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ATTN: Cook County Board President, Toni Preckwinkle, the Cook County Board of Commissioners, the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, Timothy Evans, and Superintendent of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Leonard Dixon

Subject: 2021 Annual Report of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center Advisory Board - *“Youth Re-entry from Detention in Cook County”*

Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center Advisory Board

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Overview

Pursuant to Cook County Ordinance Art VI. Div. 3. Sec. 2-511-520 (included as Appendix I), the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center Advisory Board (hereinafter “Advisory Board”) shall submit to the Executive Director of the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (hereinafter “JTDC”), the Chief Judge of the Circuit Court of Cook County, the Board of Commissioners for Cook County, and the President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners an annual report containing public recommendations for actions which may be necessary in carrying out the mission, purpose, and intent of the JTDC. The Advisory Board is charged with providing public recommendations on maximizing the use of current resources and on meeting the physical, social, and psychological needs of the population, as well as establishing public performance measures to track and measure the achievement of the JTDC’s mission.

This year, the Advisory Board focused its report on youth re-entry from detention. This report outlines the current status of youth re-entry in Cook County, a literature review of best practices in youth re-entry, insights and recommendations from directly impacted youth, and recommendations from the JTDC Advisory Board.

This work was aided by the members of the Advisory Board, ex-officio member Commissioner Stanley Moore, as well as Commissioners Bridget Gainer and Bridget Degnen, whose offices have provided insight and guidance.

INTRODUCTION

Though 150-200 young people are detained in the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) on any given day, more than 1,000 youth cycle through the facility each year. The average youth in JTDC will be released to return to their communities within 33 days of being admitted. For this reason, re-entry to the community is an issue of utmost importance for the young people involved in the criminal legal system in Cook County.

Effective re-entry systems can make the difference between a cycle of criminal legal system involvement, and a turning of a new page for a young person released from a detention facility. With the right support and resources, young people can avoid a downward spiral that their time in detention might otherwise trigger. Even short stints of detention can have serious destabilizing effects in young people’s lives. Detention almost always amounts to a significant disruption in a young person’s education, family life and relationships, as well as their mental well being. The sudden change in environment, separation from supportive relationships, lack of access to activities of

choice, and daunting prospects of a pending criminal case can coalesce in a way that traumatizes young people who are detained.

Robust, multifaceted support systems are needed to help young people regain stability and well being after a period of incarceration, and to help them avoid further contact with the criminal legal system. The challenges noted by youth, family and communities highlight an opportunity to enhance and expand the programs and systems aimed at supporting their success. In order to improve systems of re-entry for youth in Cook County, it is important to understand evidence-based best practices as well as the experiences of directly impacted youth. This report will examine themes that arose from a review of literature on youth re-entry, as well as detail the experiences of two groups of young people in two different Cook County neighborhoods, all of whom have been formerly detained at the JTDC. Based on these data, this report will offer recommendations for improvements and investments in the system of re-entry for youth in Cook County.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leading researchers on the topic of juvenile reentry and aftercare all tend to point toward similar conclusions; programs including CBT, skill training, or other forms of treatment given on an individual basis to older, high-risk youth have the best chances of reducing recidivism. Other considerations include that risk level should be assessed using a strengths and needs-based approach. Aftercare services should be in the communities in which the youth live. While the length of time spent in treatment has no clear effect on youth outcomes, long-term follow-up may be necessary as gains diminish over time. This follow-up is also more easily carried out by community-based partners. Finally, programs involving supervision by a probation or parole officer lead to no significant differences in recidivism rates and may be detrimental to low-risk youth, unlike mentoring which may be a powerful tool if the youth are directly involved in the execution of mentorship programs.

James (2015), in a meta-review of studies done on juveniles released from correctional institutions, noted that aftercare for youth is more effective when it involves individual treatment as opposed to group treatment. Since youth social systems decrease in relative importance as they grow into adulthood, treatment they may have received in a group setting is not as successful as treatment focused on the individual and the specific struggles they face. Having a group setting for treatment may also reinforce criminal behaviors in older youth due to negative peer pressure. Moreover, having an individualized approach to treatment allows the specific needs of each youth to be addressed, consistent with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity (RNR) model that has shown positive results.

