

PUBLIC FEEDBACK REPORT NO. 5

INTERVIEW WITH PARENTS
OF CHILDREN IN DETENTION
MARCH 8, 2016
APRIL 12, 2016
APRIL 28, 2016

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium, Shelby County, Tennessee



BACKGROUND

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: March 8, April 12, and April 28 of 2016, 5:30 pm to 7:00 pm each time

LOCATION: Juvenile Court of Memphis of Shelby County

CONSORTIUM ATTENDEES: Dorothy Thomas (March 8 and April 28), Freda Williams (March 8 and April 28), and Latonya Farmer (April 12)

OTHER NON-PUBLIC ATTENDEES: none

RECORDER: Notes were taken by individual members. Names of participants were changed in the attached reports to maintain confidentiality.

MEETING NOTICE DISSEMINATION: All participants were notified by court personnel and a flyer at the check-in for visitation and met with Consortium members on a volunteer basis.

OVERVIEW

Consortium members met with parents of children in detention on March 8, April 12, and April 28. The meetings were arranged by request of the Consortium to Sgt. Michelle Hunt. Consortium members made themselves available in the third floor break-room of Juvenile Court for any parent wishing to speak with them. Two reports were submitted, and those are attached.

QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Consortium members have met and discussed items brought up at the parent interview meeting, and we have the following concerns:

1. The Consortium is concerned that one child had not seen his appointed attorney from February 20 to March 8.
2. The Consortium is concerned that children may not be given sufficient opportunities to attend school.

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium, Shelby County, Tennessee



3. The Consortium is concerned about the inability of some parents to understand the process that a child goes through in the course of a delinquency matter, including detention.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Consortium would like to recommend that records be kept on attorneys visiting their clients and that each attorney be required (or strongly encouraged) to visit their clients within a specified number of hours after their client has been detained.
2. The Consortium would like to recommend that all children be offered the opportunity to attend school even if they decline to go on any day.
3. The Consortium understands that the Court has adopted goal of having volunteer parent liaisons who are independent from their child's attorney or probation officer. The Consortium supports the Court in this and continues with its recommendation that the Court have one or more parent liaison(s) provided free of charge to all parents with children who have delinquency matters.

Approved:
Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium
May 2016

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium
Parents' Meeting

On March 8, 2016, I was available to meet with parents of youth who were being detained at Juvenile Court. The session was scheduled from 5:30 until 7:00 p.m.

Meeting 1

The first parent that I met with was Maria, the mother of 15 year-old Carlos who was being detained due to an incident that involved another youth who reported that Carlos used a gun to take items from him. Carlos was picked up at school because of a warrant that was issued for his arrest.

Carlos has been at Juvenile Court since February 20th and has not yet seen his court-appointed lawyer. Carlos' mother has contacted the attorney several times asking when he will visit Carlos and get information about his case. Each time his response was I'm going to see him soon. As of March 8th, he had not seen Carlos. Another concern that Carlos' mother raised was his lack of school attendance. Carlos told his mother that they knocked on his door the first morning he was there and asked if he wanted to go to school. He said no and they have not asked him since. He inquired but no one has asked him about school again.

Meeting 2

The second meeting was with the father of 17 year-old, Robert, who had been detained in Juvenile Court for 21 days. He was scheduled for a status hearing the next day. Robert was being charged with an incident that happened at Walgreens'. Robert's father indicated that Robert had been forced by gang members to participate with them as they stole items from Walgreens'.

Robert's father had three concerns. First, he was not informed about what was going on with his son. He wasn't clear about who would not give him information about his son's case. Secondly, he was concerned about his son needing toiletry items and his not being able to give them to him. Robert has very dry skin and needed a special soap and lotion but his father was not allowed to provide them for him. His third concern was with the serving size of foods at mealtime. Robert reported to his father that he did not get enough to eat because the serving sizes were so small. He was still hungry after meals although he ate all of his food.

