

**MINUTES
GENERAL ORIENTATION MEETING
UPDATE ON JUVENILE JUSTICE ACTIVITIES IN LANCASTER COUNTY
ROOM 113
COUNTY-CITY BUILDING
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 1999
12 P.M.**

Commissioners Present: Kathy Campbell, Chair
Linda Steinman
Bob Workman
Bernie Heier
Larry Hudkins

Others Present: Kerry Eagan, Chief Administrative Officer
Jim Hille, Sinclair Hille & Associates Inc.
Kit Boesch, Justice Council
Dennis Banks, Attention Center Director
Michelle Schindler, Attention Center Deputy Director
Renee' Dozier, Detention Expediter
Denise Bulling, Families First & Foremost Grant Project
Deputy Director
Bill Janike, Chief Probation Officer
Ann Hobbs, Cedars Youth Services
Petra Smith, Cedars Youth Services
Rod Ericik, Cedars Turning Point
Lenine Williams, Cedars Turning Point
Gary Lacey, County Attorney
Dave Johnson, Deputy County Attorney
Jodi Nelson, Chief Deputy County Attorney (Child Support
Division)
Dennis Keefe, Public Defender
David Beggs, Lincoln Police Department
Deb Hoover, Community Mental Health Center
Roxie Cillessen, Nebraska Department of Health & Human
Services
C J Johnson, Region V
Melissa Davis Schmit, Region V
Jeff Haase, CenterPointe
Kate Spech, Lincoln Medical Education Foundation
Jim Tucker, Best Education
Deb Sprague, Lincoln Council on Alcoholism & Drugs
Annette McRoy, City Council
Coleen Seng, City Council
Jerry Shoecraft, City Council
Jennifer Brinkman, Mayor's Office
Richard Krause, Lincoln Public Schools

Others Present: Becky Wild, Lincoln Public Schools
Chris Hain, Lincoln Journal Star Newspaper
Ann Taylor, County Clerk's Office

AGENDA ITEM

1 WELCOME - Kathy Campbell, County Board Chair,

Kathy Campbell, County Board Chair, stated that in addition to building a new juvenile detention facility, Lancaster County is working to provide alternatives to detention. She noted that a Comprehensive Juvenile Justice System Study conducted by Chinn Planning Inc. had made it clear that if both components were not made available, the new facility would be too small to effectively meet the needs of the community.

2 JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITY

a. Current Status - Dennis Banks, Attention Center Director

Dennis Banks, Attention Center Director, reported that the average daily population of the Attention Center has increased from 11 in 1993 to 47 in 1999. The severity of law violations has also increased significantly. He said the current facility is unable to handle these increases or classification by age, gender or charge.

Banks also reported the following:

- * Approximately one third of the youth in the Attention Center are placed there for technical violations, such as truancy and violation of curfew
- * Minorities comprise 35 percent of the population
- * Approximately 27 percent of the population is female
- * Length of stay averages 12 days

b. Facility Update - Jim Hille, Sinclair Hille & Associates Inc.

Jim Hille, Sinclair Hille & Associates Inc., gave a brief overview of the new Juvenile Detention Facility referring to a site plan (Exhibit A). He noted that components include 60 secure detention beds, 20 staff secure beds, indoor and outdoor recreation areas, education program area, Intake/Control Station, and an Assessment Center. There is also space for future expansion to include the juvenile court system.

Hille reported that the projected cost of the facility is \$10,000,000, which equates to \$165.00 per square foot.

c. Assessment Center Process - Bill Janike, Chief Probation Officer

Bill Janike, Chief Probation Officer, said youth who come into contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice systems present certain risks and needs. He said the Assessment Center will serve as a tool in determining how to handle those youth through use of an assessment tool, interview and check of prior law enforcement and court contacts.

Janike reported that the Juvenile Court Judges and representatives of the County Attorney, Public Defender, Juvenile Probation, Attention Center, law enforcement and alternative programs within the community have been meeting to determine policies and procedures for the Assessment Center. Crucial questions to be answered include:

1. Who should be brought to the Assessment Center
2. Staffing of the Assessment Center
3. Assessment instruments

Janike noted that the Assessment Center process may be able to decrease the number of petition filings and expedite adjudications and disposition hearings on those cases that require formal court action.

- d. Groundbreaking Ceremony - Dennis Banks, Attention Center Director

This item was not covered.