This same meta-review also notes that effects were higher when treatment was aimed at older and high-risk youth, particularly those who were charged with violent offenses. Altschuler and Armstrong (2002) found similar results, and pioneered some of the most effective programs for juvenile re-entry, through meta-reviews of previous studies and studies of their own. They focus on the importance of targeting risk and needs for each youth. Rather than just denoting a youth as high-risk due to their age or number of prior arrests, their model highlights particular problems or need factors that the youth may be facing when determining risk levels. If the youth have more need factors, then they would be assessed as higher risk. These factors include but are not limited to family functioning, participation in school or work, nature of their peer group, and substance use. These can all be addressed through individual treatment focusing on each need.

While James (2015) found that across most studies done on juvenile aftercare programs, intensity of treatment is more important than duration of the treatment Altschuler and Armstrong (2002) note that if treatment programs are offered within the institution, they should also be followed up with quality, community-based aftercare programs to continue treatment within the community where youth reside. Ideally, there would be common staff between settings, and the same community workers who would treat youth upon release would come into the institution to treat the youth while they are in a facility.. Though duration may not be of highest importance, more contacts between mentors or counselors and the youth led to less recidivism, though only when the youth were of high-risk (James, 2015).

The Youth re-entry Task Force of Washington D.C. conducted a review of aftercare programs across the country in 2009. They noted that early approaches to aftercare, such as supervision and surveillance, are not as effective as community-based treatment programs that have gained popularity in recent years. They noted, "it is now believed that interventions and services which include educational tutoring, job skills training, cognitive-behavioral therapy, family and individual counseling, and community-based services aimed at improving thinking and behavior will yield greater post-incarceration success." This aligns with other reviews done on the topic. Since intensive programs that involve treatment are relatively new and not as heavily studied as more traditional methods of re-entry such as supervision, Bouchard and Wong (2018) also compared supervision as a potential method of aftercare. Like the other studies, however, they found that this level of intensive contact is not necessary, and in fact can be detrimental for youth who are of lower risk. Supervision without treatment for the youth's needs also results in a higher chance of technical violations, which disrupt the youth's life by forcing another stay in an institution when they may have otherwise been making progress in their community.

The 2009 D.C. review also discussed the difference between supervision and mentoring, noting that including mentoring in aftercare services also results in long-term

positive effects. When planning these mentorship programs, they must be available to, delivered to, and engaged in by youth participants. When youth are not involved in choosing their mentor or frequency and form of communication with their mentor, they may end up not engaging in the process at all; however, when implemented well, youth-centered mentorship is a powerful tool in decreasing recidivism. Youth who were involved in mentorship programs, alongside other aftercare programs – not supervision – had the following results, according to the 2009 D.C. report:

- Significant reductions in testing positive for drug usage;
 - Lower recidivism;
 - For those who did reoffend, longer time before their first re-offense;
 - Increased referrals and connection to educational and employment services;
- and
- Increased referrals and connection to mental health treatment.

Final considerations should be made in how recidivism is measured, as Bouchard and Wong (2018) point out – youth receiving intensive supervision are less likely to be arrested or charged for an alleged offense, but are more likely to be convicted of an offense. Also of special note is mental health treatment and assistance for those who need it. When provided with mental healthcare, youth have significantly higher success in their community, according to the 2009 D.C. report. When taken together with the individualized approach to treatment and therapy, a needs-based risk assessment, and quality community-based continuity of care, research shows a higher rate of success in juvenile aftercare programs.

COOK COUNTY SYSTEM OF RE-ENTRY

The JTDC Advisory Board hosted presentations by system stakeholder partners throughout 2021 to better understand resources and opportunities for youth leaving the JTDC. Specifically, the Board engaged with the City of Chicago's Department of Children & Family Services, Chicago Public Schools, Cook County Health (Cermak Team & Care Coordination Team) and Cook County Juvenile Probation. These agencies provided information on their programming and identified challenges and gaps in services for youth returning to their communities.

