

Iowa Girls Justice Initiative

Meeting Summary

April 1, 2016

10:00 am – 2:00 pm



Iowa Correctional Facility for Women

420 Mill St.

Mitchellville, IA

Working Group Members

Ashley Artzer, *Juvenile Court Services*

Terri Bailey, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*

Kristin Corey, *Iowa Department of Human Rights*

LaTasha DeLoach, *Johnson County Social Services*

Kim Denning, *Juvenile Court Services*

Andrea Dickerson, *Youth and Shelter Services, Inc*

Evelyn Garrison, *Achieving Maximum Potential Facilitator*

Jasmine Garrison, *Achieving Maximum Potential Member*

Nicole Hart, *Achieving Maximum Potential Member*

Jeremy Kaiser, *Scott County Juvenile Detention*

Nathan Kirstein, *Disability Rights Iowa*

Lori Rinehart, *Polk County Juvenile Court*

Jennifer Tibbetts, *ITFYW Chair and Catherine McAuley Center*

Julie Walton, *Scott County Attorney's Office*

Guests

Dawn Schott, *Linn County Juvenile Detention and Diversion Services*

Jen Sievert, *The Coalition*

Julie Martin, *Linn County Juvenile Court*

Staff

Gracie Brandsgard, *SPPG*

Arlinda McKeen, *SPPG*

Kathy Nesteby, *Iowa Department of Human Rights, Div. of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning*

Welcome and Overview of the Day

McKeen convened the meeting at 10:02 am. Staff from the facility explained the schedule for the day and provided an overview of the operations of the facility and answered procedural questions.

Small Group

Working group members met in small groups with women from the Iowa Women's Correctional Facility to discuss women's personal experiences in their younger years with the juvenile justice system. Discussions focused on their experience with services provided to them and their families. The women provided their perspectives on how their needs as a child or young woman and how they were involved with services from DHS or juvenile justice workers.

Large Group Debrief

McKeen facilitated a short discussion with working group members as they debriefed their small group conversations and shared key takeaways.

Provide supports for the entire family.

- Services should include parents and guardians, not just the child.
- After trauma, often counseling is only provided to the child. Parents should also receive services.
- Untreated trauma of parents has great impact on children in the home.
- "Girls aren't silos."

Focus on proactive services, rather than retroactive service.

- Each of the women found benefit in classes offered by IWCF (on healthy relationships, parenting, life skills, dealing with trauma).
- They wished they would have taken these classes earlier – in elementary or middle school.

Find out the "why" of actions.

- Use this as the main goal for services (Ex. Substance abuse programs should move away from focusing on consequences of drug usage because most know the consequences, but they don't outweigh the "why" motive. Address the "why" and solve the problem.)
- Remain persistent in asking youth questions about "why" as they may not want to or be able to answer at any given time.

DHS involvement was heavier than members originally anticipated.

Relationships are critical.

- Common theme among women that they did not feel like there was one person in their life that truly cared about them.
- Relationship-building and mentorship is very important.
- It did not matter if the person they were close to was a professional or not, the relationship itself is what mattered most.

Kids are often “out of the loop.”

- Most of the women were unclear which services had been offered to parents, what attempts at reunification had been made, options for services, etc.
- The women felt they were not kept fully informed about the process, they were being dragged along.
- The women did not feel like they had had a say in placement options, did not know there were multiple options.

Use a holistic approach to services.

- Have them move beyond people – find purpose and connection outside of people.
- There is a constant focus on behavior, not the trauma causing the behavior.
- Focus on the positive. The consensus among women that they were surrounded by negativity throughout childhood, and did not have a focus on the positive.

Closing Comments

McKeen thanked the working group for their thoughtful discussion and thanked the guests for attending. The meeting ended at 1:32 pm to allow for a tour of the facility and grounds.

The next Iowa Girls Justice Initiative Working Group meeting is May 6, 2016 – Polk County River Place – Room 2, 2309 Euclid Ave., Des Moines, IA.