

ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

THURSDAY, November 14, 2024

2:00PM - via ZOOM

Attendees: Judge Degnan, Anibal Ramos, Ogechi Okubanjo, Keisha Walker, Anthony Higgins, Michelle Callari, Tyrone Hunter, Apryl Caldwell, Shelton Thurman, LaQuanda Williams, Lori Scott-Pickens, Amy Godfrey, Kenneth Douglas, Taieta El Amin, Nicole Williams, David Sims, Erica Cashaw, Jason Martinez, Alicia Holman, Flohisha Johnson, Nayellie Collazo, Karina Silva, Ron Small, Amanda Compton Dover

This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 -10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided on the Essex County Website.

Agenda Item I

Reading of the Open Public Meetings Act Approval of Minutes – September 19, 2024

Director Ramos asked for a roll call of voting members which was administered by Administrator Martinez. It was determined that there was a quorum. The Open Public Meeting Act was read by Director Ramos. Director Ramos asked for a motion to approve the minutes for September 19, 2024. Lori Scott Pickens motioned to approve the minutes and Shelton Thurman 2nd the motion. Minutes were adopted with one abstention.

Subcommittee Reports

Planning Committee – No Update

Monitoring Committee – Lori Scott Pickens reported that the team continues to monitor programs. Some dates have been rescheduled. She also asked for volunteers to assist in the process. Director Ramos added that it is a great way to see first-hand what services the program is providing to our youth and an opportunity to ask questions of the provider.

Allocations Committee – Michelle Callari stated that there was nothing to be reported at this time.

Action Item I

Budget Modification I. 1/3 Set aside (MDT)

There is no vote required for this action item. Administrator Martinez advised that there were changes on the line item. There was an approval for a 3rd MDT and from that budget item, there was a total of \$2606 spent on office supplies and equipment.

Electronic Monitoring Equipment Administrator Martinez requested an additional \$57, 120.00 to ensure that we stay within the budget. The total allocation was \$145, 547.00 of which \$116,821.00 has been appropriated to BI Inc. up to October 21, 2024. We currently have a contract with Track for \$59,433.00. Judge Degnan added that the transition of the new devices went well. There was a learning curve but overall dramatic change for the better in terms of efficiency. There are fewer violations. He applauded the detention alternative staff for getting the job done. Director Higgins agreed and stated that seldom with children in detention, there is a viable alternative that can be put a child home and ensure the safety of the community. New devices have allowed the court to release more children. Also made a note of the dramatic drop in violations, they perform better and have fewer errors with the new device.

Lori Scott Pickens motioned to approve the additional \$57,120.00 and Director Higgins seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

ECYSC Updates: Jason Martinez, YSC-Administrator

1. Currently the County has issued an RFP for career and Life skills Readiness Program for ages 16-19. November 22, 2024, can go to the County purchasing portal and submit any questions that you may have.
2. Will meet next week with all 3 subcommittees between this week and week after to make sure by laws meet state regulations.
3. Working on plan update hopefully completed by Monday will then start the application process. Need all subcommittees to be a part of the committee. Upon completion, he will send a summary to voting members. We will then need to meet by December 12th @ 212 Washington Street for a vote.
4. Announced a JAMS training in December and February.

Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program Updates: United Community Corporation, Equal Justice USA, Rutgers University

Susan Biegen reported that they have 40 referrals who are participating in conflict resolution, peace circle, and case conferencing. Referrals identified for vocational services, also continuing to reach out to schools to expand the referral base. Also working with families for housing and utilities. Director Ramos asked where referrals are coming from and Susan responded from the courts, station house adjustments, Newark Police Department, and Sheriff.

Administrator Martinez asked if anyone from Equal Justice or Rutgers University was in attendance. Nicole McKennon of Rutgers will start data collection with families. Has also constructed a few focus groups. Also using Logic with resources and goals will determine outcomes we would like to see through collection of data through focus groups.

State Community Partnership and Family Court Programs (Updates/Announcements):

MDT – Flohisha Johnson reported on October 17th MDT held the detention review meeting. The next one is November 20th @ 212 Washington St.

1. On October 17th attended the Newark Public Safety Collaboration
2. On October 28th completed a site visit at Aspira with Mr. Medina.
3. Recommended 162 Juveniles to the courts for programs and 128 completed the programs.
4. MDT is looking into 5 different detention alternative programs which are Hear My Cries, Teen Resurrection, International Youth Organization, Newark Community Solutions and Scribe Corporation.
5. Also looking into the Re-Entry program for League of Essex County funded by YCS.

Ramos asked if any other program would like to report out on their program. It was also noted by Administrator Martinez that all detention alternative programs should be attending the meeting and reporting on their programs as well. Director Ramos recommended that a letter go out to providers to attend and present especially our I house programs. Judge Degnan Agreed. Lori Scott Pickens also advised that the process has also been reiterated at the monitoring sessions as well.

Leaders for Life – Nicole Williams reported that the Day program has a total of 3 successful completions and that graduation will be held on December 6 at Beth Israel Hospital at 10 am. They focus on resume building as well and some youth have been offered jobs with the hospital and Wendy's.

UCC – Romal Leake reported that they have 14 referrals for the 4th quarter and 4 completed. Also, have an alternative location available for safety concerns. Youth Liaison is in court on Monday and Wednesday. Have also completed a resource directory for youth with services.

Probation - Keisha Walker reported October 28th UCC held a financial literacy course for the youth. Next week will have a Thanksgiving Dinner for the youth. December 9th youth graduation.

Juvenile Justice Commission Announcements: No updates

- I. Court Liaisons
- II. JDAI
- III. RTJ

Public and/or Youth Service Commissioner Announcements: Public Portion of the Meeting:

Director Ramos announced the County Thanksgiving Giveaway at the Cherry Blossoms in Branch Brook Park. In anyone knows of family or person in need please contact Jason for the flyer.

Isaiah Fudge of Advocates for Children advised that they Show ways of staying healthy and educate and advocate for youth. Help keep youth from being incarcerated.

Apryl Caldwell of WIO Services informed there will be an open house for WIOA services for youth 17-24 years old

Next meeting will be held December 12, 2024 at 2:30PM at 212 Washington Street.

Director Ramos asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Apryl Caldwell and second by.