



COUNTY OF HUNTERDON NEW JERSEY

HUMAN SERVICES ADVISORY COUNCIL LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON ALCOHOLISM & DRUG ABUSE YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MENTAL HEALTH BOARD



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REFERENCE:

- Council
- Mental Health
- Youth
- Disabled
- Substance Abuse
- Transportation

Draft to be approved July 12, 2023

YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION

Regular Meeting

Wednesday, May 3, 2023 12:30 p.m.
Via Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

K. Stoskus	S. Becker
F. Brown	L. Gudino
L. Ranieri	L. Zellar
M. O'Reilly	L. Zielinski*
J. Collevchio*	L. Lupo
T. DiFranco	A. DeLuca
A. Villano	

EX-OFFICIO

K. Schwenderman

STAFF

D. Childers

GUESTS

J. Hunt
J. Cassano
J. Keebler
E. Witkowski
G. Thomas
W. Svard

*Designees

- I. "This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 – 10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided in the Hunterdon County Democrat and the Courier News. A public notice announcing this meeting has also been placed in the lobbies of the Hunterdon County Department of Human Services, the first floor of the Main Street County Complex, 71 Main Street Building #1, Flemington, NJ; the first floor of the Route 12 County Complex, Building #3, 314 State Route 12, Flemington, NJ and County Clerk's Office."

PURPOSE: The Commission shall serve as an advisory committee to the Human Services Advisory Council and to the Board of County Commissioners to maximize provision of assistance to youth and their families, and to promote prevention programs that enhance the building of competencies and positive development of children and youth and reduce the likelihood of juvenile delinquency and other socially unacceptable behaviors.

F. Brown opened the meeting and introductions were made among the participants.

- II. **MINUTES:** With the revision of the term dispensary to vape shop in the last paragraph of page 5, J. Collevchio made a motion and L. Ranieri seconded to approve the minutes from March 1, 2023. All were in favor. The motion passed.

III. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. **Presentation: NJ Statewide Student Support Services, Gregor Thomas (Center for Family Services):** G. Thomas introduced himself and stated he is representing the Center For Family Services and will be sharing a brief introduction of the grant NJ4S (New Jersey Statewide Support Student Services). He advised the grant will begin this upcoming school year.

G. Thomas outlined his professional experience. He has worked in Warren, Hunterdon and Somerset Counties and has experience with Children's System of Care (CSOC) and the Department of Children and Families (DCF). G. Thomas began his career at Robert Wood Johnson Hospital in Somerset. He worked in the Emergency Room performing discharge planning. Following that, he expanded into CSOC, working at Bonnie Brae as a therapist, then worked for Tri-County's Mobile Response in Flemington as a supervisor and ran the Hunterdon County Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC). He added he is currently in charge of several programs including the School Based Programs at Warren Hills, Warren County Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU), Supportive Employment, Quality Cleaning Crew, Better Future Self Help Group, Intensive Family Support Services, and he runs the Partial Care Program in Washington. He added NJ4S is the next addition to the list of programs that he will be running.

G. Thomas began his presentation by informing the group that the Center For Family Services was formerly the Family Guidance Center of Warren County. On January 1, 2023, they merged with the Center For Family Services to provide more coverage. He conveyed the Center For Family Services is mainly run out of their Camden and Egg Harbor offices. G. Thomas communicated they are expanding quickly and are close to covering all counties across the State. The NJ4S program will be Center For Family Service's first entry into Somerset County. The Center For Family Services has over one hundred (100) locations across New Jersey.

The mission of Center For Family Services is to support and empower individuals, families, and communities to achieve a better life through vision, hope, and strength. The vision of Center For Family Services is for all people to lead capable, responsible, fulfilled lives in strong families and healthy communities.

G. Thomas reported the **Culture** of Center For Family Services is

- team focused
- family oriented
- mission driven
- community focused
- compassionate
- open minded
- change makers
- forward thinking

Center For Family Services offers a comprehensive continuum of care and a broad range of services to best meet the current and changing needs across the New Jersey community.

Service Areas

- Behavioral Health
- Community Connections
- Safe and Supportive Housing
- Addition and Recovery
- Trauma and Victim Response
- Workforce Development
- Family Support and Prevention
- Early Childhood Education

Core Values

- Culture of Respect
- Service – focused

- Ethical
- Moral
- Diverse
- Leaders
- Accountability
- Gratitude
- Progressive
- Excellence

Continuous Quality Improvement

- Council on Accreditations
- CQIP Committee
- Evidence based programming
- Policy development
- Best practices
- Improving compliance
- Funders & licensing requirements

Advocacy

- We intervene for the individuals and families we serve on more than just a micro level.
- As an agency, we also are a leader in the community and lend our voice for macro level change.
- Advocate for policy change
- Legislation
- Educating legislators
- Coalitions

Statewide Student Support Services (NJ4S) Concept

- The Statewide Student Support Services Network will expand New Jersey's School Linked Services to increase its reach far beyond the 2% of current NJ students.
- Ensure continuity of supports by engaging youth, families, and community with regional programming.
- Will be integrated with other major youth-serving systems throughout the state and maximize resources through the use of a statewide hub and spoke model.
- These reforms are timed to be fully operational for the 2023-2024 school year.

