



# DURHAM COUNTY JUVENILE CRIME PREVENTION COUNCIL

*Helping to Improve the Lives of Our Youth*

## **Minutes January 28, 2015**

### **Welcome and introductions**

Angela Nunn, chair, opened the meeting with a welcome and asked every to introduce themselves.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Angela asked everyone to review the minutes for any additions or modifications. Motion: that the minutes be accepted as presented. Action: Seconded and Approved.

### **Presentation - Teen Court & Restitution**

Teen Court is an alternative court for youth who commit first time misdemeanor offenses. Youth admitted to the Court are defended, prosecuted and judged by their peers and hold youth accountable for their actions. The Restitution Program provides community service opportunities for adjudicated/diverted youth to repay the victims of their crimes.

Sabrina Cates, Executive Director for Teen Court and Restitution reported a slight decline in youth referred to Teen Court which could be attributed to the Misdemeanor Diversion Program, which divert first time 16 and 17 year old offenders. She noted that she regularly receives referrals from School Resource Officers. Ms. Cates concluded that Teen Court and Restitution will serve the anticipated number of youth as indicated in the Program Agreement.

### **El Futuro's Durham County Clinical Program**

The Durham County Clinical Program offers mental health and substance abuse crisis treatment interventions for at-risk Latino youth, ages 7-17 in clinical & school settings while providing support for parents. The Program links at-risk and/or delinquent youth with a caring counselor to help them improve behavior (misbehavior at school, delinquency, substance use, gang involvement, etc.) increase life skills, and improve school performance using crisis assessment and intervention and individual assessment and psychotherapy.

### **Wake County Literacy Program**

Laura Walters, Executive Director of the Literacy Center of Wake County was changing its name to the Triangle Literacy Council and noted that since 1970, the Triangle Literacy Council (TLC) has been teaching adults how to read and write better through the use of volunteer, one-on-one and small group class tutors. The TLC also has an English as a Second Language (ESL) program designed for students whose native language is not English. By training tutors and matching them with students, the TLC helped over 500 adults work towards their personal reading and writing goals last year alone.

Laura explained that the Juvenile Literacy Center (JLC) provides direct one-on-one tutoring to court-involved youth. The program serves students ages 6 to 17 who are referred to the program by

Juvenile Court. Students who participate in this program receive individualized instruction to improve their reading, writing and math skills.

### **Discussion of Suspension Questions**

DeWarren reminded that Heidi Cater, Chairwoman of the Board of Education and Superintendent Dr. Bert L'Homme of Durham Public Schools had accepted our invitation to attend the meeting on Wednesday, February 25, 2015 at 4:00pm.

He explained that an email was sent to members and program service providers soliciting questions on the suspension policy and its impact on juvenile delinquency in Durham County.

Javonta expressed concern about students being assigned to Lakeview Alternative School who do not receive their course work or permitted to return to their assigned school which impacts their academic performance and grades.

Allan questioned who was responsible for ensuring students on suspension or assigned to Lakeview Alternative School received course work.

Tasha expressed concern about students not receiving services or treatment for the underlying issues that may cause disruptive behavior in the classroom.

The following questions were approved for submission:

1. What is Durham Public Schools plan for reducing school suspensions? How will Durham Public Schools keep themselves publicly accountable for these efforts? Will Durham Public Schools provide disaggregated monthly data on out-of-school suspension days by school and by the type of offense? If so, how will the data be made available to the public?
2. How does Durham Public Schools, now and in the future, plan to make sure that out-of-school suspensions does not cause the suspended student to fall even further behind academically than they may already be, a problem which often exacerbates and causes further negative behavior?
3. What efforts are being made to make the subjective approaches of teachers and administrators to student discipline more objective? What discipline assessment tool will be used to ensure objectivity in the determination of discipline?
4. When a student begins the disciplinary process, are efforts made to include school social workers or school psychologists so that potential underlying factors (i.e. home environment, student disability, substance abuse, etc.) can be assessed and support services can be provided? Would the participation of the student/family in any identified support services allow a decrease of the amount of time of the suspension, or consideration of alternative discipline other than suspension?
5. How has Durham Public Schools engaged students to solicit input on alternatives to suspensions and revisions to the discipline policy?
6. What types of restorative justice practices are being used in Durham Public Schools? If none, why? If restorative justice practices are being used in Durham Public Schools, are there plans to expand those practices? If so, how does Durham Public Schools plan to expand restorative justice practices?
7. What information and/or resources does Durham Public Schools provide to parents and students to navigate the suspension process?
8. How many parents have been successful at having their child(ren) suspensions overturned?

9. Would Durham Public Schools support an independent review panel to review appeals of suspensions? Why or why not? If so, when and how will Durham Public Schools develop and maintain an independent review panel to review appeals of suspensions?
10. Does Durham Public Schools consider the Lakeview Alternative School effective in meeting the needs (i.e., academic, mental health, social skills, substance abuse and gang issues) of students with chronic misbehavior and/or on long-term suspension? If not, what steps are being taken to improve the services provided to students at Lakeview Alternative School to ensure the school is effective?
11. What objective criteria does Durham Public Schools use for assessing and determining when a student at Lakeview Alternative School will return back to their home school assignment? When is the assessment conducted to determine if and when the student will return to their home school?
12. What process, if any, does Durham Public Schools have in place to ensure students referred to Lakeview Alternative School receive class assignments from their home school? Who is held accountable for this process?
13. What mandatory training, if any, does Durham Public Schools have for teachers and administrators on how to engage at-risk students and effectively manage the classroom?

DeWarren noted that the list of questions would be provided to Chairwoman Carter and Superintendent L'Homme no later than Monday, February 2, 2015. He strongly urged members to be on time for the next meeting as to not delay the business portion of the meeting.

Without any further business. The meeting adjourned at 5:30PM.