



Texas Juvenile Justice Department
ADVISORY COUNCIL ON JUVENILE SERVICES

Embassy Suites San Marcos
Hotel, Spa and Conference Center
1001 E. McCarty Lane
San Marcos, TX 78666
Wednesday, March 7, 2012
The Burleson Boardroom
1:30 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

Members Present

Estela Medina (Chair), Doug Vance (Vice-Chair), Linda Brooke, William Carter, Audrey Deckinga, Homer Flores, Phillip Hayes, , Mario Ramirez, Matt Shaheen, Cherie Townsend, Randy Turner, and Mark Williams

Absences

Larry Thorne

Guests Present:

Jennifer Carreon (Texas Criminal Justice Coalition), Benet Magnusen (Texas Criminal Justice Coalition), Bob Kimball (Palo Pinto County), Aris Johnson (Gregg County), Donna Richardson (Bastrop County).

TJJD Staff Present

Melanie Cleveland (Executive Assistant), James Smith (TJJD Associate Deputy Commissioner of Youth Services), Amy Lopez (TJJD Superintendent of Education).

Welcome [Estela Medina]

The chair welcomed everyone and introduced Melanie Cleveland (Executive Assistant) and excused Larry Thorne. Everyone present was introduced including guests and TJJD staff.

Review and Approval of January 26, 2012 Meeting Minutes [Estela Medina]

On page two of the minutes, the last sentence of the last paragraph was changed to read, "Consistent with the goals of SB 653 recommend that the Board establish funding priorities that support this mission." Minutes were approved with changes, submitted and directed to be posted on the agency website.

State Operated Program and Services Update [James Smith, Amy Lopez]

Giddings State School

In the previous meeting there was a discussion to get updates on TJJD facilities. Coincidentally, the Advisory Council received a complaint via email on February 24, 2012 from a former TJJD employee at the Giddings State School. The Chair and Ms. Townsend discussed the response to the complaint. Ms. Townsend indicated that most of the issues raised in the email were already being addressed. The council was responsive in forwarding the email to the Texas Juvenile Justice

Department Board chair.

Ms. Townsend introduced James Smith and Amy Lopez who presented an overview of the Giddings State School programs as well as the strengths and challenges faced by the facility. The Giddings State School scored very high as a facility to continue, due to the programming and stability that had occurred in the past. Mr. Smith and Ms. Lopez each gave an account of the facility: Report from James Smith

Program strengths:

- **Veteran staff** in upwards of 20 years.
- **High quality programming:** sex offender, alcohol and drug and capitol and serious violent offender.
- **Largest grouping of sentenced offenders.** Facility worked primarily with sentenced offenders and specialized treatment youth but the general population has increased.
- **Great Education and Vocation programs.** Many industry level certifications and vocations such as welding, wood work, construction trade and automotive certifications.
- **Campus** setting is beautiful and resembles a preparatory school or college.

Program challenges:

- **Staffing.** Traditionally this facility had very little turnover and currently 95% staffed. However, they had significant turnover in the Fall. This facility received youth from Al Price and Crockett facilities when they closed in the summer which increased general offender youth. In addition, staff was unavailable due to injuries, workman compensation or calling in sick. Vacancies were also a challenge but currently there are only two vacancies in the Juvenile Correctional Officer (JCO) 1-4 classification. This was achieved due to a partnered effort with Human Resources to expedite hiring and interviewing occurring every Wednesday. In January, 16 JCO's were hired so currently 24 staff are going through entry level training. SB103 requires all JCO staff to have 300 hours of training before they can be responsible for sole supervision of youth. That is a lot of time from hire to work but 5 staff from January reached that mark yesterday. Another 16-17 will be fully certified by the end of the month. November and December are hard months to hire for direct supervision and that hit at a time when vacancies were adding up which compounded the supervision challenges. When vacancies combine with a few incidents, then morale goes down. Giddings State School currently has 10 JCO vacancies with two in JCO 1-4, two in JCO 6 and six in JCO 5. Additionally, in March Giddings partnered with other facilities to loan staff to help with coverage on the floor as well as mentoring and coaching staff. They are focused on being one team not many and are appreciative of the help. Mr. Smith has established a satellite office on campus and works there 2 to 3 days a week. His goal is to provide assistance by talking with staff and youth and explaining expectations, especially around youth aggression.
- **Youth aggression.** This is a significant challenge and partially due to an influx of youth from Al Price and Crockett facilities while transferring other youth to other facilities at the same time. These youth were in a new environment, testing limits and at the time, the facility was experiencing staff shortages so these youth took advantage of these opportunities. The staff could have responded better but did not and we are working on that. Historically, this facility handled youth aggression very well. When staff work additional hours, they are less likely to confront behaviors. The Giddings State School staff is now ready to confront behavior and hold youth accountable for their actions.
- **Security.** Additional staff was deployed from Central Office to Giddings to regularly help, guide and assist. The PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) coordinator is there once a week to ensure that security and safety practices are in line. This has been a major help to the staff.

