

**DELAWARE RE-ENTRY EDUCATION TASK FORCE
Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Workgroup**

April 29, 2015

9:00 a.m.

**Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families
Administration Building #2, Conference Room #199
1825 Faulkland Rd., Wilmington, DE 19805**

MEETING MINUTES

Workgroup members in attendance:

Heath Chasanov, Woodbridge School District

Eliza Hirst, Office of the Child Advocate

Tyrone Jones, AstraZeneca

Carlton Lampkins, Colonial School District

Patricia Dailey Lewis, Attorney General's Office

Kit Lunger, Office of the Public Defender

Kendall Massett, Delaware Charter Schools Network

Abdul-Malik Muhammad, Parkway Academy Schools

Angela Porter, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

The Honorable Jennifer Ranji (Chair), Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

John Sadowski on behalf of The Honorable Mark T. Murphy, Dept. of Education

Laurisa Schutt, Teach for America Delaware

Brenda Wynder, Lake Forest School District

Others in attendance:

Alicia Keys, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Cara Sawyer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Kelly Schaffer, Dept. of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (consultant)

1. Welcome and Introductions

**2. Review of Executive Order 45 Task Force Report and Recommendations –
Background information**

Background information was provided on Executive Order 45, which is the basis for the workgroup. The Youth Re-entry Education Task Force met throughout 2014 and submitted a final report to the Governor at the end of the calendar year. The report focused on supporting youth who are returning to existing educational settings, as well as exploring the option of creating a boarding school for youth in need of unique supports. The workgroup will focus on the first part of the recommendations, kids returning to existing educational settings. The workgroup is made up of Task Force members as well as district representatives who will consider existing agreements and explore modifications to a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to support youth's educational re-entry.

The agenda for today's meeting has been modified so that the primary focus will be discussing Task Force recommendations as they apply to the MOU workgroup. Discussions on the existing MOU and crosswalk with Task Force recommendations will be tabled for future meetings.

3. Review of Task Force recommendations

The workgroup reviewed recommendation 3 of the Youth Re-entry Education Task Force. The recommendation focuses on implementing systems-level strategies to remove barriers to successful re-entry and to support clear roles and expectations among stakeholders. This includes utilizing the “ideal transition process” as a model to guide the MOU and define communication, as well as establishing a common set of criteria for determining a student’s educational pathway. In addition, requiring districts and charters specify in writing how and why a decision was made about a student’s pathway. Lastly, tracking data on the education status of youth. Recommendation 1.4 will also be considered, which discusses counting time youth served in secure care toward suspension and expulsion time.

Next, Secretary Ranji provided an overview of the “ideal transition process” document that was reviewed and voted on by the Task Force as part of its final report. The document was utilized by the Task Force in response to feedback that the educational re-entry process may often be rushed or uncoordinated and schools expressing desire for more information when making educational placement decisions. The “ideal transition process” document includes:

- Exchange of data from districts to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families (DSCYF) when youth enters custody; completion of assessments at the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services (YRS)
- Holding the intake meeting, where the Education Unit, YRS and youth and his or her family meet to discuss goals for the youth while in custody
- The Education Unit providing updates on academic progress to a student’s district throughout their time in custody
- Bi-monthly meetings with DSCYF, youth and the district or charter representative
- 45 days prior to exit, determining to which school the youth will be returning
- Between 30 days and two weeks before the youth exits YRS, youth will visit their next educational placement; youth will also be assigned a buddy/mentor to aid in the transition
- Youth is enrolled at his or her next academic placement; prior to youth leaving custody, all records are transferred to the district/charter
- Transition Specialist accompanies youth on the first day of school and checks in with youth at regular intervals (through 90 days post leaving secure care)
- After the 90 day check in with the Transition Specialist, youth’s Probation Officer supports re-entry issues

The workgroup discussed that the intake meeting does not currently include district or charter representatives and it would be ideal to include them at the onset. Additionally, the bi-weekly meetings noted between DSCYF, youth and the district/charter representative do not currently include family as a listed attendee. Family members will be included. The workgroup discussed whether or not schools already have mentoring in place. Alicia Keys, Transition Specialist for DSYCF, noted some districts do and others do not. Christina and Colonial school districts are examples of where supports are in place.

Consideration was also given to opportunities for youth to showcase their successes while in secure care and how that portfolio of information can be shared with youth’s district. The average length of stay for youth at Ferris is 6 months to 1 year. Many youth come from detention and also spend six weeks at Mowlds after leaving Ferris. The exception will be youth

transitioning through the Department's Youth Advocate Program. The Youth Advocate Program will provide youth with a mentor who will be available 10-15 hours per week to the youth and his or her family. Mentors will begin working with youth 6 weeks prior to them leaving YRS. Data on the Youth Advocate Program will be tracked to understand if outcomes differ from youth transitioning through the Department's regular process.

