

# Community Taskforce to Review Youth Corrections Systems Standards

## Meeting Summary

Thursday, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024 4:30 PM

Ruffin Building 6<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room

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### Taskforce Members In-Person

Jazmine Rogers
Debbie Kennedy
Yeni Telles
Lamont Anderson

### Taskforce Members via Zoom

Valerie Leon
Marquetta Atkins-Woods
Tracey Mason

### Resource Members

- Steve Stonehouse, Department of Corrections Director
- Dan East, Wichita Police Department Deputy Chief
- Carl Lemons, Wichita Police Department Captain
- Elora Forshee, Emergency Communications Director
- Jennifer Wilson, COMCARE Director of Crisis and Access Services
- Dee Nighswonger, Department of Children and Families (DCF) Regional Director
- Kristen Peterman, DCF Foster Care Program Administrator

### Greeting and Welcome

Commissioner Sarah Lopez welcomed everyone and shared that she is grateful for the people who have come together to work on the taskforce. This journey started from an awful situation and the taskforce looked at the system as a whole with the goal of doing better for the kids and the community. She believes that we have come a long way and is grateful to the taskforce and staff at the City and County for all of the work that has gone into making the system better.

Commissioner Lopez shared that Sedgwick County is looking to revamp the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to focus more on community issues. This may be an opportunity for members from the taskforce to continue the work that has been started.

## **Corrections Update – Department of Corrections Director Steve Stonehouse**

- Recommendation 1: Update JIAC Policy 8.810 – Use of Force
  - This policy was updated about a year ago, and the Kansas Department of Corrections (KDOC) approved it in January. The annual Juvenile Intake Assessment Center (JIAC) reporting to Team Justice about the previous year’s instances of use of force has been shared with Team Justice in a public meeting; reporting will continue next year.
- Recommendation 11: Prioritizing the County’s upcoming Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget updates for the video recording system at JAIC to cover more areas of the lobby and holding rooms, and a recording system that uses audio capacity.
  - Retrofitting the building to include audio has been more difficult than anticipated.
  - Changes are being made to the physical environment including different ceiling tiles, absorbent material on walls, etc. to help the cameras/audio work better.
  - CIP increased from \$247,776 for cameras to \$760,014 for cameras with audio capacity. CIP has been approved by the Board of County Commissioners (BoCC).
  - The Department has moved to Axon body cameras for all supervisors and staff at JIAC, Juvenile Residential Facility (JRF), and Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF). All cars that transport kids will be outfitted with Axon cameras and audio recording devices.
- Recommendation 24: Strengthening the Individual Justice Plan (IJP) process used in different organizations throughout Sedgwick County.
  - March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024: trained over 100 individuals on IJPs.
  - The Department is working on a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sedgwick County Sheriff’s Office so that IJP information can be recorded at JIAC as well as the Sheriff’s records management system.
  - There have been a few meetings for kids with IJPs.

## **Questions from Taskforce Members about Corrections**

- Yeni Telles: Is there a policy so that officers/staff know when to use body cameras?
  - Yes—a part of the federal funding process included formulating a policy.
- Tracey Mason: The Department has a five-year contract for the Axon cameras—is this a typical timeframe for a County contract?
  - Five years is fairly long for a County contract. A typical contract is two years with three one-year extensions.
- Jazmine Rogers: How soon will camera/audio installation be?
  - The Facilities department is working with contractors to develop a timeline.
- Jazmine Rogers: Why has IJP integration been delayed?

- The process took a lot of coordination with law enforcement, COMCARE, the Mental Health and Substance Abuse Coalition (MHSAC), and Wichita State University (WSU).
- Tracey Mason: How has the calming room at JIAC been working out?
  - It has become a part of standard operating practice. Mental health practitioners use it for initial assessments because it is more comfortable for the kids. There is a camera in the room and doors remain open so kids can have some alone time.
- Jazmine Rogers: What is the update on the JRF plan/BoCC action?
  - The BoCC has approved architectural and engineering work for a building that would house JRF, Field Services, Evening Reporting Center, and Home-Based Services in one building.
- Marquetta Atkins-Woods: Will the JRF redesign be less carceral?
  - Yes, the goal is to use evidence-based design to make it as home-like and durable as possible. This is not supposed to be detention, but a therapeutic environment.

### **Wichita Police Update – Deputy Chief Dan East, Captain Carl Lemons**

- Recommendation 1: Increasing funding for COMCARE mobile mental health unit and ICT One, so they can be available 24/7 and dispatched by 911 as a resource that serves the community.
  - Partners at 911 and COMCARE have implemented ICT Teams 2-5.
  - Dispatch integrated ICT 1-5 into the computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system in April and provided radios so dispatchers can communicate with ICT teams.
- Recommendation 2: Developing and implementing standardized training for foster care, law enforcement, 911, JIAC, and JDF personnel, to include topics on de-escalation, mental health first aid, adolescent brain development, and de-stigmatization of mental health, as well as when and under what circumstances a youth can and should be taken to Ascension Via Christi St. Joseph, as opposed to JIAC.
  - Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE) training began this March. 380 officers have participated.

