texas foster care system. Read more and watch video . . .

Juvenile Justice Information Exchange

Man Still Fighting 40-year Sentence for Nonlethal Crime He Committed as 14-year-old

Fourteen-year-old Christopher Thomas pulled on his tan Dickies pants, white sweatshirt and blue and white tennis shoes as he got ready for school. He had been living at his foster home in Hephzibah, Georgia, for just six months, but already was close to his foster “brothers” Christopher Buls and RaShaun Eugene Bentley. Read more . . .

Next Administration Needs to Close Youth Prisons, Experts Say

The next presidential administration should build on the momentum researchers, advocates and policymakers have created to close youth prisons, experts say. They are hopeful a new report that lays out the case for investing in community-based alternatives to incarceration will be a Read more . . .

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When asked about challenges they face, both Gregory and Phelps are in agreement:
1. The juvenile population faces a lot of barriers. In many situations not one staff member or one program is adequate, but it takes several programs along with the environment and reinforcement of several staff to give the juvenile the information, strategies and support they need to overcome those barriers.
2. Financial Literacy needs to be a top focus, as the number one reason why young adults drop out during the first two years of school is their inability to manage finances.
3. Bridging the gap with the community is a priority. Ms. Phelps advises “It takes everybody to work together to get this done.” Team work and collaboration are essential.

For more on the reentry program at JKCC contact Stephanie Gregory at Stephanie.Gregory@doc.ks.gov or Abigail Phelps at Abigail.Phelps@doc.ks.gov.