

December 1, 2008

The third meeting of the Joint Subcommittee Studying the Comprehensive Services Program for At-Risk Youth and Families was held on December 1, 2008 in Portsmouth. Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr. gave opening remarks, and announced that a final meeting of the subcommittee would be held in early January, in Richmond.

Nathalie Molliet-Ribet: CSA Administrative Costs and Funding

The first speaker was Nathalie Molliet-Ribet, who spoke in the often mentioned issue of administrative costs and funding for the CSA program. JLARC first studied this issue in 2006; her presentation came from that study. Ms. Molliet-Ribet went over purpose of administrative funding, and the role of CSA staff in administering this program. She pointed out that localities with CSA coordinators had lower overall costs than localities that did not. Localities received an average of \$14,600 per year from state to administer CSA; an amount that has been leveled since 1997. Localities must supplement this money with local funds. Most still do not have full-time CSA coordinators. Some instead have part-time staff or none at all. This adversely affects localities in many areas, including negotiating contracts with providers, monitoring outcomes, and identifying alternate funding sources.

Delegate Hamilton pointed out that funding for this program is skewed against localities, more so than other programs.

Gail Schreiner/Reynold Jordan/Dr. Roderick Hawthorne: Portsmouth CSA

The next speakers were representatives of Portsmouth's CSA program. They discussed some of their more innovative programs. One such program includes therapeutic day treatment in public schools for student with emotional programs. They also discussed the importance of holding FAPT meetings in schools, in order to bring in more parents. They stressed that going into schools is key to early intervention.

Portsmouth also has innovative foster care programs, including the CARES program, which includes parent/family training for foster families and individualized services for children. This program is a public/private partnership, which creates more value, with higher quality services for the children. There is also their homeless brokerage program, which finds ways to keep children out of foster care by keeping families from becoming homeless. The program looks for landlords to lower rents, waive deposits, and also offers to oversee tenants. Keeping families together is ultimately less traumatic for the child as well as cost effective for the state.

Portsmouth has had some success with their CSA program: 271 children were served in FY '08, and for past two years congregate care rate as been 11% (national best practice is 10%). However, there are still problems: for example, they have found that permanency for 16 year old coming into foster care is just not feasible before they age out of the

system. Their final message is that CSA can work, and the culture change in Portsmouth DSS is proof.

Dr. Susan Dye: Virginia Beach CSA

The next speaker was Dr. Susan Dye, of the Virginia Beach CSA program. She also gave an overview of some of their successful programs, including the Pendleton Child Service Center, which is a private facility which offers a 3 month residential program for children in Virginia Beach. The program requires intense parental involvement; in fact, parents must be there five days a week. They are also starting to use professional foster homes, which are homes with highly trained parents who do not work outside of home. These parents have shown some success in working with challenging children. However, recruitment of such parents is difficult.

Virginia Beach currently has about 40 of its 700 CSA children in residential care. Many of these 40 have juvenile justice problems. Sometimes community based group homes seem more appropriate for these children, perhaps because their backgrounds have made them so unaccustomed to a family environment. Virginia Beach is also facing challenges with their CSA program, including children who are not responsive to treatment, children who age out, and especially in this area, problems with military families. Military families with special needs children are often transferred here because of the specialized services available. However, no additional funds, federal or otherwise, are appropriated for this purpose. For this reason, military families are adding strain to the Virginia Beach CSA budget.

Denise Gallop/Mike Terkeltaub: Hampton/Newport News CSA

Denise Gallop, of the Hampton CSA program, spoke about how they are currently focused on looking at data previously collected, and using this data to improve their program. One important lesson they learned from their data is that families need to be more involved in the process. Ms. Gallop stressed that they would not have realized this was a problem if not for the data, and now this is an area they are focused on improving. She also discussed a program called Youth in Fast Forward, which was initiated by a local judge, Judge Jay Dugger. The program is modeled after program to send adults back to work; it has now been modified for young adults aging out of the foster care system. The program brings public and private providers together to help these young people transition out of foster care and into success adult lives. Ms. Gallop concluded by restating the core values of the program, include a one child at a time approach, a belief that families are the experts about their families, that any program must be child-centered and family-focused, and that planning must begin with the outcome, not process.