- **Staff and youth accountability.** The staff and leadership were not meeting our expectations and that has been addressed. Management is more visible now and although there are reasons and/or explanations for the problems at Giddings State School, they were not acceptable to the agency. An action plan was developed with the facility for corrective action including a town hall meeting where everyone received a copy of the plan. The Agency is working with the Office of Inspector General (OIG) to be more aggressive in moving youth to jail if staff is assaulted by a sentenced offender. Youth on staff assaults were four in one month period and the last three were moved to jail or prison within a day or two of the assault. This is sending a clear message that assaults are not acceptable.

There was a correctional mentality with the veteran staff except for those engaged in the delivery of specialized treatment. This was a roadblock for culture change at Giddings and continues to be a challenge that is being addressed.

- **Work shifts.** The work shifts were poorly aligned. The trained or more seasoned staff were going to the first and third shifts but all the activity is on the second shift and trying to handle that with all new staff presented a challenge. The schedule has been realigned and the facility is making adjustments.
- **Case management support.** Case management staff was primarily working until 5 or 6 in the evening but incidents were happening between 7 and 9 p.m. As of March 12th all of the case management staff will be working until 9 p.m., two nights a week. This will form a partnership with the JCO's and provide additional coverage which creates a much safer environment. Also, the administrative staff schedule was changed to include weekends and not a straight 8-5 shift. These changes were adopted by the agency some time ago but they were not adopted at Giddings or they had occurred but quickly back slid.
- **Housing assessment and assignment.** Giddings' capacity is for 300 youth and they are at 279 today. A moratorium of 272 was imposed when this issue came about. This will allow half a wing to close and redeploy 10 staff throughout the campus. The structure is a combination of an open bay with 18 beds that are in a "U" shape, plus a multi-occupant room which has 3 to 4 individuals in it, plus 64 individual rooms. Most facilities have been reconfigured to be individual rooms but it would significantly reduce capacity at Giddings and increase cost. Three dorms are currently being reconfigured but in the past, the culture was strong enough that they could overcome the room configuration

Giddings has the largest number of sentenced offenders but they have a wide availability of programs so youth can be served closest to their homes with the exception of violent intensive programs. Youth are now placed on an orientation dorm before being placed on their treatment dorm or general offender dorm. The supervision ratio is 1 to 12 because of dorm configuration. Following discussion, the Advisory Council would like to make a recommendation to the legislature to adjust the 300 training hours for part time employees.

Report from Amy Lopez

The TJJD school system looks like any other High School in the State of Texas. The youth go from bell to bell with seven periods and a class runs about 55 minutes long. The school system is under all Texas Education Agency (TEA) auspices with TAKS testing, STAAR and end of course testing starting this week. One difference is that the school year starts on September 1st and ends on July 31st.

- **Diplomas.** Last year Giddings issued 17 high school diplomas which is an accomplishment because the bulk of the students come to us with no or very few credits. We had two students (not from Giddings) graduate with distinguished honors which is incredible. Giddings has issued 6 high school diplomas so far this year.
- **GED** (General Educational Development). Last year 58 GED's were issued and currently at 26 for the year.
- **CTE certifications.** They offer 10 types of vocational classes with 14 courses or sections and all of them offer industry certification. Giddings issued 144 industry certifications from January through December of 2011.
- **College classes.** There are currently 15 students enrolled in one or more college courses this semester through

Navarro College. Currently they are offering English 1301, 1302, College Statistics and History of Music.