G. Thomas communicated this program is not here to replace any current programs in existence. He reported this program was created to fill the gaps and support current programs. As a Director of School Based Youth Services Program at Warren Hills, G. Thomas knows firsthand, the extended waitlists programs have. He foresees the NJ4S program aiding in the decrease of waitlist times.

Universal Support

- Universal support will be provided to all NJ schools.
- Hubs will provide resources to all school communities (K-12) in their service area.
- Hubs will build relationships with local community resources to ensure the best outcomes for our youth and their families.

G. Thomas explained this is a three-tiered system and there are two (2) topics within those tiers. He reported every public school in New Jersey qualifies for tier one universal support by default. The grant does not require schools to sign up or apply, they are automatically in the NJ4S system. G. Thomas reiterated the service area is tri-county, covering Hunterdon, Warren, and Somerset counties. He communicated the grant requires staff to sit on CIACC meetings for the counties that

they serve.

Targeted Support / Brief Intervention

- Targeted supports “Tier 2/3 Services” are directed towards middle and high school students.
- Hubs will deliver and manage tiered services based on identified needs.
- The NJ Statewide Student Support Services program operates on a three-tiered system for service delivery.

G. Thomas stated the Kindergarten through Elementary School youth will only be utilizing tier 1, whereas Middle and High Schools will use tiers 1, 2, and 3. He conveyed DCF is working on an online portal. DCF will work with each school district’s representatives to create a profile on the portal. This profile will allow the district representative to reach out to the NJ4S Hub directly to present a synopsis of what their district needs. Whether it be an entire school grade that needs an assembly or a small group of individuals who are struggling with vaping or bullying, a program will be administered by the NJ4S staff.

Three-Tiered Approach

- Tiered services will be delivered using methods as determined by the advisory group and community engagement.
- Services will include programming in school buildings, remote services, or programming in community locations, such as Family Success Centers, or other partnered locations that are accessible to the community.

G. Thomas stated as of right now, there is no blueprint of what services are provided. The advisory boards that are in the process of being formed, are the individuals who decide what services will be delivered. He stated the advisory board will consist of local level individuals such as principals, super intendants, families, and students.

Tier 1 Services

- Includes universal prevention interventions that benefit all students.
- Service delivery through district-wide programming, workshops, and evidence-based interventions.
- Focus areas for interventions include mental health/well-being, social connections, job readiness and more.
- Examples of evidence-based interventions include Peers Making Peace, Teen Outreach Program (TOP), Good Behavior Game, Sources of Strength, Mental Health First Aid, Signs of Suicide, Botvin/Life Skills Training, Success for Kids and Project KIND.
- No application required.

G. Thomas conveyed all services provided need to be evidence-based interventions. He explained tier 1 is grand scale and as you go up in tier, the engagement is more individualized. Tier 1 services will be for large assemblies and big crowds. G. Thomas gave the example of a famous public speaker discussing suicide prevention during the month of September or a Prevention Consultant giving a presentation on vaping or drinking to an entire grade or school.

Tier 2 Services

- Tier 2 includes early identification and focused prevention interventions.
- Services can be delivered through small group interventions, brief individualized early intervention services, and mentoring.

- Services also include linkages to existing programming and/or community resources.
- Application Required.

G. Thomas explained Tier 2 is for smaller groups. Community partners are able to be utilized if schools do not have the space or are unavailable. Transportation of youth and families to these facilities was built into the budget. If an individual has an appointment with a clinician at the Family Support Center and is unable to get a ride, transportation will be taken care of and free of charge.

G. Thomas reported they are working on getting interaction-based materials. Programming will be based around sexual health, pregnancy prevention, and others that will be discussed later in this presentation. Tier 2 services will be short-term, lasting approximately six (6) to eight (8) weeks, and will meet once a week.

Tier 3 Services

- Includes assessment and brief individualized clinical interventions to youth to improve overall mental health/well-being.
- Support ongoing mental health needs, including referral for further evaluation and/or ongoing mental health counseling.
- Application Required.