Current transition processes were also discussed. Transition planning begins at intake. There are two transition specialists working for the Department, one specifically for youth transitioning from level 5 secure care. As part of Task Force recommendations it was acknowledged that additional transition specialists would be ideal, as would a point person on the district or charter side to support students' transition. Ms. Keys described re-enrollment as the most difficult part of re-entry. This is due to the many factors impacting a youth's return to their home, community or school. Currently Ms. Keys is engaging districts and charters to build relationships to support youth's education. The group also discussed challenges with coordination of special treatment needs for youth who may have lapses in Medicaid coverage when they leave YRS. Community-based agencies have offered to attend transition meetings and the Department will explore what roles they may play in care coordination.

4. Input and discussion of the "ideal transition process"

The workgroup discussed that approximately 100 youth are released from YRS secure care each year. Only 6-8 youth will be served annually by the Youth Advocate Program, which is staffed by paid mentors. The group weighed the pros and cons of exploring a volunteer-based mentoring program to supplement the work of existing transition specialists. The current fiscal climate and willingness of individuals to participate could be beneficial, though some workgroup members pointed out potential changes with reliability of unpaid mentors. The Department may also explore the use of community-based services through Prevention and Behavioral Health.

Mentoring supports through Communities in Schools, which is in place at some Delaware high schools was also discussed. Concern was expressed about there potentially being too many individuals involved in youth's re-entry process and a suggestion was made to utilize resources already in place. The needs of each individual youth were discussed as paramount and the workgroup will continue to explore this topic further. It was also noted that the districts to which many youth transition back are Christina, Colonial and Red Clay; sometimes not to the same district which the youth attended prior to YRS. A suggestion was made that the mentoring system be re-examined to think about how individuals who have come successfully through the system can help support youth who are experiencing similar situations. Secretary Ranji noted the transition process will bring consistency in terms of processes and resources, and the types of supports accessed by each youth will vary depending on his or her unique needs.

The next topic discussed was bi-monthly meetings between DSCYF, district/charter schools, and youth and his/her family. A question was raised about whether bi-monthly is too frequent. Currently, YRS Treatment Team Meetings occur once every four weeks for youth at Ferris, and it has been considered if it would be beneficial to invite the student's district/charter. The workgroup agreed monthly meetings may be sufficient, and with a greater level of frequency once youth are 45 days prior to transition. At the next workgroup meeting the Education Unit staff will present on the current meetings that take place and who attends. This information will be used for the group to discuss how to integrate Task Force recommendations. There was

agreement that reporting from DSCYF to districts/charters alone would not be sufficient.

School district representation, and whom that would include, was discussed by the workgroup. Currently, the position of the district representative varies and may be a special education coordinator, educational diagnostician, guidance counselor or others. The workgroup discussed the importance of a consistent relationship with face-to-face time with youth so that the youth's school can understand their journey and progress made.

Youth's re-entry pathway was also discussed. Some districts believe youth need to return through an alternative school setting or have other re-enrollment criteria that make it difficult for youth to return to a traditional school. District representatives shared challenges with being asked to re-enroll youth for whom they have little information. For example, youth returning from out of state placements or who are moving to Delaware from another state. 80% of youth in secure care are placed in state, and 20% out of state. At the next meeting the workgroup will talk in greater detail about setting criteria that will be used to make an educational placement decision. This may include credits obtained, seriousness of youth's offense, and safety/rehabilitation issues. Other criteria may be time served, as well as type and level of supports needed. John Sadowski suggested the workgroup survey districts to help discover the most relevant criteria. Emphasis can be placed on the criteria building a framework. The Department will revisit Task Force meeting minutes and work with Mr. Sadowski to gather information from districts for a draft list of criteria. The goal of establishing criteria is to support a consistent process that is individualized and documented for each student.

Brenda Wynder, Chief Academic Officer for Lake Forest School District, described the district's procedures for when youth return from YRS care. In many cases, if youth entered YRS care while they were in an alternative setting they will have to return to that alternative setting to complete the work they started. In other cases, if youth were doing well in their traditional school setting and had an offense unrelated to their schooling then they may be permitted to return to the traditional school setting. Ms. Wynder offered to share a copy of the procedures with the workgroup. The workgroup discussed the impact of students needing to complete 45 days in an alternative setting, and Consortium Discipline Alternative Program (CDAP) procedures for reviewing youth's progress at the end of each marking period. Face-to-face interactions between the district and the Department were discussed as essential to helping districts understand the progress youth have made while in YRS care; information that can be used when making educational placement determinations. Information sharing between the Department and districts/charters will be discussed in greater detail at the next meeting.

5. Next Steps

The next workgroup meeting will continue today's discussions and will focus on establishing a foundational understanding of existing procedures to support youth's educational re-entry. A meeting schedule will be developed for the MOU workgroup and shared with members.

6. Public Comment

No public comment.

7. Adjournment

The meeting concluded at 10:30am.