



Juvenile Court of Memphis and Shelby County

616 ADAMS AVENUE MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38105
P. O. BOX 310 MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE 38101

MEMORANDUM:

To: Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC), Shelby County, Tennessee

From: Pamela Skelton, CAO, Memphis and Shelby County Juvenile Court (Court)

Date: December 6, 2016

Subject: Response to CJJC Inquires and Recommendations

Response by Juvenile Court to CJJC Recommendations

Public Feedback Report No. 6

Questions

- 1. Please advise the Consortium on the manner in which children are permitted to attend Hope Academy. In particular, is it true that a child can be prevented from going to the school and asked to do school work on her own as described above by the parent?**

Response 1: Hope Academy School, which is part of the Shelby County Schools, reviews the school records of each youth detained in the Shelby County Sheriff's Office Juvenile Detention Services ("JDS") and advises JDS personnel which students will be attending school. The goal is always for each youth to be able to attend school and keep up with his/her classwork to allow a seamless return to school wherever possible.

On weekdays, JDS receives a school class roster from Hope Academy School and those youth are brought to class.

When youth refuse to attend school, Hope Academy staff will provide school work for them. Hope Academy and JDS staff work together to encourage the youth to attend school. Hope Academy maintains records of the students attending school.

If students have not yet been placed on a roster to attend school, other programming is made available so that they are not idle while others are in school.

2. Please advise the Consortium on the manner that children are kept in their individual cells/rooms and the manner in which they are permitted free time outside of their rooms. In particular, are children confined and permitted free time as described above by the parent?

Response 2: In the case mentioned by the parent, the two (2) young women had a verbal disagreement after the school day had ended. For the safety of the youth, that afternoon/evening—and only for that afternoon/evening--they were given their recreation time apart from each other. Both had approximately three (3) hours of recreation on the date in question.

Room confinement is kept at a minimum. Staff works closely with youth to resolve their differences with safety as a primary concern. Until disagreements are resolved and while safety is a concern, providing separate recreation time is one alternative that reduces the possibility of further incidents.

So long as they can do so safely, youth are encouraged to exercise, participate in activities, read, and spend their time productively outside of their rooms.

Recommendations

- 1. If the Court is not doing so already, the Consortium would like to recommend that records be kept on all children who either attend Hope Academy or do not, along with the reason for a child not attending school.**

Response: We would like to thank you for this recommendation. Records are kept by both the Sheriff's office and Shelby County Schools on both who attends and who does not attend. The Sheriff's office keeps records daily on the reasons for attendance/non-attendance.

- 2. The Consortium would like the Court to make every effort for all children in detention to attend school.**

Response: We want to assure the Consortium that every effort is made by all agencies involved (Court, Sheriff, Shelby County Schools) to ensure that as many youth as possible attend classes at Hope Academy. The Court considers Hope Academy as one of the greatest assets that we have at the Court, and will absolutely continue to work to ensure that all youth detained have access to Hope Academy. It is critical that these youth attend classes and continue or restart their schooling when in detention, and we thank you for your concern and this recommendation.

- 3. The Consortium would like the amount of room confinement reduced as much as possible with records of how and why a child is placed in room confinement.**

Response: The Sheriff's office keeps records on each youth detained regarding when and why a child is placed in room confinement. Both the Sheriff and the Court shares your concern on reducing room confinement as much as possible, and many programs have been implemented to do so, including the Positive Behavior Management System (PBMS). The PBMS gives rewards

to all youth detained for good behavior in many areas, but is also used to encourage good behavior and conversations so that room confinement is used only when necessary and as infrequently as possible. This is a very important area and we thank you for the recommendation.