



Division of Youth Services

Carmen M. Mosley-Sims
Assistant Director of Community Services
P.O. Box 1437, Slot S-501 · Little Rock, AR 72203-1437
501-320-6295 · Fax: 501-682-1351 · TDD: 501-682-1355
carmen.mosley-sims@dhs.arkansas.gov



October 10, 2014

Capt. John M. Foster, Jr.
Chief Deputy
Yell Co. Sheriff's Department
P.O. Box 99, Danville AR 72833

RE: Staff Training

Dear Capt. Foster:

DYS Director Tracy Steele forwarded me your letter dated October 1, 2014, in which you requested input and suggestions as to alternatives to the now-defunct WRAP restraint device, as well as training for your staff. I am very pleased you have reached out to us for this assistance, and I'm happy to offer you both suggestions of alternatives as well as direct support from our office in obtaining some training.

I am encouraged to see that several Yell County JDC staff have registered for our upcoming Statewide Juvenile Justice Conference. This will be an excellent opportunity to receive training introducing them to several alternatives. Some of the experts in systems I mention in this letter, in fact, will be presenting at the conference, including Jamie Williams (Restorative Justice) and DYS' own Steve Nawojczyk and Adam Baldwin. By registering for this conference, your staff have already taken an important first step toward positive changes.

In general, DYS favors equipping staff who care for youth with more options and tools, especially when best practices require eliminating outmoded procedures that have been in use for some time. Research has shown that, for high-needs adolescents in particular, using the minimum amount of force necessary in a given situation leads to better long-term outcomes for both youth and staff. Several juvenile detention centers in Arkansas have successfully adopted these best practices, and reap the benefits of better client-staff rapport, lower numbers and severity of incidents, and greater adaptability to dynamic circumstances.

I suggest a three-tiered approach to training, as follows:

1. Address any **culture change** that is needed in your facility to bring staff into the mind-frame that they are providing rehabilitative care to juveniles, not punishment to adults. This may include training on **adolescent development and the teenage brain**, to teach staff how to better discern normal behavior from what needs intervention. DYS System Improvement staff have a training module in this area they would be happy to present at your facility. You may also consider training on **restorative justice**, which is the rising alternative to the previously dominant correctional model. In the past DYS has arranged for statewide training on a restorative justice system called Peace Circles, and we may considering doing so again in the near future, if there is interest.
2. Introduce **practical methods of intervention**, and training on the **level of intervention needed in a given circumstance**. This training is available through many private and non-profit sources. One reputable system is **Handle With Care**, which offers training at various sites throughout the U.S.

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year-round, as well as intensive on-site training. This system is worth consideration because it addresses a wide range of youth in a variety of circumstances (i.e., youth with special medical or mental health needs, pregnant youth, and others), and includes techniques for de-escalation and behavior modification, as well as physical holds, disarms, and restraints. This is not the only alternative available, however, so I would encourage you to search the internet and ask among your colleagues for the system that works best for them. One method of intervention that DYS staff can provide training on is **motivational interviewing**, which is technically a counseling technique but can be used by facility staff to build rapport and encourage cooperation of youth. It would be best if you could have a long-term staff member trained as a trainer in the new method(s), to keep costs low and ensure that new employees could be oriented as soon as possible.

3. Adapt your system to incorporate **best practices in Arkansas**. As mentioned above, several Arkansas JDCs have already made the shift to a restorative justice model of care, and I am sure they would be pleased to receive your invitation to share their stories and guidance. If you would like DYS to facilitate that contact, please let me know.

I hope these suggestions are helpful to you and the JDC administration. Please contact me via email or phone if you would like to arrange for any DYS-led or DYS-sponsored training in any of these areas.

Sincerely,

Carmen M. Mosley-Sims
DYS Assistant Director
Community Services

Cc: Tracy Steele, DYS Director
Keesa Smith, DHS Deputy Director
Herman Williams, DYS Assistant Director, Residential Operations