

COMMUNITY JUSTICE TASK FORCE MINUTES

Tuesday, May 1, 2012

Shields Meeting Room

Brookens Administrative Center

1776 E. Washington St., Urbana

MEMBERS PRESENT: Scott Bennett, Lynn Branham, Mark Driscoll, Sheila Ferguson, James Kilgore, Julian Rappaport, Michael Richards (Chair), Benita Rollins-Gay, William Sullivan

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Deb Busey (County Administrator), Patti Petrie (County Board Member), Kay Rhodes (Administrative Assistant)

Call to Order

Richards called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

Welcome and Introductions

Michael Richards, Chair of the Task Force Team, as well as a County Board Member, asked everyone to introduce themselves. The Team members are as follows: Mark Driscoll, Associate Director of the Champaign County Mental Health & Developmental Disabilities Board; Sheila Ferguson, CEO of Community Elements, and a member of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill; Benita Rollins-Gay, Community Elements Crisis Line Coordinator; James Kilgore, a member of Citizens with Conviction; Julian Rappaport, Emeritus Professor of Psychology; Lynn Branham, visiting Professor of Law - St. Louis University School of Law; William Sullivan, Professor of Landscape Architecture – University of Illinois and member of the Education Justice Project; and Scott Bennett, felony prosecutor for the McLean County State's Attorney's office.

Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sullivan to approve the agenda; seconded by Kilgore. Motion carried.

Determination of Regular Meeting Schedule

Motion by Sullivan to hold meetings on the first Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m.; seconded by Ferguson. Motion carried.

Public Participation

There was no public participation.

Discussion: Documentation Current Programs to prevent incarceration, reduce recidivism, and promote rehabilitation of prisoners available in Champaign County

Driscoll explained that the Mental Health Court Program had been in operation for approximately 18 months. He stated the Mental Health Board also funded the Drug Court

Program through Community Elements. Driscoll stated the Drug Court Program had been in operation for a long time. He explained the Drug Court Team consisted of the following individuals and agencies: the Judge, States Attorney, Public Defender, Probation, Prairie Center, and TASC (Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities). Driscoll said in order to graduate from the program an individual must comply with the program and be drug-free for a 12-month period. During this time, they receive treatment services.

Ferguson stated the Mental Health Court program service capacity is growing and that participation in these programs is voluntary. She explained the treatment is individualized, often including other providers such as psychiatrists and therapists. She explained individuals in Champaign County, who are in or have been involved with the Criminal Justice System within the last 6-12 months, are eligible to participate in the Criminal Justice Program. Ferguson explained this program offers much more intensive services that help curtail recidivism and provide more support than other populations may need.

Ferguson explained other useful programs interface with the police departments. She explained the Crisis Team has developed an excellent relationship with each local law enforcement agency. She said law enforcement contacts them when an individual has a suspected mental health issue. Often times, law enforcement will use a crisis intervention trained officer. Ferguson stated this is an opportune time to redirect an individual to a treatment program before they are charged and incarcerated. Ferguson said Community Elements also operates the Times Center for the homeless. She explained often the homeless commit minor crimes or trespass because they do not have a place to stay and do not want to sleep on the street. Community Elements works with the police to find alternatives for these individuals instead of incarceration.

Rappaport asked what conditions an individual should meet in order to qualify for these programs. Ferguson said individuals need the approval of Judge Ford and the States Attorney's office before he or she can enter a program.

Bennett explained McLean County uses Drug Court based on the same model. He said first they check to see if an individual is already in the system and if they have had prior charges. Bennett said any type of violence, such as domestic battery, DUI's, and dealers are typically not considered for Drug Court. Once all the agencies agree on an individual, Drug Court votes on it. He explained the individual must comply with Drug Court requirements to stay out of the Department of Corrections.

Branham suggested the Task Force reach out to the heads of the various programs for brief descriptions of services and programs, statistics, requirements, term, and the potential for expansion. Branham said they could then work off this material to identify potential areas for improvement. Kilgore asked what resources and authority the Task Force had to accomplish their work. Richards explained the majority of these programs operate through the Court System and the State Attorney. He believed that data could be obtained. Ferguson added that Community Elements programs consist of Crisis and Mental Health Court. They are also involved in the Drug Court and the Criminal Justice Grant. Ferguson will supply information on these four programs.

Driscoll said the Mental Health Board has reports on their programs that he can share with the Task Force. Rappaport wanted more information on the mental health services provided to those who are incarcerated. Kilgore wanted to explore preventative and re-entry programs. Sullivan suggested the creation of two lists: 1) preventative programs 2) programs after incarceration. Discussion followed.

Rollins-Gay exited the meeting at 7:45 p.m.

Richards told the members to email him with any specific questions they had for the programs so they can be included in the request for information. Busey said there were many services that come into the jail that are not publicly funded from which information can be obtained.

Discussion: Identification of additional programs, not currently utilized by Champaign County, which could bolster or support current programs

Bennett stated pretrial services were essential to keep individuals out of jail and prevent recidivism. He said the McLean County jail population dropped significantly in 5 years with an 87% success rate. Bennett said it would greatly benefit the Task Force to have a speaker come in to talk about it. Branham agreed. She also suggested pretrial services specifically for the mentally ill, GPS Monitoring, Day Reporting Center, Restorative Work Programs, and Problem-Solving Courts in general.

Sullivan exited the meeting at 8:10 p.m.

Kilgore suggested they also look at what other counties did when they considered new jail construction. He said Los Angeles was a good example.

Other Business

Richards announced the County had released an RFP for Needs Assessment Study for Corrections and bids are due May 25, 2012. He said this should help guide the Task Force as well.

The next meeting date is June 4, 2012 at 6:00 p.m., in the Lyle Shields Meeting Room.

The meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kay Rhodes,
Administrative Assistant