

Minutes of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee
February 2, 2018
Holland & Knight, 50 N. Laura St., Jacksonville, Florida

Present

Chairman Buddy Schulz, Jim Clark, the Honorable Brian Davis, Pamela Davis, Rory Diamond, Kevin Gay, Sheriff Nat Glover, Shelley Grant, Marcus Haile, Gretchen Hamm, Elder Lee Harris, Bill Hodges, Alan Louder, Michael Meyers, Lara Nezami, Chief Deloris Patterson, the Honorable Jack Schemer, Vicki Waytowich

Committee is called to order at 9:05 a.m.

Meeting

Chairman Buddy Shultz welcomes the committee, visitors, and calls the room to order.

SAO Juvenile Director Laura Lothman Lambert welcomes the room and emphasizes this topic's importance, both to her and to the community. She introduces a video shown to the committee of actor and advocate Ameer Baraka, testifying to the U.S. Senate about his experiences with dyslexia, education, and the juvenile justice system.

Video is shown to the JJAC of testimony before the Senate Health, Education, Labor, & Pensions (HELP) committee hearing on Dyslexia on At the May 10, 2016. (To view the full video, please see the link included on the JJAC webpage.)

Laura Lambert next introduces presenters from PACE Center for Girls Inc. and Brandon Rothenberg.

Renee McQueen presents an overview of her organization, the PACE Center for Girls Inc., in Jacksonville, and explains its mission. PACE provides a combination of social services and education to its participants, building an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy for girls and young women. (Refer to included PowerPoint file for specific information.) Stephanie Stephens then outlines the two Florida Statutes that affect PACE, as well as the three assessment tools used in PACE centers. Stephens also compares these assessments with some of those used in Duval County Public Schools, and discusses the merits of each.

Brandon Rothenberg talks to the committee about his experience with violence, jail, and education, both within and outside of detention centers. Rothenberg recounts his experience with the juvenile justice system as well as his efforts to obtain an education while incarcerated, and achieve success upon his release.

Committee Discussion

- Questions for PACE Center for Girls:
 - Nezami asks Stephens why, in her opinion, students' learning disabilities are being missed. Stephens suggests that teachers are not as well equipped or trained to recognize the signs, and may even be too over-worked or inexperienced to spot them.
 - Meyers asks Stephens if the assessments used at PACE examine the underlying causes of the child's educational struggles. Stephens answers in the negative, that assessing learning disabilities is an interactive and long-term process. Testing simply indicates that something is amiss. However, she does know that students are quickly referred to a school psychologist for more testing to look into the possibility of an existing learning disability.
 - Haile poses the question to the committee, since young males are the largest group that interacts with the juvenile justice system, why is there no program similar to PACE for boys?
 - Diamond asks about appropriate dosage of testing and service for females in order to reduce recidivism. PACE answers that each child is different, and they try to tailor each situation according to the child's needs.
 - Chairman Schulz asked PACE if they felt frustration in not being able to personalize or individualize their testing and programming due to imposed legislative requirements. PACE offers that many girls get burned out from the diagnostic testing and some even become resistant to it, but that PACE complies and works with the situation at hand.
 - Dr. Davis notes that it is challenging to ensure students are getting all the assessment teachers and staff need in order to be constructive. She suggests leaders and teachers can be savvy in the ways they are navigating and using the collected data.
 - Waytowich suggests that there is additional assessment performed at the JAC, and wonders what is a better way to tie into each other's systems and resources to consolidate effort and information.

- Questions for Brandon Rothenberg:
 - Rothenberg is asked if diversion is effective in his eyes. He answers that it is, but in the majority of the programs do not place education as the focus. He also feels that the quality of private programs may be better than public.
 - Rothenberg was asked to compare his juvenile jail and adult prison educational experiences. He answered that he was sentenced to a youthful offender prison, which was privately owned. He found that the quality of the education he received there matched that of the Duval County Jail.

Public Comment

- Meredith Fredeking-Osgathorpe, Duval County Public Schools, ESE Team
- Dr. Tim Conway, The Morris Center
- Andrew Bush, C.B., Helping Hands Ministries

Laura Lambert closes the meeting by thanking committee members, presenters, and visitors, and announces the date for the next meeting, on March 9.

Meeting is adjourned at 10:58 a.m.