

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

DATE: February 19, 2016

TO: Supervisor Theodore Lipscomb Sr, Chairman – Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Héctor Colón, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: **An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update on plans to expand local alternatives to State corrections and the upcoming transition in the Delinquency and Court Services Division**

Background

Key partners, including the County Executive, Chief Judge, District Attorney, Public Defender, Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Director, Delinquency and Court Services Division Administrator, Wraparound Milwaukee Director and other involved parties have been meeting on a near-weekly basis since December 2015 to formulate a plan to address the crisis at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and ensure the safety of youth. The first step in the plan was to immediately increase staffing capacity to expand the Milwaukee County Accountability Program to 24 beds within the juvenile detention center and to monitor and assess all youth in Lincoln Hills, Copper Lake, and the Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center for needs and any appropriate alternative placements and services in the community. Further plans are detailed below.

Discussion

Delinquency and Court Services Division (DCSD) Administrator Position

Delinquency and Court Services Division (DCSD) Administrator Tom Wanta is retiring in March 2016 after a distinguished career of service to Milwaukee County. During his years of service, Mr. Wanta has advanced data-driven decision-making and juvenile justice reform efforts. He has also helped launch some of the County's most innovative and effective juvenile delinquency programs, which provide safe and accountable alternatives to juvenile detention and corrections, including the Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP). Prior to serving as DCSD Administrator, Mr. Wanta served as superintendent of the Milwaukee County juvenile detention center for more than two decades.

Mark Mertens, has been named as the next Administrator of DCSD, effective March 14, 2016. Mr. Mertens joins Milwaukee County after eleven years as Manager of the Outagamie County Youth and Family Services Division. In this role, Mertens introduced new strategies that resulted in reductions in residential treatment and correctional placements for youth. He has also led two juvenile justice reform projects through the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change, worked to reduce racial disparities in arrests through the Models for Change Disproportionate Minority Contact Action Network, and was selected as a member of the Robert F. Kennedy National Resource Center for Juvenile Justice Dual Status

Youth Practice Network. Mr. Mertens received his Bachelor of Arts in psychology from the University of Wisconsin –Eau Claire and his Master of Social Work from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

The County Executive thanks Tom Wanta for providing exceptional leadership to Milwaukee County and its youth. He has taken the division from one that merely locks kids up to one that empowers them to lead better lives. Considering the very difficult situation we face at Lincoln Hills, the County Executive is thrilled to welcome Mark Mertens to take over this critical function and continue to move Milwaukee County to become a national model in juvenile justice.

Assessment and Placement Options of Lincoln Hills Youth

DHHS recently proposed, and the County Board approved, four new positions, including three Human Service Workers and a Section Manager, dedicated to oversee all youth placed in Lincoln Hills, Copper Lake, and Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center, as well as Milwaukee County's contracted reentry programs that serve youth released from these facilities. Staff will monitor cases and advocate for youth and ensure that services are delivered to youth in a timely manner and complete transition plans with recommendations for alternative placements and services in the community, such as Wraparound Milwaukee, targeted monitoring, AODA counseling, and other services. Staff have been selected and will begin by March 1, 2016.

These staff, along with Wraparound Milwaukee partners, will review every youth currently placed in Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake/Mendota Juvenile Treatment Center using a person-centered approach to include screening for mental health needs, programming needs, and public safety risk. This information will be shared for consideration in planning alternative placement and programming options in the community, and transition from secure confinement. Wraparound Milwaukee is in the process of scheduling a series of trips from February into April with teams of screeners to visit all youth for whom parental consent is obtained.

The first priority for review will be youth who are currently in a DOC facility as a result of a lift of stay for technical violations of not following the rules of their supervision (as opposed to having a new offense). It is anticipated that these youth will be assessed and transition plans will be presented to the public defender's office by April 2016 for consideration in filing a revision/change of placement petition. All other youth currently in these facilities will be reviewed with transition plans developed as appropriate and presented to the public defender's office by mid-June 2016. All youth committed to DOC since November 2015 will be assigned to a Milwaukee County reentry program in February to ensure youth receive timely services in accordance to case plans developed by DOC and assist with transition planning, with an emphasis on family involvement.

Another top priority is youth who are pending DOC extension petitions. DCSD has implemented a process to review all Department of Corrections extension requests filed by the DA's office to determine whether the youth can be safely maintained in the community or in an alternative placement to DOC. DCSD Human Service Workers will prepare a written court report outlining community options and attend all DOC extension hearings to advocate for alternative options or a shorter period of extension as appropriate.

In addition, DCSD plans to notify the state by July 1, 2016 of its intent to provide aftercare supervision effective July 2017 for all Milwaukee County youth being released from DOC facilities instead of

purchasing aftercare services from the state. Providing aftercare services will allow Milwaukee County to take advantage of community-based services available locally and have greater control over release plans from DOC facilities, which is expected to result in more timely community reintegration and improved youth and public safety outcomes.

