

**Minutes of the Waukesha County Criminal Justice Collaborating Council  
Juvenile Justice Committee  
February 18, 2010**

The meeting was called to order at 3:04 p.m.

**Present:** Sam Benedict (Chair), Kelly Haag, Judge Pat Haughney, Pete Slesar, Tim Westphal, Jim Haessly, Dick Farvour. **Absent:** Sara Carpenter, Dave Wanner.

**Also Present:** Rebecca Luczaj, Shari Rather, Lisa Roberts, Clara Daniels.

**Approval of Minutes from October 29, 2009**

The minutes of October 29, 2009 were approved without objection.

**Overview of Foster Home Availability & Foster Family Recruitment: Focus on Teens**

Rather distributed and reviewed a handout on current foster home statistics in Waukesha County. She said of the 117 foster homes in Waukesha County 16 are respite, 12 are specific homes and eight are pending adoption homes. Forty-nine homes are full while 43 have openings. Of the total foster homes, 32 will take teens (over the age of 13) but only eight foster homes currently have openings. Rather said people are not as interested in fostering teens. Roberts said most of the foster homes have younger kids and the parents do not want them influenced by older kids. Foster parents are recruited through schools and churches.

Haughney said Waukesha County teens are placed in foster homes around the state. Some kids are placed in foster homes at the opposite side of the county from their schools causing issues with transportation to/from school. Haessly said those kids may qualify for special needs or homeless transportation. There are buses that transport special needs children throughout the county. Linda Sumwalt could give a presentation on special needs transportation to the committee.

Haessly asked is the percentage of teen foster children in Waukesha County typical. Roberts said the numbers are typical. Some counties place all teens in treatment facilities.

Slesar arrived at 3:15 p.m. Farvour arrived at 3:18 p.m.

Haughney said some kids are in shelter longer than the county prefers due to lack of good fit placements. Rather said the typical length of placement in foster care is 15.5 months. Benedict said delinquent youth are hard to place. Rather said the state is developing an assessment tool to help determine what youth need to be successful.

Benedict asked what is the impact of unmet needs in Waukesha County? Does it take longer to place children who need more intensive care? Haughney said reunification is the goal. Sometimes there is no foster option or the foster parents become burned out so kids are reunited sooner with parents than they should be. The county keeps kids longer while the parents (mostly moms) take care of issues. Rather said sometimes it is best for the child to be returned to their parents. The best interest of the child has to be considered: displacement or disruption. Finding alternate resources take time. Creating secondary respite providers in each family would be ideal. Benedict asked is there anything this group could do to help? Rather said suggestions are welcome. She does not know where else to find potential foster parents in general much less for teens. There are plenty of foster homes for babies and small children but not enough for teens. Foster parents do not want to take a child only to find out they cannot handle the child and need to return them.

Slesar asked are there any organizations that could donate fun things for foster families such as Bucks tickets and movie passes? Roberts said people are generous so there are many tickets donated. Rather said the community is willing to give gifts.

Roberts said recruitment is challenging. Letters and flyers are sent to guidance counselors, principals, churches, etc. Announcements are made at churches. Churches help with clothing closets, annual picnics, childcare for training. Rather said the annual meeting provides statistical information and needs lists to help reenergize and remind people why they are involved in foster care.

Haessly asked what percentage of these youth has disabilities? Roberts said it depends on how "disability" is defined. Half of the youth are in special education services. Most of the kids have struggles.

Benedict asked are there other best practices for recruitment and development that can be studied and duplicated? Roberts said Waukesha County does not have a budget for recruitment.

### **Update on Juvenile Delinquency Petition Filings & Detentions for 2009**

Haag distributed and reviewed several handouts outlining statistical information on Waukesha County's juvenile justice system. Slesar said the department saw a significant drop in the number of delinquencies and intakes from 2008 to 2009. Haughney explained that he believes the reduction is due to his tough style and the two assistant public defenders who work in the program. Haughney said he is tough with the kids and is known as the mean judge. He likes the public defenders' good client control. Slesar said it is most effective to show kids that they will be held accountable for their actions. Severity of the punishment is not a deterrent.

Benedict asked does the declining number of filings affect what the department does? The reduction has caused him to reallocate resources assigning public defenders to difference cases.

Haughney said the decline allows him to devote more time to guardianships. Westphal said the District Attorney's office changed from 1.5 FTEs to 1.0 FTE, which was difficult for one person to handle at first, but is now manageable. Haughney said he gives credit to the Public Defenders and District Attorney's Offices for their work negotiating.

Benedict said the decline could also be explained by a rise in municipal filings. Haughney agreed there has been an increase in the number of municipal filings. Benedict said this data needs to be collected. The City of Waukesha could be asked for their numbers. Haughney said statistics from Menomonee Falls and the Lake Country Court would be helpful. Municipal tickets bring more money (through fines) to communities. Benedict said he would also like to know the rates of victimization, violent offending and overall crime incidents from these communities. Slesar said the OJA's annual report provides these statistics by county.

Slesar said the department is doing more and more diversions and looks to the courts to deal with the most serious cases. There is a good balance. Staff knows that if they need to go to court, there is a certain level of severity or seriousness.

Slesar said at the next meeting, he will bring statistics showing the number of intakes and the paths they follow. Luczaj volunteered to gather the OJA data. Haag will gather statistics from the municipal courts.

### **Update on JABG Youth Accountability Groups – Pete Slesar**

Slesar said the Youth Accountability Group will receive \$21K in federal funding, which is an increase of a few thousand dollars from last year. During the time-period of July to December 2009, 25 youth were referred to the program with 15 males, primarily between the ages of 16 to 17 years of age, completing the program. Based on self and staff reporting 12 of the 15 indicated a decrease in antisocial behavior. Groups

met in September and October 2009 and January 2010. The next scheduled program will be in April. A liaison from OJA will perform a program sight visit and review on February 28, 2010, which will include meeting mediation staff, county staff and the panel. During the past year, more emphasis has been placed on evidenced-based practice in hopes the reporting and documentation will provide additional funding opportunities.

### **Update on Work of Evidence-Based Practices Team – Pete Slesar**

Slesar said the team began an assessment using a format set up by University of Wisconsin researchers to assess whether or not the county's juvenile justice programs meet evidenced-based practices. The team is also in contact with UW-Extension staff who has a lot of experience in evidenced-based programs. Because some of the programs were generated in a lab, control groups and validation measures are impossible to replicate for ethical reasons. Team members have discussed this dilemma with UW-Extension staff. Slesar said the agency feels it is successful in its commitment to keep families together but wonders how to document the results.

Slesar said the team is trying to decide how to show that a program is making a difference. The department does not have a researcher or the funds to hire one. The consulting researchers believe the programs are in good shape. What should be done if it is determined the programs are not evidenced-based. Slesar said the team talked with the researchers at UW-Extension and the UW system to see if there are any graduate students available to help with research. The hope is to have more robust statistical program information. The team also asked the researchers for help to validate program statistics. The team would like the data refined for grant applications and other recommendations.

### **Next Meeting Date**

- May 13 at 3 p.m.

### **Future Agenda Items**

Further review of juvenile delinquency petition filings and detentions statistics.

Discussion of the relationship and relevance of the Juvenile Justice Committee to the CJCC.

The meeting adjourned at 4:36 p.m.