

MINUTES

JOINT PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE

October 9, 2018

The Joint Performance Review Committee met Tuesday, October 9, 2018 at 1:30 p.m., in Room A, MAC Building, Little Rock, Arkansas.

Committee members present: Senators Missy Irvin, Co-Chair, John Cooper, Jonathan Dismang, Trent Garner, Jim Hendren, and Jimmy Hickey. Representatives Mark Lowery, Co-Chair, Scott Baltz, LeAnne Burch, Kenneth Ferguson, David Hillman, Aaron Pilkington, Brandt Smith, Nelda Speaks, and Dan Sullivan.

Other members present: Representatives Bob Ballinger, Vivian Flowers, Fredrick Love, Kim Hammer, Austin McCollum, James Sorvillo, Dwight Tosh, and Jeff Wardlaw.

Call to Order

Senator Irvin called the meeting to order.

Opening Comments by Committee Co-Chairs

Senator Irvin thanked legislators for attending the committee meetings and participating in the school safety discussions. Representative Lowery said the mental health component of the school safety issue is extremely important. He thanked the presenters for their roles in their programs.

Review of the School Safety Program at Clarksville Public Schools

Dr. David Hopkins, Superintendent, Clarksville Public Schools, was recognized. Mr. Hatchett, School Resource Officer (SRO), Clarksville Public Schools, was unable to attend. Dr. Hopkins gave a presentation on the Clarksville School District's Emergency Response Team (ERT) which was developed to provide a safe school environment. He explained how their policies were developed to increase security measures, including arming school personnel. He initially met with school administrators, the Clarksville Chief of Police, and others who helped create the requirements and policies allowing school personnel to carry firearms. A draft proposal was then presented to the Clarksville School Board and school administrators before it was implemented. Dr. Hopkins and the school administrators selected school personnel to become members of the ERT. They determined that a total of four armed school staff in each school building was an appropriate number. Criteria was established to require ERT participants to have a background check and a psychological evaluation. Participation in carrying firearms is done on a voluntary basis. Dr. Hopkins said a fifty-hour training program is provided by the Arkansas State Police. The Clarksville School District stipulates the type of firearm that is purchased and reimburses the cost to the ERT member. Dr. Hopkins responded to questions by legislators and provided additional details.

Discussion of School-based Mental Health Programs and Collaboration on the Advancing Wellness and Resilience in Education (Arkansas AWARE) Program

Stacy Smith, Assistant Commissioner, Learning Services, Arkansas Department of Education (ADE), Dr. Sufna John, Co-Director, and Dr. Nikki Edge, Co-Director, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences-UAMS ARBEST (Arkansas Building Effective Services for Trauma), and Betty Guhman,

Director, Division of Youth Services, Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS), were recognized.

Ms. Smith gave a PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the program referred to as Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education (AWARE). She said the state was awarded a \$9 million grant over the next five years to conduct the program. Key goals for the program:

- The development of model comprehensive school-based mental health programs. The programs will focus on prevention and building safe and supporting school climates through Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS) and Mental Health First Aid Trauma Informed Schools
- Mental Health First Aid programs will provide laypersons with basic training to recognize and intervene when in the presence of someone in crisis. The goal is to have 150 individuals as train-the-trainers in place at the end of five years
- Trauma informed schools will implement understanding and awareness training for school staff to identify students with a behavior disorder

The program focuses on intervention through comprehensive school-based and linked mental health services. Three distinct models will be developed across the state and tailored to any district in Arkansas. The pilot models will be in Texarkana, Marvel-Elaine, and OUR (Ozarks Unlimited Resources) Cooperative (Ozark Mountain, Valley Springs, and Eureka Springs). Each site will employ the following:

- A Licensed Mental Health Professional
- A Behavioral Specialist
- A Project Coordinator

Dr. John discussed the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) ARBEST program and its role in the Arkansas AWARE program. She said the ARBEST program supports programs for traumatized children. Childhood trauma encompasses a wide scope of experiences beyond physical abuse and neglect. All these events impact children, which places them at risk for poor educational outcomes and mental health disorders. The ARBEST program, under the UAMS Psychiatric Research Institute, helps build strong caregiving systems, and enhances access to services in communities for local children and families. The program trains mental health providers. A database serving 64 of the state's 75 counties is used on daily basis by trauma-trained professionals to track their progress and ensure the children are improving. Dr. John said the program offers six trainings that are free to clinicians annually.

Dr. Nikki Edge discussed childhood trauma and its effects, which leaves the most vulnerable children embroiled in trouble in their school or kicked out. Compounding the problem is the lack of childhood trauma training because it is not part of the regular teacher education curriculum. Dr. Edge described core areas of a trauma-informed school system:

- Identification- school policies that support identification of students with trauma exposure
- Intervention- access to evidence-based interventions for families
- Staff Education- training school staff to understand trauma's impact on learning
- Trauma-informed classrooms- modeling healthy social-emotional skills and integration of trauma-informed practices

Dr. Edge discussed a pilot program being implemented in the kindergarten systems in the Russellville and North Little Rock school systems. The program is a partnership with UAMS and Arkansas State University. It is a year-long commitment with extensive training for all school personnel in the pre-K systems. She explained that training will also be provided to school-based mental health therapists.

This training will involve Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The therapy will be provided to children ages three to eighteen and accessible in their schools and communities.

Ms. Betty Guhman referenced her handout and gave an overview of the Arkansas Division of Youth Services (DYS). She told legislators most people don't realize that DHS is a School District for the youth incarcerated in their facilities. DHS is in the process of implementing the Positive Behavior Intervention Systems (PBIS). Dr. Guhman provided statistics:

- 300 youth adjudicated as delinquent are remanded to DHS at any given point in their schooling
- Ages of youth range from twelve to twenty-one
- DHS created a program to work with parents to prepare them for the discharge of their child from DHS
- DHS community-based programs provide services to youth through diversion programs
- The costs to provide services in DHS secure facilities is \$238.00 per day per pupil
- The costs to provide service through community-based programs is \$11.00 per day per pupil

Dr. Guhman discussed the reform efforts DHS is working on with the courts, community-based providers, and schools, with the goal of reducing the number of incarcerated juveniles and the number of secure facilities. Strong support systems mean fewer commitments to institutions and allow youth to stay in their homes. Dr. Guhman listed the following six Juvenile Justice System Reform Goals DHS advocates for the state:

- Reduce secure confinement and DHS delinquent juveniles placed in their facilities
- Right-sized (close or repurposed) DHS secure residential treatment facilities
- Improve services within current residential facilities, including validated risk and needs
- Increase availability and funding for evidence-based community services
- Increase funding and support for juvenile court staff
- Enhance collaborative data collection, analysis, sharing, and reporting

Dr. Guhman listed recommendations for reforms to the current system:

Education and Juvenile Justice

- DHS curriculum aligned with state standards
- Educational/vocational opportunities for all youth
- Transferring credits to local school systems
- Information/records exchange
- Special education needs identification, planning services

Improvements/Reforms

- Better coordination among schools, courts and providers
- More diversion programs/services
- Training on managing disruptive behaviors (schools, law enforcement, courts, and providers)
- Community collaboration prior to re-entry
- DHS youth discharge planning to include educational supports
- School liaisons for parents

Dr. Guhman responded to questions from legislators who discussed the issues and goals in her presentation.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 3:00 p.m.