### **Questions from Taskforce Members about Wichita Police**

- Jazmine Rogers/Valerie Leon: Will updates on ABLE and other training be included on the Jensen Hughes dashboard?
  - Deputy Chief Dan East can ask if this is an option.
- Jazmine Rogers: How much has the number of officers who are Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) trained increased?
  - WPD representatives do not have this number. The next training is in June/July.
- Yeni Telles: How is WPD measuring that the training and other methods are working? If it's not being measured, what measurements can be put in place?
  - They are not formally tracking anything related to training. Leadership has heard positive feedback on ABLE training.

- Yeni Telles: Are there any surveys in the department?
  - The department is currently looking at software for a post-training survey.
- Lamont Anderson: Will the department look at keeping track of how many times officers actually use ABLE and intervene in the field?
  - Any situation that is escalated will be tracked and there should be re-training of the supervisor. The information may not be public-facing due to personnel issues.
  - Lamont Anderson: Publicly reporting the percentage of calls during which ABLE was deployed each year would help in terms of transparency and building trust. If that percentage is low, the public knows that the training is working. If it's high, the public knows that there needs to be training and improvements in specific areas. It's important to have numbers especially considering that the foundation of this work is to prevent another situation like Cedric's in the future.
  - Deputy Chief Dan East: The Wichita Police Chief is very data driven. The premise of ABLE is "we all go home." It may be difficult to track every use of ABLE training.
  - Lamont Anderson: The biggest concern is when there is a situation like Cedric's, when he was taken to JIAC when he could have been taken to a mental health facility. If ABLE had been a strong component when this happened, maybe it would have been deployed. A record of ABLE being deployed when there was a call, a decision, a paper trail can show how it affects outcomes.
- Tracey Mason: How is the ABLE training being received by officers?
  - Deputy Chief Dan East: There was positive feedback when he attended the training, and other executive staff have heard positive feedback.
  - Tracey Mason: It would still be helpful to see some data. Hopefully, the training moves forward and prevents a lot of tragedies.
  - Captain Carl Lemons: The department is looking for software that gives real data for training that is compiled immediately.

**911 Center / COMCARE Mental Health Update – Emergency Communications Director Elora Forshee**

- Recommendation 1: Develop an uninterrupted, 24/7 mobile mental health response system that can be dispatched by 911.
  - Dispatch and ICT teams have radios so that dispatchers can contact teams when requested by officers and when dispatchers can see that an ICT team response would be appropriate in addition to/instead of law enforcement.
- Recommendation 2: Embed qualified mental health providers within the 911 system.
  - Integrated care specialists are COMCARE employees that work in dispatch.
  - In March, integrated care specialists took over 26 calls. They also provide support to dispatch staff when needed on calls.

- The department is working on enhancing the reporting process to track more of what they are doing.
- Recommendation 3: Add an additional position, “Continuing Education Coordinator,” to the 911 budget to enrich continuing education and training for 911 employees to better screen callers, develop tools to evaluate mental health needs, and then transfer to COMCARE or another agency as appropriate.
  - The Department has asked for funding for this position and three additional positions in the 2025 budget to rebrand the current quality improvement team into an employee development team with 2 team members assigned to each shift.
- Emergency Communications Community Advisory Board
  - The BoCC passed a resolution in February to establish the board. The Department is currently collecting applications and will conclude interviews for at-large positions this week. Most of the BoCC appointments and Derby’s appointment have been made. The board will hopefully begin meeting in May.
- Turnover rates
  - There have been significant pay increases, bringing starting pay up to \$20.10/hr, a 32% increase from 2019. The building upgrades and CAD system have helped.
  - The Department is 94% staffed between operations and support services.

### **Questions from Taskforce Members about 911 Center / COMCARE Mental Health**

- Jazmine Rogers: Is there an update on recruiting people who speak languages beyond English and Spanish?
  - Recruitment and hiring manager (repurposed position) combined with advisory board will focus on finding avenues into different communities.
  - Department currently has 12 employees who speak Spanish; now looking to bring in employees who speak Arabic, Lao, and Vietnamese.
- Lamont Anderson: How is the current climate/environment around 911 culture? What is its impact on retention, etc.?
  - Internally, culture is good. There is an active employee advisory board, and the Department just finished celebrating Telecommunicators Week. Some teams are being revamped to allow staff to get involved in different responsibilities.
  - Some external factors have been a challenge to retention.
  - The Department requested an accreditation manager in the 2025 budget; accreditation could help enhance pride and bring in new ideas.
- Yeni Telles: Are ICT 1-5 teams fully staffed?
  - ICT 1 is fully staffed with a Master’s level therapist, paramedic, and law enforcement officer.
  - ICT 2-5 teams each consist of a Master’s level therapist and a Bachelor’s level integrated care specialist. All of the Bachelor’s level positions and 2 of the 4 Master’s level positions are filled.