3 MENU OF ALTERNATIVES

- a. Pre-Trial Diversion - Ann Hobbs, Cedars Youth Services

Ann Hobbs, Cedars Youth Services, said the Juvenile Diversion Services Program has three major goals (Exhibit B):

1. To divert juveniles with minor law violations from involvement with the formal criminal justice process
2. To hold youth accountable for their behavior/criminal act while diverting the juvenile out of the formal criminal justice system
3. To prevent subsequent law violations by youth that participate in Juvenile Diversion Services

Hobbs said youth accessing the program range in age from 12-18. She noted that approximately 80 percent of youth offered the opportunity to enter the program do so. Since offenses vary, each case is individualized. Hobbs also stated that this program utilizes every agency within the City and County and tries to effectively respond to the needs of the community.

Hobbs said program effectiveness is evaluated by tracking youth who have participated in the program and a control group of youth that did not complete the program and re-offended. She said youth who have completed the program were found to have committed far fewer new offenses.

Hobbs reported that the Juvenile Diversion Services Program costs the County less than 60 cents per day, while the cost of housing a youth at the Attention Center is \$145 per day. The low recidivism rate for the program also adds to its cost effectiveness.

b. Screener Position - Gary Lacey, County Attorney

Gary Lacey, County Attorney, said a screener position in his office has been made available through a grant from the Crime Commission. This person will screen cases and expedite the process of deciding whether to file or refer cases to diversion.

Lacey also reported on the County's receipt of a \$60,000 grant to explore the feasibility of initiating a Drug Court Program for juveniles and adults.

c. Expediter/Services Plan - Renee' Dozier, Detention Expediter

Renee' Dozier, Detention Expediter, presented *Detention Alternatives Project Fact Sheet* (Exhibit C), explaining that her role is to address the issue of disproportionate confinement of minority youth and to shorten the length of stay of all youth detained in the Attention Center. She indicated that referrals are received from the Juvenile Court, Probation Office and Attention Center staff and she works with them to develop service plans for alternative placement.

Dozier reported that she worked with 24 youth from the Attention Center in the first quarter of the program, developing service plans for 15 of that number. Alternative placements in programs such as day and evening reporting centers eliminated approximately 350 days of detention in the Attention Center, for a savings of \$52,000. She added that she has received 11 new referrals, to date, for the second quarter.

d. Families First & Foremost Grant Program - Denise Bulling, Families First & Foremost Grant Project Deputy Director

Denise Bulling, Families First & Foremost Grant Project Deputy Director, explained that funding of this program is through a 7 million dollar, community based grant, with a focus on youth with mental health or substance abuse needs that are in danger of coming into contact with, or are currently in contact with, the juvenile justice system. She said she will be working with the Region V Professional Partners Program and Uplift, a parents organization that provides support and respite care, to redesign the community's system of care with a strong emphasis on families. Efforts will also be made to interface the Attention Center and Assessment Center with this program.

e. Expansion of Alternatives Menu - Kit Boesch, Justice Council

Kit Boesch, Justice Council, briefly reviewed the following:

- * *Juvenile Justice Alternative Options* (1997 & 1998) (Exhibit D)
- * *Pre-Disposition, Lancaster County Graduated Sanctions for Juvenile Offenders (As of 10-17-99)* (Exhibit E)

- * A list of post adjudicated sanctions/services (See Exhibit E)

Boesch also reviewed *Detention Alternative Sanctions Menu as of November 1999* (Exhibit F), noting the following works in progress:

- * Identifying gaps in existing or new sanction or service areas
- * Developing Guidelines for the Use of Graduated Sanctions
- * Developing Administrative Sanctions to be used internally by Probation
- * Building a compatible Management Information System

4 QUESTIONS/ANSWERS

Campbell said boarding contracts remains the County's legislative priority. She added that if the State of Nebraska could be persuaded to accept its responsibility for this expense, it would free up a significant amount of dollars that could be used for alternatives to detention.

Heier asked how programs will be evaluated.

Boesch said each of the components will be evaluated. In addition, the Justice Council, will review the collective evaluations to determine effectiveness.

Deb Sprague, Lincoln Council on Alcoholism & Drugs, noted concern that the issue of prevention is not being sufficiently addressed.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Bruce Medcalf
Lancaster County Clerk