



Washington State Department of
CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES

WA State Partnership Council on Juvenile Justice (PCJJ)

DCYF Headquarters
1500 Jefferson St. SE
Olympia, WA 98504
Conf. Rm. 1213

Full Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 25, 2024
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM

Welcome and Introductions: The Council Chair, Gordon McHenry Jr, called meeting to order at 9:11 AM, welcomed attendees, and oriented participants regarding the hybrid meeting format. Provided land acknowledgment to the Nisqually, Cowlitz, and Squaxin Island Tribes, the original stewards of the land, whose ceded lands served as the place for today's meeting.

In Person Council Attendees: Council Chair Gordon McHenry, Council Vice-Chair Sean Goode, Ada Daniels, , Senator Noel Frame, Diana Cockrell, Clinton Taylor, Dr. Eric Trupin, Jimmy Hung, Felice Upton, Michael Johnson, Tashawn Deville, , and Dre Thornock.

Virtual Council Attendees: Judge Jennifer Forbes, Megan Boyd and Rep. Mari Leavitt

OJJ Staff: Les Liggins, Jenny Young, Heidi Sadri, Alexi Castilla, and Whitney Queral

Guest: Jenny Heddin, Deputy Secretary, Chief of Staff, DCYF

Meeting Minutes Approval: Motion to approve moved by Senator Noel Frame. Motion seconded by Felice Upton. Council voted unanimously to approve the April 2024 Meeting Minutes and motion carried.

Discussion and Public Comment: Suspension of Intakes & DOC Transfers

Purpose: Come to a decision as a Council regarding next steps and actions as the advisory body on Juvenile Justice. Discussion facilitated by Sean Goode.

Sean oriented the Council with a timeline of events leading up to transfer of youth from the custody of Juvenile Rehabilitation to the Department of Corrections and referenced the documents provided to members in their meeting packet which included the following documents:

Announcement: DCYF Suspends Entries at Green Hill, Echo Glen
Letter to DCYF from Superior Court Judges' Association

Announcement: DCYF Transfers 43 Young People with Adult Sentences to DOC to Address Security at Green Hill

July 12th Letter to Residents removed from GHS
TeamChild and Kids Are Kids Joint Press Conference
TeamChild and Kids are Kids Joint Press Conference Questions and Answers
Columbia Legal Services Letter to Governor
Ross Hunter Letter to the Superior Court Judges' Association and the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators
Announcement: Juvenile Rehabilitation Intake Freeze Update – July 19, 2024

Comments from Jenny Heddin:

- Addressed challenges to fully staff JR facilities
- Emphasized need to run facilities safely
- Working on Community Transition Services (CTS) although many youth are not eligible due to statutory imitations
- 120 youth are Green Hill are not eligible for step-down to a Community Facility
- What are the behaviors leading to longer sentences?

Rep. Mari Leavitt – Highlighted need for acceptance of responsibility of the harm done to young people. How will youth be served with dignity when they return to JR.

Public Comment

Community members and advocates were asked to indicate if they would like to provide public comment. Each participant was allotted two minutes of speaking time.

Sara Zier, Team Child – Highlighted that community advocates have been raising alerts regarding conditions of JR facilities for over a year. Youth currently incarcerated point to a change in values at the institutions as they are treated with less dignity and humanity. Pointed to the importance to engage with system stakeholders to improve conditions. Called for JR to bring transferred youth back to GHS with a plan to support them upon return.

Liz Mustin, WA State Office of Public Defenders – Raised issue of continued “prison riot” charges in Lewis County. 92 percent of all charges were youth under the age of 20. Only 9 young people charged with “prison riot” were 20 or older.

Karen Pillar, Team Child – Highlighted the messaging surrounding the 43 young people transferred to DOC as being “the problem” rather than the system. Brought up the need for expanded diversion and to not send young people to JR prior to age 15.