Tier 3 is the highest level of services. This tier is for clinical services, NJ4S has four (4) clinicians on staff to cover all three (3) counties. G. Thomas advised the focus will not be on treatment, it will be on brief clinical interventions, assessment, and referral. G. Thomas asked the group to consider joining the advisory board and help collaborate with referrals. He stated there are three (3) out-patient centers in Warren County that he regularly works with, and each of them have a three (3) month or longer wait for out-patient services. G. Thomas anticipates a tidal wave of referrals from this grant, particularly for out-patient services. With the anticipated increase of referrals, G. Thomas is looking for additional referral sources.

Tri-County Needs Ranking

- Vicinage: 13 – Somerset, Hunterdon, and Warren Counties
- Total Students (unique count): 85,160
- Total Students (unique count) in High Need Districts/Municipalities: 42,890
- Total School Districts (unique count): 71
- High Need School Districts: 27

https://docs.google.com/document/d/17rZI5RMwZnMjA_rM3R4irJNLLaT7BE72/edit

G. Thomas conveyed the school districts were ranked as low, moderate, or high need and a list of the districts can be found by using the link above. DCF plans to prioritize services based off these rankings. If there are requests for services from multiple different schools, and there is not enough staff to cover all requests, the school(s) with the highest need will be prioritized.

G. Thomas shared a list of staff members for the tri-county NJ4S. There will be one (1) Hub Director, one (1) Assistant Director, three (3) Scheduling Coordinator/Support Staff, two (2) Supervising Prevention Consultants, fourteen (14) Prevention Consultants, and four (4) Licensed Clinicians.

Referral Process

- The Department of Children and Families will work with each district to determine their

“Point of Contacts”.

- These contacts will create a profile on the New Jersey Statewide Student Support Services Portal and submit a request for services.
- Based on the request, HUB staff will work with school personnel to determine the best services options.

The website URL for the NJ4S portal is a work in progress and is not up and running yet. G. Thomas explained the district representatives will not be choosing a particular presentation listed on the Center’s menu of services. District representatives will provide a synopsis of what is happening at their school, and the program staff will then determine what the best course of action will be.

G. Thomas presented an example of the “A La Carte” Menu of Services. The umbrella topics are Substance Use Prevention, Sexual Health and Pregnancy Prevention, Suicide Prevention, Anti-bullying, and Violence Prevention. Other *Flavor of the Month* topics will also be available.

Advisory Group

- Each NJ4S hub will be required to establish and maintain an advisory group comprised of students, caregivers, school personnel, social service agencies, businesses, faith-based organizations, and other community leaders.
- This group will be required to be established at the formation of the hub, and will provide ongoing input on hub design areas of focus, supportive community resources, etc.
- Advisory groups will meet on a monthly basis.
- Topics that will be delivered to local school districts are chosen by the local Advisory Board.
- Topics for service delivery include: Substance use prevention, sexual health and pregnancy prevention, suicide prevention, anti-bullying, and violence prevention, and/or other prevention-focused areas of need.

G. Thomas stated there will be one advisory board that meets monthly. The board will be comprised of members from all three counties. Seeing as though there are already thirty (30) members on the board, a sub-committee advisory board for each county will be formed. He conveyed the required monthly advisory board meeting will be used to touch base with the other counties, share statistics, etc. G. Thomas explained the needs for each county vary and this will allow the needs of each county to be individualized. Sub-committee groups will likely meet on a quarterly basis.

G. Thomas conveyed there will be incentives for attending the tri-county advisory board meetings. He stated all community providers, students, parents, or anyone else who joins the tri-county advisory board will receive a \$25 gift card.

How to get involved

General inquires can be sent to: Vicinage 13 NJ4Svicinage13@centerffs.org.
Gregor Thomas MMS, LCSW Gregor.Thomas@Centerffs.org
Director of Programs: Youth and Rehabilitative Services

Anyone interested in joining the advisory board can complete the short survey. The first official advisory board meeting will be held June 5, 2023. G. Thomas asked if there were any questions and reiterated that there are additional details still being worked on and he may not have all the answers.

D. Childers thanked G. Thomas for presenting to YSC. She conveyed many people have heard about NJ4S but are unsure how it will be operating in each hub/county. She asked for clarification as to

whether services will be provided and what the purpose is for the hubs. G. Thomas conveyed they will be providing services to the community and added that DCF promises they are not looking to replace any current programs. Services are intended to be short-term, with the expectation that referrals will be made to local services/programs.

J. Collevechio thanked G. Thomas for sharing this information. She asked for clarity on the clinical aspect of the program. She stated NJ4S seems to be supporting evidence-based programming, but it does not sound like clinical type services will be offered if an individual needs them. G. Thomas reported it would be short-term, approximately six (6) to eight (8) weeks, similar to Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU). The evaluation will be done, and referrals will be made based on the individual's needs. He added all clinicians are given a basic motivational interviewing training, and this will be the approach they will be taking. The clinical aspect will be short-term, strengths based, motivational interviewing, etc.

