

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

DATE: January 4, 2019

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

FROM: Mary Jo Meyers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services
Prepared by: Mark Mertens, Division of Youth & Family Services Administrator

SUBJECT: An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, providing an update to Wisconsin Act 185

Background

Over the past few years, the County Executive and Milwaukee County Board have been working with key stakeholders to address the crisis at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake and have embraced policies surrounding the creation of a local alternative option for Milwaukee County youth to be placed in a safe environment, closer to home.

In March 2018, the Wisconsin State Legislature adopted Act 185 paving the way for the development of local alternatives to Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake. Act 185 directs the closure of Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake for use as youth correctional facilities by January 1, 2021 and authorizes County-operated **Secured Residential Care Centers for Children and Youth** (SRCCCYs). Under Act 185, DOC maintains supervision over juveniles with adult court sentences and youth in the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP), but the supervision of youth under other correctional placements is now transferred to the counties.

Under the Act, the State Building Commission can authorize up to a total of \$40 million to counties for the planning and construction of these facilities. Eligible construction costs include new construction as well as the renovation of an existing structure. To qualify for the funds, counties must submit grant applications to the Juvenile Corrections Grant Committee in DOC by March 31, 2019.

In November, the Milwaukee County Board adopted File No. 18-633 authorizing the creation of a capital project for the SRCCCY. This capital project enables DHHS to move forward on the planning and design for a local facility so that Milwaukee County youth can be closer to their families. This work will inform the county's grant application.

As part of its efforts to keep policymakers informed as the project evolves, DHHS has been providing monthly informational updates to the County Board.

Discussion

Since the passage of Act 185, DHHS has been working on several fronts to implement a local SRCCCY. DHHS' Vision for the Milwaukee County Secure Residential Care Center for Children and Youth is to:

Establish a safe, positive, sustainable, and developmentally appropriate treatment environment for youth committed to the county under Wisconsin Statute Section 938.34(4m) that effectively promotes accountability,

protects the community, reduces recidivism, and returns youth to our community with the skills needed to become successful and productive citizens.

With the near-term objective to develop plans for a SRCCCY and submit a grant application to the State in March, DYFS has assembled a Steering Committee and workgroups to address the following critical components of this project: Stakeholder Engagement, Programming and Location. The committee and work groups reflect a stakeholder network of 40 to 50 people who bring subject matter expertise in human services, criminal justice, law enforcement, education, therapeutic treatment, community advocacy, health and wellness, judiciary practice, systems reform, data analysis, facility design, government and finance.

Stakeholder Engagement & Communication

DHHS is committed to including diverse stakeholder feedback over the course of the project's lifecycle. This is being accomplished through a variety of methods including convening workgroups, hosting community briefing sessions and meeting with elected officials, community leaders, residents and those with lived experience. DHHS has received extensive feedback from meeting with the various stakeholder groups, including the following common themes:

- Families must be a core part of the services/treatment youth receive;
- The business sector should be engaged to provide workforce development opportunities to youth and their families, as well as employment;
- Ensure diverse community-based service providers have access to supporting the youth;
- Engage residents and key stakeholders early, often and in a transparent way;
- Smaller location is better; location should include greenspace;
- Desire to learn more about the differences between State and County plans and
- Language matters!
 - Ensure language about youth is people centered and promotes dignity
 - Be clear to discuss programs and not numbers of beds

On December 19, DHHS, in partnership with the Office on African American Affairs (OAAA), convened a group of individuals to begin drafting a Community Development Agreement. This agreement will cover expectations as to how the youth secure care center will be built. For example, community priorities, expectations on targeted business participation, the Request for Proposals (RFP) processes and deliverables for construction vendors will be taken into consideration as part of the overall project.

Finally, in December, DHHS issued an RFP seeking a communications provider to develop and implement communications strategies related to this project. This includes increasing awareness and understanding, building excitement and acceptance, generating stakeholder and community involvement and driving positive outcomes for the SRCCCY initiative. A recommendation for a provider is being submitted under passive review to the County Board in the January cycle.

Programming

The Programming Workgroup is partnering with the Milwaukee Community Justice Council (CJC), Youth Justice Milwaukee, and the Justice Lab at Columbia University for a presentation on the outcomes of

New York City’s Close to Home project. The presentation is slated for late February and will draw on similarities between New York and Wisconsin’s current juvenile corrections crisis, highlighting the successes of Close to Home in establishing a more effective local continuum of care for formerly incarcerated youth.

In addition, a programming logic model has been drafted. Examples of programming components include assessments (psychological, trauma, family cohesion, etc.); a welcoming, safe living environment; integrated treatment model; low youth to staff ratio; and restorative justice circles. Programming recommendations will continue to be developed throughout the month of January.

Location

Over 40 locations have been assessed to determine their feasibility based on several criteria. The priority is to identify an environment that fosters positive youth development. The Facility & Budget Workgroup and architects will continue to assess locations and begin schematic designs of sites that most closely match the established criteria. The criteria include the following and are divided among three categories – place, technical and people:

PLACE	TECHNICAL	PEOPLE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 5 acres • Near public transportation • Proximity to communities where youth live (incl. accessibility via public transportation) • Proximity to community-based resources • Proximity to state’s facility (TBD) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental feasibility • Complexity of acquisition process, zoning • Cost of site development • Cost of operation, maintenance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident and community support • Political support • Business sector support • Public school support

Through a Request of Interest (RFI), the Steering Committee is also exploring the use of a potential third party to locate and operate a SRCCCY. DYFS met with the two qualified responders and discussed opportunities for future partnership. Both indicated a limited capacity to accept youth into a new SRCCCY program, and concerns about the limitations imposed by the emergency rules (DOC 347). Currently, a direct partnership to purchase programming space at an existing residential care center does not seem viable. DYFS will continue to explore options with community partners.

Facility Planning

In early January, the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Facilities Management issued an RFP to identify a construction management firm to assist in the design and construction of the new facility. Responses are due at the end of January.

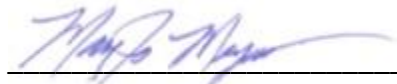
State Regulations

In late November, DOC issued a draft emergency rule (DOC 347) which describes the State regulations that govern the youth secure care centers. Counties were permitted to comment prior to the rule taking effect on December 31, 2018. Milwaukee County submitted a document outlining

recommendations for revisions. These recommendations primarily sought more specificity and clarity in the rule.

Recommendation

This report is informational and no action is required.



Mary Jo Meyers, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

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