

COMMISSION ON YOUTH

November 20, 2007

10:00 a.m.

House Room C

AGENDA

Attending: Senators Harry Blevins and Yvonne Miller; Delegates Mamye BaCote (electronically), Robert Brink, William Fralin, and Robert Tata; citizen member Marvin Wagner

Absent: Senator Edd Houck; Delegates John Reid and Mark Cole; and citizen members Vanessa Cardenas and Glen Francis

Staff Attending: Amy M. Atkinson, Joyce Garner, Leah Hamaker, and Cordell Hairston

Agenda Items

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Senator Harry B. Blevins, Vice Chair

Vice Chair Senator Blevins called the meeting to order, as Delegate Reid was unable to attend because of a conflicting engagement. Delegate BaCote will participate in the meeting electronically as provided under Section 2.2-3708 of the Code of Virginia.

Senator Blevins announced that presentations of the Commission studies are being reported at the meeting. The members will be voting on the study recommendations at the December 5 meeting.

II. 2007 Activities in State Government

Amy M. Atkinson, Executive Director

Brief discussion of 43-page document in member packet, which is developed by the Commission each year and updated for each meeting to provide members with current information on state activities related to youth and families. Much of the focus of 2007 programs highlights child mental health and the Comprehensive Services Act. Commission members were invited to request presentation topics for 2008 meetings after reviewing the document.

III. Study of Alternative Education Options

Leah Hamaker, Senior Legislative Policy Analyst

Presentation by Ms. Hamaker on the two-year study, which is concluding, and the study findings and recommendations.

Recommendation 1. LACK OF INFORMATION ON LOCALLY ADMINISTERED ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Ms. Hamaker indicated that the Department of Education (DOE) budget request would be in addition to other DOE funding requests.

Recommendation 2. STUDENTS NOT OFFERED EDUCATIONAL SERVICES

There is not a designated number of slots to be requested; Ms. Hamaker indicated that the number of slots requested would be determined by the Commission.

124 school divisions have local programs, but there may be, in some cases, a waiting list. Ms. Hamaker will provide a map showing what school divisions are currently offering.

It was suggested that there may be a need to re-examine the practice in which state dollars stay with the local school district and consider allowing state dollars to follow the students' placement.

There have been bills introduced during the past two General Assembly Sessions which addressed high school drop out and which spoke to the issue of educational services, but these did not pass in either Session. It was further suggested that staff obtain the Virginia Education Association research on the number of parent lawsuits being lost by school divisions regarding the adequacy of special education services. Members discussed the limits that the Commonwealth should go to to provide services, given the number of students who statistically are unlikely to attend school. In response to a question about the extent to which Head Start and similar programs have been effective, Cindy Cave, Director of the Office of Student Services, Virginia Department of Education (DOE), indicated that Head Start had been effective, but did not have statistics at hand. Ms. Hamaker will research the availability of data on the effectiveness of Head Start and share it with the Commission in 2008.

In response to members' questions about regulations surrounding students' taking GED's in a timely manner (less than the prescribed 12 months), Michael Nusbaum of DOE, addressed policies and procedures governing GED's. After a review of the Code cite, Ms. Hamaker indicated that she will present a fuller picture of how GED policies and procedures affect alternative education programs at the Commission on Youth's December 5th meeting.

Recommendation 3. SHORTAGE OF SCHOOL-BASED PREVENTION PROGRAMS
Staff indicated that this recommendation would have a budgetary impact.

Recommendation 4. EFFECTIVE SCHOOLWIDE DISCIPLINE PROGRAMMING
No discussion.

Recommendation 5. LACK OF DEFINITION FOR ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION
No discussion.

Recommendation 6. REVIEW IMPACT OF GAPS IN SERVICE
No discussion.

Senator Blevins reiterated the guidelines for submission of written comment for the November 20th and December 5th meetings.

IV. Study of Establishment of an Office of Children's Services Ombudsman
Ms. Atkinson

Presentation by Ms. Atkinson on the study findings and recommendations of this two-year study.

Recommendations 1, 2, 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF AN OFFICE OF CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN SERVICES

Recommendation 4. MISSION OF OFFICE – INVESTIGATION
The Ombudsman would have an advocate's role.

Recommendation 5. MISSION OF OFFICE - SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 6. MISSION OF OFFICE - STANDARDS

Recommendation 7. MISSION OF OFFICE – INFORMATION AND REFERRAL

Recommendation 8. MISSION OF OFFICE - ADVOCACY

No discussion.

Recommendation 9. OPERATIONAL – MANAGEMENT OF OFFICE

Recommendation 10. OPERATIONAL – APPOINTMENT OF THE CHILDREN'S OMBUDSMAN

No discussion of Recommendations 9-10.

Recommendation 11. OPERATIONAL – RIGHTS AND POWERS OF THE CHILDREN’S OMBUDSMAN

Inclusion of “writs” was an error and will be deleted from the December 5th document.

Recommendation 12. OPERATIONAL – REPORTS

Recommendation 13. OPERATIONAL – ANNUAL REPORT

Recommendation 14. OPERATIONAL – NOTIFICATION

No discussion.

Recommendation 15. REPORTS – NOTIFICATION OF SERIOUS PROBLEMS

Recommendation 16. REPORTS – INVESTIGATIONS REPORTS

Recommendation 17. REPORTS – DIRECT REPORTS

Recommendation 18. REPORTS – CONFIDENTIAL RECORDS

No discussion.

Recommendation 19. COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

No discussion.

Recommendation 20. COOPERATION OF OTHER STATE AGENCIES

No discussion.

Recommendation 21. COOPERATION AGREEMENTS WITH STATE AGENCIES REGARDING ADVOCACY SERVICES FOR THEIR CLIENTS

No discussion.

Recommendation 22. BUDGET

An estimated \$500-800,000 would be needed to staff the office with six to eight employees.

V. Systems of Care and Evidence-based Practices Conference: Tools that Work for Youth and Families

Ms. Hamaker

Informational presentation on the results of the September 16-18 Conference in Roanoke, which was co-sponsored by the Commission and the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. (Members and the public had viewed a visual presentation of photographs taken at the Conference prior to the Call to Order.)

Senator Blevins expressed appreciation to Commission staff for a successful conference and acknowledged the active participation of Commission members at the Conference.

VI. Adjourn

Prior to adjournment, Senator Blevins reviewed key actions scheduled for the December 5th meeting, including election of officers and voting on study recommendations for the 2008 General Assembly Session.

The meeting adjourned at 11:55

Public comment was not received at this meeting.