



## **Advisory Council on Juvenile Services**

### Meeting Minutes

Friday, January 19, 2024 @ 10:00 a.m.  
200 Wilco Way Georgetown, TX 78626

**Advisory Council Members present:** Chairman Lynn Hadnot, Ed Cockrell, Lou Serrano, Homer Flores, Karina Browning, Judge Teana Watson, Lindsey Van Buskirk, Marc Bittner, Judge Mark Allen, Shanna Floyd

**Advisory Council Members not present:** Judge Natalia Oakes, Shandra Carter, Vice Chair Melanie Ramsey

**TJJD Staff in attendance:** Ashley Kintzer, James Bateman, Ryan Bristow, Rachael Gandy, Marqus Butler, David Ellis, Lynn Jackson, Javier Aguilar, Todd Novak, Chief Scott Matthew, Chief Edeska Barnes, Chief Joe Barton, Chief Jerry Bullard, Chief Luis Lejia, Will Burham, Judge Cyndi Wheless, Jana Jones, Kaci Singer, Noah Wright, Daryl Liedecke, Daniel Guajardo, Emily Anderson, Deborah Harris-Wiggins, Shantae Motley, Stefan Richards, Chelsey Oden, Neil Eddins, David Hensley, Mark Williams, James Wilson, Ashley Cabler, Cameron Taylor Scott Friedman, Casey J Koenig, Aparna Karki, Preston Streufert and Ronnie Gamez

**Other attendees:** Jerome Green, Kyle Dobbs, Brad Slater

**Call to Order/Introductions:** The meeting began at 10:06 a.m. with Lynn Hadnot introducing himself and taking roll call of the Council members. Rachel Gandy provided an update regarding the newly appointed Board of Directors for the Texas Juvenile Justice Department and their onboarding training. Each board member provided an introduction to the council and information regarding their background and role on the TJJD Board.

### **Approval of Minutes: October 27, 2023 Meeting**

Shanna Floyd made a motion to approve the minutes. Ed Cockrell, seconded the motion. The motion passed.

**Texas Juvenile Justice Department Updates:** Lou Serrano, Deputy Executive Director reported Director Carter continues to meet with legislative stakeholders. Upcoming initiatives include tours with legislatures to state facilities. Capacity for state-committed youth has increased since last year. Waitlist continues to be strain on the system as kids with higher acuity for mental health are difficult to place in detention facilities. Changing state agency culture continues to be focus point for executive leadership. The agency continues to work with

the field and had meeting with the President's council regarding planning for the next legislative session. With the system being provided an additional \$144 Million, it will be important to be able to articulate the use of the funds and improvements for the system. Parole services now match regionalization structure with seven (7) regions. The team is working hard on relationship building at the local level and improving services for kids upon re-entry on parole supervision. Implementing robust services for kids on parole will promote long-term success and community safety.

Todd Novak, Director of Re-Entry Services provided an update on parole and re-entry structure and initiatives. Director Novak reported it would extremely important to improve the communication and the impact on victims when parole youth are returning the local communities. Part of this effort includes the state agency's collection of victim's coordinator information for all juvenile probation departments. Improving collaboration between parole and local departments to improve the collection of outstanding restitution for victims will also be a coordination initiative moving forward per council recommendation. Parole numbers per region or going down with the exception of the North Region. Currently there are 167 youth on parole, including Interstate Compact. There are roughly 803 youth in secure, contract, and half-way houses receiving parole services as these officers work with all youth in the state system, not just youth on the ground on parole. Other initiatives include future capabilities for department's who provide contract parole to be able to access the state system. Contract parole rates for contract parole services has increased from \$13.00 per day to \$18.00 per day, whereas the rate for confinement is approximately \$460.00 per day. Other parole initiatives presented by Marcus Butler included strengthening the core components of re-entry services: Medicaid access, training for officers on evidenced-based practices, supporting local projects and efforts, and EPICS (Effective Practices in Community Supervision). Probation Chiefs are now being provided an invitation to attend level 1 parole hearings for youth.