For youth that are City of Chicago residents and not in need of a therapeutic school setting, Chicago Public Schools provides transitional services from Nancy B. Jefferson to a home school. These services include enrollment/re-enrollment, credit transfer, and re-entry planning. They also provide training and support to the neighborhood and alternative CPS schools that are receiving youth from the JTDC. The program has had impressive results: (1) in 5 years, enrollment rates have increased

69% and (2) the retention rate has increased to 80%. CPS highlighted gaps in services for suburban youth, young adults, and youth with travel/safety concerns.

Through Cook County Health, there are a number of re-entry supports for youth with mental health needs. First, through Cermak Health Services at the JTDC, youth are self-referred or referred by unit staff, mental health clinicians, or parents to receive mental health services while detained as well as re-entry supports pre-release. In preparing youth for release, clinicians link youth to medication management, counseling services, skill building, recreation, mentoring, job programs, community-based programs and school-based programs. Staff noted exceptional challenges in supporting families in navigation of benefits and re-enrolling youth in Medicaid post-incarceration. To address some of these challenges, Cook County Health recently developed a continuity of care program for youth with system contact and acute mental health needs. The program provides screening and assessment, coordination of community-based behavioral health and wrap around services and navigation support. The program is currently in a pilot phase and hopes to continue to expand to serve more youth.

About 63% of pre-trial youth in detention are connected to probation. These youth are provided with an expeditor, an educational advocate, and referrals to community-based supports. The expeditor provides services and supports to expedite the release of the young person from detention while the educational advocate helps them re-enroll in their home school. Both of these advocates connect youth to other resources as needed. At any given time, there are also a little less than 100 probation youth in detention. These youth are often already receiving support and services via supervision, probation, or intensive probation. Probation identified gaps in developmentally appropriate services for young adults in the community; community programming that serves high risk, high needs, and hard to engage youth; and opportunities for youth with serious charges or histories of violence.

The City of Chicago recently launched a pilot program for youth and young adults at the highest risk of violence involvement in 6 impacted communities. This program provided each youth with one Navigator who provides care coordination, youth-driven goal setting, service planning, CBT, and referrals to other community based services. The pilot, launched in January, 2021, planned to serve 48 youth.

Overall, while there are some re-entry supports for youth returning to their communities from the JTDC, there is little to no coordination or data sharing across stakeholder agencies to ensure an effective re-entry system. There are also very clear gaps in opportunities for older youth, higher risk youth, higher needs youth, youth with serious charges, and youth with histories of violence.

The JTDC Advisory Board is also aware that there are community organizations across Cook County that provide service and support to system-involved youth. It is essential that system stakeholders also coordinate with these agencies.

VOICES OF IMPACTED YOUTH

One member of the JTDC Advisory Board had the opportunity to speak with youth from two communities in Chicago who had histories of detention at the JTDC about obstacles to re-entry. These youth were not selected randomly and may not serve as a representative sample of all youth with histories at the JTDC, but we hope their reflections can help inform our work.

The first interviews were conducted with youth engaged in programming through Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation (PBMR) in September 2021. These three youth serve as a good example of the positive effects of programming that takes place over time in a safe, secure, and nourishing environment. All three portray a confidence and pride in their newfound skills, their accomplishments, and a strong belief in their capacity to create a positive future for themselves. Precious Blood provided all three with experienced and consistent mentors – some who had made their own journey through the system. The mentors worked with the youth at Precious Blood and visited them at the Detention Center building a familiar re-entry link back to the program.

Semaj, 18, PBMR: He has been detained at the JTDC seven times over a 5 year period. He has participated in programs at PBMR for three years.

My first detention was at the age of 13 and the longest period of detention was 120 days. I was released in April of 2021 to my Grandma. At the JTDC, I stayed at 4-A Renaissance where all the staff know me because I have been there many times. Because of Covid, we stayed on the pod, all 16 youth, and did not go to gym or down to school. We attended school remotely. They hooked up a computer to the TV. We did not do any programs so I read books.

Now that I am out, there are opportunities at Precious Blood (PB). I don't have a job but I do get paid for doing classes at PB. I do ceramics and have made a lot of things including candle holders and ash trays. I also go to a class there where we get to talk – this calms me down and takes my mind off stuff. It's 2 times a week for 2 hours.

