



Commission to Review and Advise on Services to At-Risk  
Adolescent Youth in New Hampshire  
Interim Report  
February 12, 2016

Produced for  
Governor Margaret Wood Hassan  
In compliance with Executive Order 2014-8

## **Interim Report February 12, 2016**

### **I. Interim Report per Executive Order 2014-8**

The Commission to Review and Advise on Services to At-Risk Adolescent Youth in New Hampshire Interim Report, as established by Executive Order 2014-8 must submit a report to Governor Margaret Wood Hassan, the Commissioner of Health and Human Services, the Speaker of the NH House of Representatives and the Senate President on or before one year from the date of the first meeting. This report is an interim report to satisfy that requirement as the work of the Commission is not complete. Therefore, the Commission requests that it be given additional time to complete the duties outlined in the Executive Order and submit a complete report before September 1, 2016.

The Commission, as established, has met monthly from February 6, 2015 through January 29, 2016.

### **II. Commission Membership**

In accordance with the Governor's Executive Order, the following list of individuals represents Executive and Judicial branches of State Government, as well as representation from the areas and potential points of service within a juvenile's life. This membership brings together a wealth of knowledge and expertise that can provide recommendations to policy makers with a full array of national, state and local knowledge to best serve the youth in NH.

Members of the Commission and representation:

- Commissioner Nick Toumpas, NH Department of Health and Human Services and delegate
- Associate Commissioner Mary Ann Cooney, NH Department of Health and Human Services
- Mary Steady, NH Department of Education
- Michael Adamkowski - Member of the Division of Children Youth and Families Advisory Board
- Judge James Carroll -Justice from NH Circuit Court, focused on juvenile justice and recommended by the administrative judge of the court.
- Michael Skibbie - Attorney specializing in juvenile justice
- Nicole Rodler -juvenile diversion programs
- Evelyn Clark Smith- Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) employee for State Employees' Association of NH Chapter 21 President
- Martha Kane – Juvenile Probation and Parole Officer
- David Dionne- Superintendent of County Corrections
- Karen Purse - Parent of child at SYSC
- Representative Betsey McKinney – House of Representatives
- Michele Harlan – Bureau of Behavioral Health NH DHHS

### III. Presentations to Commission

The Commission has been in the process over the past eleven months reviewing all nine points of contact along the juvenile justice system with a concentration of information provided by the Sununu Youth Services Center (SYSC) on existing and potential infrastructure. Presentations included topics on the Division of Children Youth and Families - An Overview of the SYSC and Budget; NH's Diversion Services; Juvenile Justice Field Services; Overview of DCYF – JJ data and outcomes.

There was one public submission for the Commission to consider and that was a letter by the Parole Board to consider the impacts to youth who are paroled at six months. The Commission has also heard from experts in the field such as Ed Loughran, Executive Director of the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators in regards to his research on SYSC and recommendations for system change and improvements. The information in the presentations assisted the Commission to start developing recommendations for the Governor and policy leaders to address possible policy and/or procedural changes to the juvenile justice system that align NH with best-practice models nationally.

### IV. Key Policies Addressing At Risk Youth Reviewed

The Commission reviewed several national publications in regards to the best policies and practices for addressing At-Risk youth and the national transitions taking place in juvenile justice. One particular publication that summarizes many of the discussions about policy change that were held by the Commission was presented nationally and supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Models for Change Initiative and the Justice Center, The Council of State Governments: **“Three Key Steps Policymakers Can Take to Improve Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System”**. In it are described three key steps that all policy makers can take to increase public safety, improve youth outcomes and maximize the efficient use of resources.

They are:

- 1.) Prioritize reducing recidivism and improving other outcomes for youth in contact with the juvenile justice system;
- 2.) Develop a system-wide plan to reduce recidivism and improve other outcomes for youth in contact with the juvenile justice system; and
- 3.) Track progress on recidivism and other youth outcomes by requiring annual progress reports.

Currently, there is a sea of change in the juvenile justice field and reform is necessary due to either fiscal or moral reasons, but either purpose, these changes have been attributed to a reduction of youth held in detention and locked institutions; while at the same time correlated to the decrease in juvenile crime to an all-time low. The policy document mentioned above also includes specific principles that, if instituted, can lead to system improvements and efforts that may change NH's re-arrest rates, incarceration and improve services for all in the system. These principles are:

**Principle 1:** Base Supervision, service, and resource allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.

**Principle 2:** Adopt and effectively implement programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes, and use data to evaluate system performance and direct system improvements.

**Principle 3:** Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs.

**Principle 4:** Tailor system policies, programs, and supervision to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.

## **V. Preliminary Recommendations**

The Commission voted and accepted unanimously the following preliminary recommendations to most effectively and efficiently create system transformation of the juvenile justice services in NH.,

- 1. The State (DHHS) should review the current costs and develop an operating budget reflecting only costs associated to services provided to youth at SYSC to determine actual cost.**
- 2. The State (DHHS) should study the cost and service effectiveness of SYSC and to see if 1 or more smaller facilities would be better suited to provide a greater service array that is more cost effective.**
- 3. The State (DHHS) should review current Eligibility Guidelines to Commitment, evaluate its effectiveness and make recommendations for further use or change.**
- 4. Identify additional evidence-based tools/assessments to better identify the most appropriate continuum of services for youth.**
- 5. The State (DHHS) should develop a subcommittee to study the array of youth services. These services should be monitored for effective outcomes using assessment measures.**

**The Commission will discuss the above recommendations as it continues its work over the next year.**

## **VI. Summary**

The Commission believes the 5 recommendations put forward may require additional commitment from DHHS to accomplish them. The Commission intends to continue its work in reviewing other areas and services related to youth at risk and to extend monthly meetings until July 2016 to develop additional recommendations, as identified. A completed report will be prepared and presented to the Governor, Commissioner of Health and Human Services, Speaker of NH House of Representatives and President of the NH Senate before September 1, 2016.

An email vote from Commission members was conducted to approve the report. Vote: 11 Yeas; 1 non-vote.