There were other parents who wanted to have conversations but time was out.



COMPARISON COMMENTS WITH COMPLIANCE REPORT #7

- **Parent #1**

ML – Female – African –American
Juvenile – Male – Age 15

Youth detained seven (7) day earlier – hearing last Monday, (2/15/16)

Parent reported no communication or intervention between herself and her son, with any legal counsel. Parent reported not understanding the charges, nor did the Juvenile..

Parent reports a total of 17 days, her son was without an attorney. The attorney of record was Larry Nance, according to parent. **Juvenile still awaiting Evaluation**

DUE PROSESS RESPONSE – Pg 2

It appears that Juveniles continue to have their civil rights violated due to the lack of legal representation. This is according to the reports of the parent and the Juvenile.

- **Parent # 2**

- JA – Female – Hispanic/Latina

Juvenile – Male – Age 17

Arrested 1/21/16 - , Evaluation completed 3/17/16

First offense (according to parent)

No contact with Public Defender.

Juvenile schedule to be bound over to adult court.

Parent was extremely upset about the possibility of her son being transferred to Adult court, consequentially being place in adult facility.

She reported that her son is scheduled to graduate from high school and is currently not attending the school at Juvenile Court Detention.

PARENT COMPLAINT

There should be a better system for completing the evaluations

Youth in jeopardy of being harmed

Parent report that her son had a boil, and he complained, however was refused medical help, which caused the boil to get worse. **Very frighten for the overall care of her “child”**

Protection from Harm, pg4

Parent report child is afraid and not receiving appropriate medical care.

- **Parents #3**

CS & KW Parents - African- American

Juvenile – Male – Age 16
Arrested 1/20/16 @school
Hearing postponed 2/24/16 (?)
3/30/16 Evaluation Completed
To be bound over to adult court (according to parents)
No attorney contact with parents or juvenile.

LACK OF DUE PROCESS – PG 2

Concerns from Parents (All Parents)

- *Why are they kept so long without any attorney involvement*
- *Why can't they receive Bibles*
- *Care packages are received two or three days after being detained. Soap and deodorant is not enough to "wash and control odor."*
- *Some Juveniles have been detained for months without any resolution*
- *Parents report that the living quarters are inadequate for children*
- *"States that their children states that they are treated "like animals"*

Comments

After talking with the parents, there were several themes that continued to unfold.

- **Juveniles are not attending school as required. The reason for this mishap, is due to the lack of space or accommodations. Currently there are 69 males and 2 females in detention. Less than 50% of them are attending school.**
- **Care packages are inadequate, as reported by parents, however they are told that they cannot bring supplies to the children. Unacceptable**
- **The conditions of the cells is antiquated and small as reported by parents. Juveniles are forced to sleep on the floor because the beds are too short. (In the 21st century, children are growing taller, therefore if we are to house them, an attempt should be made to explain to parents why, "Their children report feeling as though they were being treated like animals.**
- **Juveniles report being hungry, however, I asked the officer and she said they received three meals plus snacks. (interesting)**
- **Violence – the Juveniles report that the guards force other Juveniles to fight those children that they don't like or have problems managing, this is very concerning as**

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium, Shelby County, Tennessee



this is reported to the parents who shared with me. These children are afraid and “according to the parents’ report, part of the problem is the guards.....

**COMMUNICATION COMMUNICATION
COMMUNICATION**

**IT IS CRITICAL THAT THERE IS MORE
COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE COURT, LEAGAL
COUNSEL AND PARENTS. TRUST IS BUILT ON
COMMUNICATION. THERE CONTINUES TO BE A
LACK OF TRUST, AND AS ONE PARENT STATED,
THESE ARE CHILDREN WHO HAVE MADE POOR
CHOICES, BUT THEY ARE CHILDREN AND HUMAN
BEINGS.**

Submitted by:

Dr. Dorothy J. Thomas