

JOINT PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

JUNE 18, 2015

MINUTES

The Joint Performance Review Committee met Thursday, June 18, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. at the Second Chance Youth Ranch, Paron, Arkansas.

Committee members present were Senators Alan Clark, Senate Chair, and Gary Stubblefield, and Representatives Kim Hammer, House Chair, Jana Della Rosa, Kenneth Ferguson, Mickey Gates, Milton Nicks, Jr., Dwight Tosh, and Dave Wallace.

Other members present were David Meeks and Stephen Meeks.

Call to Order

Representative Hammer called the meeting to order. Representative Hammer recognized Perry Black, Founder of the Second Chance Youth Ranch.

Overview of Programs Offered at the Second Chance Youth Ranch, a DHS Licensed Residential Child Care Facility, Staff Comments, Interaction With Children Housed at the Ranch, and Tour of the Facilities

Pastor Perry Black welcomed the legislators and gave an overview of the organization, which he described as a 501(c)3, public benefit charity, with a faith based program. The program is designed to provide youth in foster care a safe, stable, homelike environment. He explained that construction of the facility began in 2000 with a goal to build multiple family-style bunkhouses for young adults and house parents, and provide a family environment for the foster children. He then described their new additional program called Transitional Living Program (TLP) which currently houses seven girls in a residence in Bryant, Arkansas. The average age for students in the TLP program is between 16½ and 17 years of age. This program is designed to help older children to transition to becoming an independent adult and to live on their own. The young adults seek and obtain employment and learn life skills such as cooking, cleaning and maintaining their living quarters. The TLP young adults open checking and savings accounts. They are required to save money. Five students in the TLP program have purchased automobiles. An offer has been made to purchase a second residence in Bryant to house boys in the TLP program. Pastor Black said there is a bunkhouse for boys at the Ranch scheduled to open August 1, 2015.

Pastor Black discussed future plans for the organization which involve harvesting of 200 acres of pine trees growing on the property which are projected to provide between \$1.2 to \$1.5 million. The organization plans to use these funds to fence the property, build horse stables, construct a sports field, and a swimming pool.

Pastor Black responded to questions concerning the Ranch's financial arrangements for the services it provides to the students. Cost to operate one house is \$105,000 annually, which includes compensation to house parents, food, utilities, supplies, and

transportation. It does not include clinical services, such as therapy and life maintenance. A partnership with the Counseling Clinic of Benton costs \$175,000, which covers salaries for three employees who provide clinical services. An additional \$200,000 covers the cost for additional clinical staff, two caseworkers, and two therapists, with the majority of the cost reimbursed through Medicaid. The salaries for house parents ranges between \$40,000 to \$50,000 and a salary of \$25,000 for respite house parents.

Pastor Black was asked to describe the relationship between the organization and the Department of Human Services (DHS). He said there are three levels of care provided to children by DHS. Level One students are typically very young. Level Two students are children who have been identified as abused or neglected. Level Three students are children identified as dangerous. The Ranch takes in children who are between 13 to 17 years of age and are identified as Level Two by DHS. All students receive the same services. Two levels of financial arrangements with DHS include:

- \$750.00 per month per student, less a monthly allowance of \$105.00
- \$90.00 per day per student

Pastor Black outlined the process used by DHS to identify students who are eligible to reside at the Ranch. DHS makes the initial contact to the Ranch requesting placement. Children typically spend one to two days over a weekend at the Ranch during which the Clinical Director does an initial screening. The house parents, where the child stays during the weekend, conduct an evaluation of the child and talks with other students already in residence. The evaluations are submitted to Pastor Black who makes the final determination for admittance into the Ranch's program.

Overview by Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) Staff Regarding Policies for Removing Children from a Troubled Home Environment, Placement of Children in Licensed DHS Facilities, Foster Care, Adoptions, and Funding Sources

Representative Hammer recognized Cecile Blucker, Director, Division of Children and Family Services, Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS). Ms. Blucker described the process used by DHS when an investigation into child abuse is conducted. The process begins when a hotline report about a possible abused child has been made. DHS personnel assess and determine whether or not the child is at risk. A final determination is then made as to if the child can safely remain in the home, or needs to be removed. When a determination is made that the child cannot remain in the home, DHS personnel are assigned to locate a suitable placement for the child. If it becomes necessary to involve the court system, a judge makes the final decision for the placement of the child. Based on probable cause, the judge also makes the decision if the child should remain in the foster care system. Ms. Blucker said the current Arkansas population of children in the foster care system is 4,465.

The legislators were taken on a tour of the Ranch, visiting the bunkhouses, common areas, and chapel, and meeting with the students.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.