- **Work program.** Thirty students participate in our work programs; previously called RIO Y. They get paid for these various jobs on campus and those monies are used to pay for restitution and child support.
- **Sports opportunities.** We have an athletic program and are part of the Texas Association of Private Parochial (TAPPS) league with football, basketball, and track. We have a rating scale for off campus approval which affects their ability to participate.
- **Student Council.** Members in the State Student Advisory Council Association plan culture and service projects and are very active at Giddings. They also participate in public school Student Advisory Council which includes competitions.
- **PBIS.** Positive Behavioral and Incentive Supports for Education is state mandated and TJJD is in its second year. TJJD has national consultants and has hired coaches with an Education job grant for each campus. The focus is on positive behaviors and support as opposed to anything punitive. The use of PBIS has resulted in decreases in incidents, restraints and security referrals from school. PBIS is working well at Giddings and is being rolled out facility wide. The tracking database which is now used agency wide was created by the Giddings staff. The majority of Giddings issues did not occur in School.
- **Staff experience.** Staff is tenured for over 20 years. They did not have a good response to the addition of more short-term youth at the facility as opposed to sentenced offenders and took longer to adjust. A big challenge is that 34% of the youth are special education eligible so special education requirements must be met as outlined by state and federal law. Three years ago TEA audited TJJD at our request and there were 96 areas of noncompliance. The last submission of documentation as evidence of full compliance is in process and as a result, the services to our youth have improved greatly.
- **Innovative lessons.** Giddings has a very active technology team. The agency chose 5-6 teachers from each school in our agency who wanted to train in a digital age, they then go back and train other teachers. The Giddings staff is very superior in this area and they have ActivBoards, ActiveSlates, document cameras, digital cameras and clickers.

Feedback from the February 17, 2012 Texas Juvenile Justice Department Board Meeting [Estela Medina, Doug Vance]

Chair Estela Medina and Vice-Chair Doug Vance attended the TJJD Board meeting on February 17, 2012 and presented the Advisory Council's list of priorities and projects developed at the previous meeting and provided a copy of the minutes. In addition, the Board received a transition document from the previous Advisory Council. The presentation was informational so the Council will prioritize these issues and present them at an upcoming Board meeting for a vote. These top issues will be decided by having the members poll their regional associations and asked for specific input on specific standards as well as looking to the summary of results from the TJJD 2012 Customer Survey currently being conducted. The members will email their polling results to Melanie Cleveland to be compiled with a copy to the Chair and Vice Chair. The agenda at the Regional Chief Probation Conference on March 8, 2012 will set the stage for regional opportunity discussions.

Recommended Advisory Council on Juvenile Services Priorities [Open Discussion]

Ms. Townsend reviewed the list of issues developed in the previous meeting at the member's request. She identified funding, mental health, the commitment capacity and Strategic Planning as major issues to the agency. The council added performance measures, program development and standards to the list. The Strategic Plan is the agency's largest and most pressing priority. The results of the TJJD 2012 Customer Survey will be key in giving the Advisory Council a better idea of specific work to assist the Board and Agency in their mission.

TJJD Strategic Planning [Cherie Townsend]

The focus groups at the Chief's Summit on March 8, 2012 will be looking at very specific areas with the three key areas being prevention and early intervention, mental health and aftercare. The focus groups will specifically be asked about the status, gaps in services and priorities. The TJJD 2012 Customer Survey is available online and reaches beyond the focus groups. It was distributed at the Juvenile Law Conference which included judges, prosecutors and defense attorneys. The

closing date for survey submissions is March 31; however, preliminary information may be available to the council by the end of April to use in prioritizing issues for the Board's consideration.

The big issues are juvenile case management system (JCMS), the Border project, mental health and Parole. The Parole issue was broadened to include the issue of "after care" and "out of home" placement. Some counties want to take responsibility for handling parole. The agency Strategic Plan will consider the parole process and whether contracting after-care and placement should be expanded. The Strategic Planning process will identify the areas that need reworking. These focus groups will look at some agency concerns such as:

- Early intervention and prevention
- Parole
- Alternatives for placement for extremely troubled youth
- Continuum of services

Ms. Townsend has met with the Texas Council on Offenders with Mental Impairments (TCOOMMI) on the issue of continuum of services and she would like to report back to the Advisory Council on the possibility of developing a pilot program.

Funding [Open Discussion]

The Advisory Council agreed this would fall back under the Strategic Planning.

Schedule Future Meetings [Cheryl Townsend]

The Advisory Council received the TJJ Board Meeting dates and the next meeting is April 6, 2012 in Fort Worth. The Advisory Council will be a standing agenda item at every Board Meeting so a council member will need to present on behalf of the Advisory Council.

The next Advisory Council meeting will be at the Corsicana facility on Tuesday, May 1, 2012 at 11 a.m. Materials and information will be provided beforehand.

Estela Medina, Doug Vance, Randy Turner and Mark Williams are possible presenters at the next TJJ Board Meeting.

Closing Remarks and Adjourn [Estela Medina]

The Advisory Council is on the agenda at the Chiefs' Summit and Estela Medina and Doug Vance as well as the other chiefs will give an update on the Council's work thus far. The meeting was adjourned at 4:23.