



POLK COUNTY CRIMINAL JUSTICE COORDINATING COUNCIL

DEFLECTION AND DIVERSION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Date: October 15, 2024

Time: 10:30 a.m.

Location: Polk County Behavioral Health & Disability Services (River Place)

MEMBERS PRESENT: Joseph Johnson (Change Course), Kimberly Graham (Polk County Attorney), Rachel Adams (BHDS), Greg Stallman (Altoona PD), John Hawkins (Juvenile Court Services), Darnell Loatman (FOCUSS), Stacie Nessa (Des Moines Public Schools), Stephanie Swartz (Des Moines PD) Eric Kool (Polk County Youth Services), Jose Ruesga (Change Course), Jerry Evans (CJCC).

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kameron Middlebrooks (Reform Alliance)

GUESTS: None

ACTIVITY:

1. Meeting called to order by Chair Johnson. Members introduced themselves and spoke about their experience, and interest in finding pathways to deflect and divert youth and adults from entering the criminal justice system. Everyone was able to identify specific decision points within their professional field that create opportunities to work differently with troubled youth.

TOPICS OF DISCUSSION:

Purpose of CJCC Subcommittees

1. CJCC Coordinator Jerry Evans, highlighted the intent and purpose of forming the CJCC Subcommittees. Essentially, the subcommittees are designed to bring content experts together to address goals that have been identified by the full CJCC. In this case, the goal is to “shrink the net” by deflecting and diverting cases that have historically been referred to the criminal justice system. At least 20 controlled academic studies have documented that early involvement in the court system leads to: 1. Increased future arrest; 2. Poorer school attendance; 3. Higher dropout rates; 4. Heightened delinquency.

Need for collection and reporting of standardized data

2. Jerry Evans talked about the need to create uniformity, where possible, regarding the various deflection and diversion programs.

DMPD 2nd Chance Program

3. Stephanie Swartz discussed how the DMPD 2nd Chance Deflection and Diversion Program operates. One of the keys that has helped them be successful is the DCAT funding they receive from Polk County. This allows the DMPD to designate an officer as well as a case manager/social worker (Jay Hansen). Between the two of them, they are able to be the points of contact, assess the needs of each case, make referrals, and track outcomes. Having a dedicated social worker working with youth and their families has to be instrumental to their success. In an ideal world, this is how it could work in other departments across the metro. As Stephanie noted, unfortunately, it is unlikely that any of the other local law enforcement agencies in Polk County can replicate what DMPD is doing due to lack of resources. Especially, the smaller departments. The challenge becomes finding a way to replicate the 2nd Chance Program without utilizing a case manager/social worker. Kimberly and Stephanie volunteered to meet with the local police departments to find out what barriers they might have in developing a standardized deflection and diversion program.

Need for Coordination

4. Discussions centered around the lack of coordination between community partners relative to the programs that are available for youth to be deflected and diverted to, and police departments who struggle to find programs appropriate for deflection and diversion. A few on the subcommittee also serve on the United Way Safe and Thriving Youth Initiative and they spoke about how this topic was also discussed at their last meeting. Kimberly Graham and Staci Nessa indicated that Save and Thriving Youth identified a list of community providers who work with youth and they volunteered to get a copy of the list. Stacie also volunteered to put the agencies on an Excel Spreadsheet and send it out to everyone.

Frequency of Subcommittee Meetings

5. The members decided the frequency of the meetings needed to be bi-monthly. Moving forward, the subcommittee meetings will be scheduled for the 1st Monday of the month, every other month, at 10:30 a.m. at River Place.

Closing

6. The subcommittee meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m. Next scheduled meeting will be December 2, 2024, at 10:30 a.m. at River Place.

***NOTE: The meeting room will change to Meeting Room #3, which is in the main entrance to River Place. (There was a conflict with the meeting room used for the October meeting.)**