

**Governor's Commission to Review and Advise on Services
Related to At-Risk Youth in New Hampshire
August 14, 2015
Rooms 305-307 Legislative Office Building**

FINAL MINUTES

Commission Members in Attendance: Geoffrey Souther, Michael Skibbie, Mike Adamkowski, Nicole Rodler, Martha Kane, Representative Betsey McKinney, Superintendent David Dionne, and Commissioner Toumpas' designee Mary Ann Cooney

Commission Members Absent: Mary Steady, Evelyn Clark-Smith, Debra DeSimone, Karen Purse, Judge James Carroll

Others in Attendance: Amy Kennedy, Governor's Office, Gail Snow, DCYF, Lorraine Bartlett, DCYF, and Mark Meister, NAMI.

I. **Call to Order:**

Chair Souther called the meeting to order at 12:37 pm by welcoming the members.

II. **Approval of Minutes:**

Chair Souther asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the July 10, 2015 meeting. Commissioner McKinney moved to accept the draft minutes and the motion was seconded by Commissioner Rodler. Motion was adopted. The minutes will be reposted on the website as final draft.

III. **Presentation: Strengths and Gaps in System Collaboration with Juvenile Justice by Lorraine Bartlett, Director of DCYF.**

Lorraine distributed paper copies of her PowerPoint presentation to the group. She then asked the group for feedback from a systems perspective on the strengths and challenges of JJ.

- Commissioner Rodler mentioned a strength in the good working relationship with points that exist in the system, but a challenge is that there is not enough diversion in community resources. The entire North Country is bare and vulnerable. The entry point is key in the rest of the journey, so it helps to keep that minimalized. Diverting the youth that don't need to be in the system serves them better than having to navigate and manage all these systems.
- Commissioner Kane mentioned that in the Concord area there are many opportunities for youth, such as voluntary chins that come in and provide them community resources and case management support. However, there are challenges with the opportunities for medical services, especially psychiatric, for youth which contributes to the rising substance abuse issues. The schools are also lacking in their ability to provide supports outside of their institutions to some of the individuals. For example, at Pembroke Academy the provision of a therapist through Riverbend Children's Services (mental health agency) but both of these "services" were only available during the school year calendar.
- Commissioner Souther mentioned that children's mental health services as a whole are not strong across the state, and they vary from region to region. NHH also has limited resources with only 24 beds at Philbrook, so there is a waiting list at times.

- Commissioner Dionne would like to know what the state is going to do for diversion as there are not enough programs up North.
- Commissioner Adamkowski explained that the lag time in the system is problematic when issues need to be resolved immediately. He agrees with Commissioner Kane that schools and mental health services need to be more connected and cooperate as agencies.

Lorraine asked the group what pieces of the system they feel works that we could build off of. For example, diversion; where has diversion assisted us?

- Commissioner Adamkowski said diversion works in a lot of places but it is case specific. It falls apart in different places for different kids. There is no magic recipe to fix it.
- Representative McKinney said the problem is the cost and the economies of scale; the amount of money vs amount of people in the system.
- Commissioner Skibbie referenced his past experience as a lawyer in which children were constantly being diverted from good planning and coordination of various child serving systems. There is also inadequate commitment to community services as compared to institutional services. We need to break down the silos. The system of care is designed to improve that coordination.

Commissioner Kane mentioned one gap and challenge is the availability of social activities when a kid does not meet the academic criteria, but they still need to learn camaraderie, team building, and sportsmanship. There are not enough crossovers from SYSC into the community. Kids need a less restrictive setting with an opportunity to be brought back without a long court process. We should look at how to use the SYSC campus and structure it differently. Another idea is to use incentive funds to help support pro-social activities in the community; for example, building a skate park for the kids to use, and developing other activities for kids afterschool to keep them engaged and out of trouble. We need to figure out a way to manage what kids need now.

Commissioner Skibbie remarked that it seems like a challenge of decreasing demand is a challenge for the future. Lorraine responded that the current demand is young people with greater challenges and needs than in the past, so we are looking at what services are needed to meet those needs. Commissioner Rodler said the cases with multiple contacts with JJ before being charged are the most complex. There are less going into the system, but those that are going in are more intense. Law enforcement is the entry point to the system, and mental health cases will often go beyond her program right away because the need is far greater than what she can provide. Commissioner Skibbie pointed out that there is a problem when JJ is used to get mental health services; someone with severe mental health conditions shouldn't be at the top of the heap for JJ services.

Another gap is the area of transitional services for emerging adults. If a 16 or 17 year old enters the system for the first time, there isn't enough time to engage and help them change behaviors before they transition out at 18.

Lorraine shared with the group that in the last biennium the SYSC budget was cut by \$1.2 million, resulting in layoffs, particularly in the education department. House Bill 2 requires \$1.7 million to be cut from the budget in FY2016, and \$3.5 million in FY2017. If this goes forward, the SYSC would be unable to sustain and maintain business operations. We believe there is an opportunity to look at how the facility is used and expand the array of services for all youth in NH, not just delinquent youth. We need to demonstrate that we are working toward something to help us save those costs. We are exploring the possibility of having the facility certified and accredited as a secure psychiatric residential

facility. There is a backlog of youth who are no longer acute but still need supports. This plan will take at least 2-3 years, so we are in the very beginning stages of exploring what the options could be.

Commissioner Skibbie mentioned that one of the problems with the SYSC is that they have to be ready for any kid that may walk through the door, so they have to keep a large scale of services ready which is not cost effective. He suggests thinking about moving to smaller, more specialized, facilities.

Commissioner Souther asked the group if they'd like to take a position on HB2 and draft a letter as a Commission. The group agreed that a letter would be drafted in which it would be stated that the group doesn't agree with the timeframe and that the reduction is too significant. Commissioner Mary Ann motioned to write a letter to propose this as a commission. All members were in favor. The motion passed. Commissioner Souther volunteered to draft the letter and send it to the group for feedback before sending it to the Governor.

Mark Meister, from NAMI NH, stated that NAMI's position is to make sure if SYSC is closed and youth are moved back into the community that some money moves with them so the community is able to support them.

IV. Commission recommendations to execute Executive Order 2014-8 duties.

V. Next Steps and Proposed Agenda for future meetings:

Commissioner Souther has changed roles from interim Administrator of the Bureau of Behavioral Health to the Chief Operating Officer at NHH, so his preference would be to step down as Chair of this Commission. He would like to discuss this change and his replacement at the next meeting.

VI. Other Business:

VII. Adjournment:

Chair Souther moved to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Skibbie seconded. The motion was adopted and the meeting was adjourned at 2:42 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Emily A. Larson
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DHHS Bureau of Behavioral Health