

Minutes of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee
January 12, 2018
Holland & Knight, 50 N. Laura St., Jacksonville, Florida

Present

Chairman Buddy Schulz, the Honorable Suzanne Bass, Jim Clark, Pamela Davis, Rory Diamond, Kevin Gay, Dr. Jeffrey Goldhagen, Shelley Grant, Marcus Haile, Gretchen Hamm, Bill Hodges, Alan Louder, Michael Meyers, Lara Nezami, the Honorable Jack Schemer, Anthony Stinson, Vicki Waytowich

Committee is called to order at 9:08 a.m.

Meeting

Chairman Buddy Shultz welcomes the committee, visitors, and calls the room to order.

SAO Juvenile Director Laura Lothman Lambert welcomes the room and introduces Dr. Lauren Abramson.

Dr. Abramson presents an overview of her organization, the Community Conferencing Center, in Baltimore, MD. (Refer to included PowerPoint file for specific information.) Restorative justice is a perspective from which to view the criminal justice system, by examining our treatment of people who make mistakes. In restorative justice, the process is characterized by dialogue and negotiation between participants, victims are central to the process, and the focus is on repairing the harm that has been done.

A video about Glen Mitchell and Ellis Curry is shown to the committee. (Refer to included "MITCHELL" video file for specific information).

Ellis Curry talks to the committee about his experience with violence and restorative justice in this community. Curry recounts his experience with the juvenile justice system as well as his community efforts since release.

Committee Discussion

- Questions for Ellis Curry:
 - Clark asks Curry what his advice is as far as prevention. Based on his experience, what could have been done? Curry: Having positive role models to help instill and exemplify right from wrong.

- Nezami asks Curry if not being able to read affected his life's path. Curry: He was placed in SLD classes in first grade, and told by the principal attendance was not mandatory and that he would still pass his grade. He was told that his behavior and effort were not important.
- Gay asks Curry what we, as a community, to do differently to message and reach youth to show them that we value and want to hire them? Curry: youth need to see positive role models in their own world in order to show them what is possible. Youth cannot just see someone in a suit and tie talking at them—they need to see someone from their world show them what is attainable.
- Judge Bass asks Curry what would be impactful for youth to hear from a judge. Curry advises to have an open heart, and to try to look beyond the court room and understand the reasons how the youth arrived there. Most of the youth in those situations dislike authority, and will be impacted just to know someone in an authoritative position cares.
- Questions for Dr. Abramson:
 - Abramson is asked what the financial impact of community conferencing is. How much does it save the city? Abramson: The total amount is unknown, because it is hard to assign a dollar amount to a complete juvenile case both in outside of court. An approximate cost savings in Baltimore is around \$800-\$1500 per case.
 - Nancy Ricker (public commentator) asks if community conferencing provides counseling services to those in need. Abramson: Counseling is not part of the CCC program. Sometimes referrals are made to services, and sometimes services are invited to participate in the program, but counseling is not offered by the CCC.
 - Abramson is asked how and when the CCC gets involved in situations. Abramson: only 15% of cases in a 20-25 year period have refused participation. Not statutorily prohibited from pursuing failed conferences in court, but judges have refused to hear failed cases.
 - Abramson is asked how community conferencing works with public victims, like city governments, when harm or damage is done to public property. Abramson: Community conferencing has been successful with a city police lieutenant as well as with crimes involving youth on youth.
 - Abramson is asked about recidivism rates of community conferencing. Abramson: Over 20 years, recidivism is consistently between 9-12%.
 - Abramson is asked about victim satisfaction with community conferencing. Abramson: Participants satisfaction rates were consistently above 95%. Survey questions such as, "did it help resolve

the issue, did you think it was fair, would you recommend it to someone else?"

- Chair Jacobs asks how restorative justice is received by the electorate, especially in more conservative communities, who maintain a tough on crime approach. Abramson: restorative justice is not seen as a liberal or conservative issue anymore. People across the aisle are moving towards a "smart on crime" approach because they are frustrated with the way the system is currently working.
- Waytowich asks what are the highest levels of offenses addressed with a restorative justice approach. Abramson: misdemeanors and low level felonies are accepted. They will see almost anyone, especially people with priors, because that is evidence that the status quo is not working.
- Nezami cites the Fair and Just Prosecution document provided to the committee which states that restorative justice is most successful when used in serious cases. She asks if restorative justice has been utilized in sex cases. Abramson: Yes, it has been done. However these cases are a different category and must be very carefully prepared for.
- Waytowich asks if community conferencing requires specially trained staff. Abramson: Yes, an entire program development package exists. It includes facilitator training plus an apprenticeship workshop.

Public Comment

- Lequita Brooks, Youthsources
- Nancy Ricker, ICARE
- Sharon Pentaleri

Laura Lambert closes the meeting by thanking participants and announcing the date for the next meeting, on February 2.

Meeting is adjourned at 11:16 a.m.