Roxana Gomez, ACLU – Asked that the Partnership Council ask DCYF for a tangible plan moving forward as to how they will address the increase in aggressive behaviors in the institutions, such as the creation of a Behavior Management System.

Excerpts from statements read on behalf of youth transferred to DOC:

- Please just pass on that we are still fighting for justice. Please keep us in the loop.

- We want DCYF to honor their word in the last agreement they made when illegally transferring youth to DOC by allowing us to have a hearing before transferring out of DCYF custody
- I want it to be shared that many of us have been at GHS since we were 16 or 17 and have invested so much into the facility just to be thrown out.

Break: 20 Minutes

Discussion Continued

Recap of recommendations from first half of discussion:

- Policy – Expand and support diversion services across the board, raise the threshold for JR sentencing to limit the population of youth and young adults entering JR facilities, expand eligibility for CTS and other step-down programming
- DCYF – Get in front of messaging that youth are not to blame for system issues. Provide actionable plan to address unsafe conditions. Ask DCYF to engage more intentionally with stakeholders
- Encourage coordination of systems more broadly and effectively including forecasting and other court data
- Leadership- Call for a change in DCYF leadership. Need for a change in culture by leadership.
- Call for meeting with the Governor to elevate Council’s recommendations

Legislative- Coordination of agency request legislation and budget decision packages. What are the timelines, and can the Council have a role in the development?

Felice Upton- commitment to create behavior management system

What is DCYF doing to include Tribes in decision-making around the juvenile justice system?

State/County system bifurcation- how to create more avenues for meaningful partnership? How to support counties and detention centers.

Trust rebuilding and repair- how to invest in solutions when germane information is not being shared and decisions are being made in silos. The path going forward needs to be built in shared truth.

Any actions taken need to be centered around those most impacted

Council Next Steps

Action Items:

- Request audience with the Governor
- Council to author letter the Governor speaking to the leadership failures of Secretary Hunter and outline the Council’s recommendations for immediate next steps to identify resources to meet the needs of those returning to JR as well as reduce the current population at GHS. The following members volunteered to assist in the writing of the letter: Gordon McHenry, Jr., Sean Goode, Tashawn Deville and Judge Jennifer Forbes.

- Decarceration- begin planning for transition to smaller, therapeutic facilities to meet the developmental needs of young people.
- Address state/county bifurcation to best serve young people in the carceral system
- Identify where agency request legislation stands (second chance legislation led by young people)

Youth Voice: Echo Glenn Children's Center (joined virtually)

- Young people requested more structure and consistency of programming. Ideas included sports and recreation, education, creative outlets, and job opportunities such as auto shop, welding and other vocational activities. Youth shared that they do not have many opportunities to leave their cottages (living units).
- Access to religious programming, cultural programming, and parenting classes. Many times, youth are told that programs will be available, but they are not or are not held consistently.
- Youth voice initiatives- getting personal items approved for use on campus (shoes) and implementing cultural programming. Youth voice led a celebration for Juneteenth at EGCC. Also working on expanding and increasing access to hygiene items that are available upon intake.
- Trying to get visitation to be more inclusive for children. Taking steps for the creation of child safe visitation spaces. Engaging in college programming but shared that many have dropped out due to lack of support and inconsistency of programming.
- College program will be moved out of the school into an area that cuts off access for male residents.
- Staff person requested help with support for culturally responsive programming.

Announcements & Closing Remarks

Council Chair Gordon McHenry provided overview of current work of the council including policy studies and upcoming Biennial Report to the Governor.

Upcoming Events:

OJJDP 50th Anniversary National Conference
November 19th-21st, 2024. Washington, DC

CJJ Racial and Ethnic Disparities Conference
October 16th & 17th, 2024. Seattle, WA

Adjourned at 1:00 PM

Council Members & Staff to travel to Touchstone Community Facility for a gardening service project and to host dinner with the young people and JR staff.

Next Quarterly Meeting: October 17, 2024. Location TBD.