DCSD will simultaneously build additional capacity in the community to offer the same or similar evidence-based practices and programs currently offered in DOC facilities, such as Juvenile Cognitive Intervention Program, Aggression Replacement Training, restorative justice, and AODA counseling, so youth do not have longer stays in the DOC facilities awaiting space in these programs.

Creation of an Alternative Facility / Expansion of the Milwaukee County Accountability Program (MCAP)

DHHS recently proposed, and the County Board approved, eight new Juvenile Correctional Officer positions within the secure juvenile detention center to fully staff two MCAP units, allowing capacity of up to 24 males at one time.

In addition, DCSD is assertively pursuing plans to create an alternative facility to expand capacity of MCAP by another 44 slots on County grounds (in CATC Building F) as a locked residential facility. This requires approval by the City of Wauwatosa, as well as licensing by the Department of Corrections (DOC). A Wauwatosa Planning Commission hearing on this project and a meeting with DOC is scheduled to review schematics on March 7, 2016. A follow-up meeting is being planned with the Department of Children Families regarding the required regulations for operation of the facility. The estimated timetable for follow-up steps is as follows: completion of the construction plans by early April, receipt of bids by the end of June, and the completion of the renovation work by December 2016 or in the first quarter of 2017 at the latest. However, it should be noted that the timeline may be pushed back in the event that there are delays in the process with construction, licensing, staffing, or other aspects of the plan.

The appropriation transfer of \$500,000 in contingency funds authorized by the County Board for creating an alternative facility will be used for the renovation costs. If these costs are expected to exceed the \$500,000 allotted, DCSD will return to the County Board to request additional funds once a firmer estimate is established. The best estimate of the renovation costs at the current time is \$750,000.

Opening 44 MCAP slots in an alternative facility in the community will allow a small (12-bed) unit for girls to be opened in the juvenile detention center. The MCAP program will be tailored to include evidence-based and gender-specific programming for girls.

In addition, DCSD will explore other program models by May 1, 2016 that would present the courts with a 365-day secure detention option as an alternative to Lincoln Hills/Copper Lake, such as La Crosse County's Community Option for Re-Engagement (CORE) program.

However, it should be noted that DCSD intends to transition all MCAP programming from the juvenile detention center in the future (2018) as we continue to expand community-based options. DCSD will also explore with the Milwaukee County Department of Administrative Services other possible community options to expand correctional alternatives if additional capacity is determined to be necessary.

House of Correction as an Option for Serious Juvenile Offenders

The Serious Juvenile Offender Program is a specific designation within Wisconsin statutes that allows judges to commit certain juveniles to a five-year commitment that extends the court's jurisdiction beyond the juvenile's 18th birthday. Because of the severity of the underlying offense for youth designated as

Serious Juvenile Offenders, these youth can be confined to up to three years with an additional two years of mandatory aftercare in the community.

Per the Milwaukee County Board resolution, the Administrator of the DCSD and the Superintendent of the House of Correction will explore the feasibility of House of Correction as an option for SJO youth. Using the House of Correction as a placement for SJO youth would require compliance with Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter DOC 346 (Secure Detention for Juveniles) and its provisions governing education, programming, staffing ratios and credentials, living arrangements, and other requirements. In addition, co-locating juveniles within a county jail facility like the House of Correction would require compliance with the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act components, including sight and sound separation of youth and adults.

It should be noted that the costs of the Serious Juvenile Offender Program are currently borne entirely by the state and any future arrangements would need to take into account state agreement and the significant costs associated with serving these youth.

This initial study is anticipated to be completed by July 1, 2016.

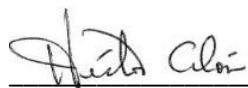
Redesign of Juvenile Corrections

DHHS/DCSD has initiated conversations with the state to collaborate on a redesign of the state juvenile corrections system to transition to small, local facilities that implement trauma-informed care to better meet the needs of all youth. This is consistent with national trends and a solid research basis supporting a move away from deep-end secure congregate facilities. DCSD proposes to work with the Department of Corrections and the Department of Children and Families to collaboratively review the current system and available and needed capacity and resources, and to thoughtfully map out a desired future state and roadmap for getting there.

As a first step, DCSD will invite state partners to jointly pursue technical assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation on “deep-end” reforms. DCSD will also prepare a white paper/proposal in March 2016 to lay out initial thoughts on how we may work together to best serve the needs of youth. Such a plan may involve proposing to transition operation of MCAP or other locally developed alternative programs to operation by the state in the future.

Recommendation

This report is informational and no action is required.



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