Ashley Kintzer, Director of Probation Services provided introductions for all regionalization specialist for each of the seven (7) regions. Mark Williams was recognized for this extensive career and impact on the field. Regionalization taskforce work has begun and in the initial meeting was productive with primary issues being addressed for rulemaking as required by Sunset. 149 diversion application have been received this year with 75 kids being placed. Detention expansion grant was sent out last month. After initial announcement, the state agency did not receive enough applications to account for the available funding. In response, another announcement was sent to the field and the agency now has additional applications under review for funding consideration. Grant is designed to expand detention bed capacity. Applications under review are from Angelina County and Tom Green County. The state agency has moved to encrypted e-mails. Information regarding the change was forwarded to the field and training is available if needed. Newest staff member, Casey Koenig was introduced and comes from HHSC and will be working with Dr. Susan Scott on community intervention and support.

Ryan Bristow, Director of Integrated System Support reported in 2023, the agency was able to move 613 kids into care. That is the highest number since the waitlist began. The state agency

began this week with approximately 70 kids on the list and ended the week in the 60's with zero females pending placement. The orientation unit was able to increase capacity from 48 to approximately 60-66. Mr. Bristow reported approximately half of those youth are nearing placement at their long-term campuses which should positively impact the waitlist. Kids continue to move at a rate of 10-15 per week. Total commitment target for state is 630. There were only about 530 kids committed last year. Strain of waitlist discussed. Conditional placement presented as a tool the state hopes to utilize for very specific youth. All conditional placements are required to be sent to the TJJD Board each quarter. Conditional placement policy is to be sent to the field.

**Sunset Review Update & Council Objectives:** Rachel Gandy, Chief of Staff reported the agency having \$200 Million for a new-build with the associated feasibility study being expected soon. The agency is also expecting to receive news regarding a grant through OJJJD to map out service gaps as directed by the sunset bill but the funding announcement is delayed until February. As prescribed in the sunset bill, a number of rules were vetted with the advisory council for consideration. Rules vetted by the council include:

- Rules governing the purpose, membership, and functions of the Advisory Council
- Data sharing requirements between the state agency and local probation departments
- Rules governing youth on the commitment waitlist and local flexibility to house youth on the waitlist in either pre-adjudication or post-adjudication programs
- Allowance for local boards to retrofit, certify, and use facilities previously designated for adults
- The least restrictive educational requirements for juvenile probation officer certification

Ongoing campaigns of the council include, but are not limited to, rules to incentivize and expand local probation department participation in regionalization, rules incorporating accommodations for military experience as required in the Texas Occupations Code, and the creation and implementation of a risk-based monitoring tool and inspection schedule for facilities, and legal sufficiency review processes.

**TDFPS Update:** Lindsey Van Buskirk, DFPS, CPS Director of Field reported the agency is focus on preparing for the 89<sup>th</sup> legislative session. Efforts looks to expanding capacity and stabilizing existing capacity on mental health and behavioral health supports on the front end and throughout is important. On average the system has approximately 16,500 TO 17,000 kids at any given time with about 11 year being in TJJD custody. The agency is seeing more youth being in city and county facilities with approximately 100 kids being in local facilities at any given time. Children without placement continues to be challenge but the numbers have improved. The agency is average 45-55 now, down from 75-65 youth. In a sample of 50 youth in a sample, 41 of those youth had prior referrals for delinquent conduct with some having serious charges and/or acute mental health needs. Charges range from theft to serious felony charges which make placement very challenging.

**Sub Committee Report:**

- Standards Subcommittee – Probation certification minimum requirement rules were vetted by the field. Multiple robust meetings were held. New rules requirements regarding military experience as required by chapter 55 of occupations code were discussed. Kaci Singer discussed closing gaps in communication between agencies wherein an applicant must disclose whether they have ever had their certification revoked or suspended.
- OIG Abuse, Neglect, & Exploitation Subcommittee -- Kickoff meeting scheduled for January 29<sup>th</sup>. A comprehensive meeting with approximately 70 facility administrators and stakeholders was attended virtual by local practitioners. No changes are being recommended at this time for TAC: 349.

**New Business:**

- Raise-the-Age Workgroup Planning -- Looking to coordinate the selection of committee members. Plan is to have the advisory council create a subcommittee and have the state agency partner with the field with taking a stance on this issue. The committee is looking to have an ambitious timeline for the work of December 2024.

**Old Business:**

- Information-Sharing Initiative -- New CIO is being sought by the state agency and interviews are underway. Meeting conducted with Harris County with potential interest in case management solution exploration. Information sharing will be set as a potential priority item. Large urban areas who are not utilizing JCMS serve the majority of Texas youth but are not able to communicate with another or neighboring counties.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Next Meeting:**

The council will meet in person on Friday, April 19, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.

**Meeting Adjourn** – at 12:15 p.m.