J. Collevechio asked if there are already programs being facilitated in schools, would NJ4S staff refer the individuals to an outside agency, or would the NJ4S staff handle it. G. Thomas advised they will provide all the services that are needed; however, their services are short-term. He informed the group that the curriculum-based services are six (6) to twelve (12) weeks long. A prevention consultant will be working with a particular school or district for that period and a workshop will be held weekly for the specific group of youths. G. Thomas conveyed he does not believe that amount of time is enough and that is where referrals will come into play.

IV. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **Current Trends:** D. Childers conveyed May is Mental Health Awareness month and asked the group what trends related to Mental Health their agency is observing and what service needs clients are seeking or requesting. She reported the feedback from agencies will be used for planning purposes of the YSC grant and the County's RFP process.

L. Ranieri stated Hackensack Meridian Health received information today stating individuals are desperate for out-patient services. She added there are long waiting lists, transportation issues, and issues with agencies not accepting Medicaid. She conveyed it was not a previous issue while everything was virtual, but now they are struggling to discharge patients.

B. **Community Engagement:** D. Childers stated she is currently working on the Department of Human Services' webpage, specifically the Youth Services page. She is updating the information to have a strong foundation of information. She conveyed parents and youths with questions, are researching themselves and going online to find information. D. Childers advised there are areas of the webpage that can be strengthened, and there are a lot of excellent resources that should be linked to the webpage. Once the webpage is launched, she will inform the group and ask for feedback on how to strengthen it and if there are additional resources that should be included.

V. **AGENCY UPDATES/NEWS:**

Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board: J. Cassano reported the Greater Raritan Workforce Development Board's Summer Youth Program has received opportunities from eleven (11) employers in Hunterdon County. The Summer Youth Program is looking for additional youth applications. D. Childers asked how many youth applications they have received from Hunterdon County and how many more they are hoping to receive. J. Cassano reported they have received sixteen (16) applications from Hunterdon County youths and would like to have three times the number of positions available. She added several

employers are looking for up to four (4) or five (5) internships. She stated the application can be found on the GRWDB's website. D. Childers conveyed she will forward this information to Superintendent of Schools for distribution.

VI. REPORTS:

A. **Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC):** L. Gudino has nothing new to report at this time.

B. **Department of Children and Families – Children's System of Care (CSOC):**

i. **Tri-County Care Management Organization (CMO):** No report.

ii. **Tri-County Family Support Organization (FSO):** No report.

iii. **Tri-County Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS):** L. Zellar reported for March 2023, MRSS had 29 dispatches in Hunterdon County out of the tri-county total of 203. The dispatches decreased to 20 in April for Hunterdon County out of the total for tri-county which was 111. Schools have been the highest referral source. March had a total of 13, which then dropped to 3 in April, likely due to Spring break. The second highest referral source is other community providers. The highest age group of referrals is 13 to 18.

C. **N.J. Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P):** L. Lupo stated that for the month of March 2023, the Hunterdon County office had a total of 33 referrals. 9 were physical abuse, and the 24 others were neglect. April had a total of 50 referrals. Currently, DCP&P has 205 active children. 10 are in placement, out of those 10, 7 are with family and 3 are not with kin.

L. Lupo advised she has accepted a different position at DCP&P so this will be her last YSC meeting. She stated M. Scherer will likely fill in until a replacement is hired. She conveyed she will be working with the quality reviews. Quality reviews is how DCP&P utilizes quantitative and qualitative data to improve their services.

A. **N.J. Juvenile Justice Commission (NJJC):** K. Schwendeman advised NJJC is waiting for the release of the three (3) year plan and application. She encouraged individuals to attend and provide feedback to ensure the services that are necessary are being provided. She added D. Childers and herself will be monitoring the programs that are funded by the JJC dollars over the summer.

B. **School-Based Youth Services:** K. Stoskus announced she has taken over L. Gonski as Coordinator of School-Based Youth Services in Hunterdon County. She added planning has continued for their Hampton Summer Program. She reported North Hunterdon and Voorhees school therapists are working on a welcoming for 8th graders who will be attending those high schools as freshmen in the fall.

C. **Family Crisis Intervention Unit (FCIU):** No report.

D. **Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI):** No report.

D. Childers encouraged the group to keep the conversation open and share what service needs there are even if it only effects one youth. This will allow the planning process to be as board based as possible to identify the service needs for our community.

VII. ADJOURN:

There being no further business, the meeting of May 3, 2023 was adjourned. The next meeting will be held Wednesday, July 12, 2023 at 12:30 pm via Microsoft Teams.