- One of the Bachelor's level employees passed their licensure boards and will move to Master's level in May.
- COMCARE has a mobile crisis response team that can respond to situations when ICT teams are unavailable due to staffing/other calls.
- Tracey Mason: What are the barriers to filling roles?
  - Second- and third-shift positions are the biggest struggles. Part-time positions that help with holidays and weekends are also difficult to fill. This is an issue in the industry as a whole and there is a lot of competition.

**DCF – Foster Care Update – Foster Care Program Administrator Kristin Peterman,  
Regional Director Dee Nighswonger**

- Recommendation 1: Fully funding evidence-based prevention and early intervention programs for youth and families before youth are placed in the foster care system, including intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) services, support for families in the home, behavioral programs, and substance abuse programs, among others.
  - DCF has been working with Families Together to develop a program to help families keep their children safely in their homes while awaiting IDD Services.
  - DCF is partnering with agencies including the Urban League and Kansas Children's Service League to develop family resource centers in Wichita.
- Recommendation 3: Creating an ecosystem that connects community resources, grassroots organizations, advocates, coaches, champions, and others with the Kansas DCF, law enforcement, Sedgwick County COMCARE, JIAC, and JDF and other systems that serve foster care children in a mental health crisis.
  - Network Sedgwick County event on March 22<sup>nd</sup> brought in professionals and agencies throughout the community to talk about services they offer. 70 organizations were present, and about 300 people attended.
- Recommendation 8: Expanding the Crossover Youth Practice Model for sharing data and system protocols between DCF, school districts, and the juvenile justice system, to allow those agencies to effectively serve the foster youth in their care.
  - There are multidisciplinary team meetings when children meet risk criteria.
  - Individual Justice Plan (IJP) training was held on March 29<sup>th</sup>.
  - Foster care provider in Sedgwick County is changing from St. Francis to EmberHope, which will have a case management specialist for crossover youth.
- Recommendation 10: Administering an assessment (using disaggregated data) of the youth in the foster care system that allows root cause issues to be identified and a strategic plan developed that will address barriers and systemic issues.
  - Data walk was held on April 9<sup>th</sup>: opportunity to look at data/information on outcomes for youth in foster care and reflect on what the data shows.
  - An RFP has been issued for a Continuum of Care for the childhood and family wellbeing system in Sedgwick County; proposal deadline is Friday, May 17<sup>th</sup>.

### **Questions from Taskforce Members about DCF**

- Tracey Mason: What is the meaning behind the name change to EmberHope?
  - DCF representatives are unsure of the origin of the change but will provide information on the organization to the taskforce.
- Yeni Telles: Have there been conversations about how on-call procedures will work with the new contract?
  - Yes, EmberHope has been very open to feedback. Their plan is to have on-call staff that is completely separate from case management staff.
- Lamont Anderson: Has the system seen any instances of high-risk situations with an individual involved in multiple agencies since Cedric's situation?
  - There have been some youth for whom agencies have worked together to understand how to intervene differently. The most helpful strategy is getting people together to communicate and know who is involved. The focus is trying to get consistent mental health services to youth who do not have stable long-term placements. There is a crossover youth facilitator housed at JIAC who follows up with providers each day.
- Lamont Anderson: In the event of a Wichita Children's Home refusal, where do youth go?
  - Debbie Kennedy: WCH staff understand that they cannot refuse a child without her permission. They only refuse for youth who have been active runners from WCH in the last six months, foster children from another state, or youth exhibiting aggressive behavior per their contract with JIAC.
  - Steve Stonehouse: Beds are available at JRF during third shift: 10 beds total, 1 reserved for situations like Debbie described. Once staffing stabilizes, the number of beds will increase.
- Tracey Mason: Cedric had a mental health issue. Is it correct that EmberHope does not have sustainable mental health services?
  - They are not a mental health provider; they have access to community resources.

### **Discussion: Future of the Taskforce**

- Rusty Leeds: The recommendation is that it might be time to move in a different direction, but agencies want to hear from the taskforce.
- The County will continue to maintain the dashboard and update with data from all agencies involved as they continue to provide information.
- Yeni Telles: As the taskforce comes to an end of their meetings, the work must continue through different avenues in the community; this is just the start.
- Lamont Anderson: Thank you to all community partners including the City, County, DCF, COMCARE, WPD, people in the community, and everyone else for their commitment to the taskforce. The only concern that remains is what oversight might look

like. It is important to ensure that the work the taskforce has done in the name of Cedric Lofton continues so that there is not another Cedric Lofton again in our community.

- Rusty Leeds: Team Justice and other advisory boards can help provide oversight. If the taskforce ever feels that there is a need to reconvene, they can call a meeting.
- Jazmine Rogers: Thank you to Rusty, Nicole, and other County staff for providing answers.
- Tracey Mason: He appreciates everyone's time, which is very valuable. It is important for the dashboard to continue to be maintained. It is especially important to maintain accountability from the Wichita Police Department.
- Rusty Leeds: This all started from a tragedy for Cedric and his family. Cedric lives on with everyone involved in the Task Force work and always will. The people in this room are committed to doing the right thing and protecting kids. Thank you to everyone for the work they've done and working with partners and agencies in a cooperative way to make things better for the community.