They also have a music studio at PB. I can use the equipment. I'm not serious about it but I do like to hear the sound of my own voice.

I have a mentor, Marlon, who visited me while I was locked up. He has helped me get to the doctor and given me rides to school. I use the internet on my phone to do my school work.

I would like to open a business after I graduate - I'm a senior this year. It would be my own clothing line. For example, I would make a shirt with an abandoned building on it, all boarded up. There's a lot of those in my neighborhood. There would be a picture of the building and on the bottom it would say BANDO. That would be my brand. It means an abandoned house. They have a screening program at PB. Maybe that's my opportunity.

Randell, 17, PBMR: He has been detained at the JTDC once.

I have been to the Detention Center just once. And I wasn't there long because they put me on house arrest. It was pretty smooth except I was used to being outside all the time and it's a big change to be inside.

I was going to Richards High, but I didn't go much. I transferred to Johnson College Prep which is much better. Everybody gets along, you don't have to worry. It's a really small school. My parole officer checks every day to see that I am there.

I take a lot of classes: English, Physics, Band, Gym, Algebra. I'm trying to get into Art. I like to paint. I can paint better than I can draw. I like to do landscapes, scenery. I do ceramic arts at Precious Blood. What I like to do there is sculpture: I made a big fist. The teacher there is helping me to sell my paintings. She posts them on Facebook. I also get paid at PB for these classes.

I've been coming to PB since my 8th grade year. I came up with other kids after school and I stuck with it.

Joe is my mentor here. I want to be a future entrepreneur; I want to be my own boss. I have a lot of ideas. I try to stay as productive as I can. I am focused on school now. I never miss it. I play basketball and I am on the swimming team.

I live with my Mom and my brother. Our house is always calm. We talk about our problems and sit down and discuss them.

Randy, 17, PBMR: He was last at the Detention Center in December of 2020. That was his first time. The judge placed him on electronic monitoring.

I've been on it before. It's been less hard than the last time. They give me more movement. PB helped a lot with that as well as my parole officer.

I have been at PB for 4 years. Since I've been there so long, I can mentor younger kids. I teach them to 'grow up slow'.

I was kicked out of school, and had to re-enroll. They gave me a youth advocate so the school was willing to take me back. School is better. I'm focusing on my work. I have 8 classes. Gym is my favorite. I play a lot of sports but basketball is my game. I want to go to a 4 year college, like Duke or Kentucky. I'm a point guard or shooting guard.

When I got locked up, it was because I didn't have a lot of resources. In my freshman year, I couldn't play basketball because I didn't have the money to pay for all the uniforms and equipment. It was about \$300 and I didn't have it. So I started doing illegal stuff. And I ended up at the JTDC where there was nothing to do.

I spend 4 to 6 hours a day at Precious Blood. I take classes for 2 hours and then I just stay. It's a positive place where I can stay out of trouble. Joe is my mentor there. He teaches me right from wrong and what to know about things.

SECOND GROUP INTERVIEWS

The second group of youth are from Farragut High School, 2345 S. Christiana. They all live in Little Village. They all have spent time at the JTDC. The boundaries of their neighborhood are 26th and California, Lawndale and Cermak. These young men do not have a formal program but gather daily after school at the home of a concerned parent. This parent, having lost her own son to gun violence, realizes how very much at risk these young men are in their community. It is her hope that this report will spur the growth of programs in Little Village, a community that currently has nothing to offer the youth who are re-entering after incarceration.

Lucia L., the parent reports: "The opposition rides around and if they see a young boy out on his own, they will start shooting. These boys take their guns with them everywhere because they fear for their life all the time. Lucia conducted the interview as a group conversation.

James, 18: He was in the JTDC twice, one day and a week.

Ivan, 16: He was in the JTDC four times, once for a week, 3 times for 30 days.

Angelo, 17: He was in the JTDC 2 twice, one day and a week.

Luis, 17: He was in the JTDC twice, 4 months and a week.

The programs that we need here in this community, especially when we come out of the JTDC, are more counseling, more leaders, people that care - to listen to our needs. We need art: Visual, theatrical art, painting, acting, music – things that make sense to us.

We have it hard. We get harassed everyday by the police. So for no programs to be available in the JTDC, this made us panic because we did not know if we were going to die from Covid. No one was around to even explain what was going on and we had no television privileges. No one came to talk to us to keep our minds off of our panic - at least give us a coloring book!

At the JTDC, we had nothing to escape our minds. We were not able to use the phones as much. We are still young, and not hearing from our mom or siblings really makes us depressed.

Because of Covid, we were not allowed to play or to interact with others.

We need art, music, and someone to listen to us. We are the future but we do not see a good future because no one shows us what is out there in the big world.

YOUTH RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Find a positive program where you can make money, be creative, and have a place where you can stay out of trouble. The program should allow you to be there throughout elementary & high school.**
- 2. We need mentors. We need positive relationships and people that we can trust. People that will be there for us if we get in trouble or locked up.**
- 3. Programs should be accessible in our neighborhoods but should also give us the opportunity to see the world outside.**

JTDC ADVISORY BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Hold a hearing in 2022 to address youth re-entry in Cook County with system stakeholders, impacted youth and communities and colleagues from other jurisdictions.**
- 2. Collaborate with the City of Chicago, Cook County Criminal Justice stakeholders, impacted youth, and community organizations across Chicago to develop a coordinated re-entry effort for youth and young adults leaving the JTDC. Consider developing data use agreements to support data sharing and limit assessment burnout for youth.**
- 3. Collaborate with the Department of Children and Family Services and the JTDC to address length of stay at the JTDC and gaps in existing re-entry supports and services.**

- 4. Limit supervision programs that data demonstrates provide minimal benefit to youth, and further entangle young people in the criminal legal system through technical violations and subsequent reincarceration.**
- 5. Replace the above with programs that develop, identify, collaborate, and fund organizations that are well-positioned to provide developmentally appropriate, need-based, relentlessly engaging programming and mentorship to young adults and high needs/high risk youth, especially those programs that serve young adults with histories of violent charges and convictions. Collaboration must include the direct input of youth, as their participation and ownership will increase engagement and buy-in from youth in the system.**
- 6. Seek out and evaluate community organizations that provide evidence-based services intended to prevent youth entry into the system or provide re-entry services. Provide capacity building opportunities to community organizations that may have limited access to funding, but have demonstrated creating effective programming and the potential to expand.**
- 7. Streamline and amend processes to ensure that youth either maintain Medicaid benefits while experiencing a period of detention or, if benefits cease during that time, are notified and re-enrolled before returning to the community.**
- 8. Support the JTDC Advisory Board report from 2019 that the JTDC be required to systematically collect data and publicly report on the use of punitive confinement or other isolation of young people in the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and make public what is already available in the JTDC Master Report. This data transparency and monitoring are essential tools for public officials and the community at large to understand the appropriate information and to provide oversight. This data is critical to assessing the re-entry landscape and best practices. It has been demonstrated that youth who experience isolation during detention and incarceration have significantly inferior outcomes when released, including high rates of suicidal ideation and self-harm.**

Both the literature and the accounts from directly impacted youth suggest that there is a need for greater investment in supportive re-entry systems, and a shift away from punitive supervision practices that set youth up with burdensome requirements that may lead to violations and reincarceration. Mentorship programs are distinguished from supervision in that youth can be given agency to choose their mentor and influence when and how they receive support from that person. Agency and a menu of options for productive ways to spend their time seems to give youth a sense of hope for their future

prospect, as reflected in the interviews with young people who engage with mentorship opportunities offered by Precious Blood Ministries.

Given that youth in Little Village did not have a similar program available to them, and were instead meeting in the home of a mother in the community, it is clear that greater investment in youth reentry supports are needed in Cook County. If these investments are made, young people in Cook County will have greater chances of succeeding in their communities after release and avoiding further contact with the criminal legal system. This will empower them to create new chapters in their lives and overcome obstacles they face in order to fulfill their potential.

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