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## WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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### HIGH-RISK JUVENILE OFFENDERS

Waukesha County Administration Center  
515 W. Moreland Blvd., Room A255/259  
Waukesha, Wisconsin

August 6, 2008  
1:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the August 6, 2008 meeting of the Special Committee on High-Risk Juvenile Offenders. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

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#### Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Carpenter called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Sen. Tim Carpenter, Chair; Reps. Rich Zipperer, Vice Chair, Tamara Grigsby and Roger Roth; and Public Members Barbara Franks, Craig Hasting, Devon Lee, Mark Mertens, Mike Moore, and Brad Schimel.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Public Members Walter Dickey, Wendy Henderson, and Michael Malmstadt.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Anne Sappenfield, Senior Staff Attorney; and Melissa Schmidt, Staff Attorney.

APPEARANCES: Victor Barnett, Executive Director, Running Rebels Community Organization; Charles Glynn, Director, St. Charles Youth and Family Services; Eric Meaux, Administrator, Delinquency and Court Services Division, Milwaukee County; Peter Slesar, Manager, Adolescent and Family Services Division, Waukesha County; and Ron Hauser, Vice President, Program Services, and Heather Yaeger, Director Homme Home, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin.

### **Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's July 10, 2008 Meeting**

*Mr. Hastings moved, seconded by Rep. Zipperer, that the minutes of the July 10, 2008 meeting be approved. The motion passed by unanimous consent.*

### **Description of Materials Distributed**

Anne Sappenfield, Legislative Council Senior Staff Attorney, highlighted the materials distributed at the meeting. This included Memo No. 3, Memo No. 4, Memo No. 5, a letter from Mr. Patrick Kenney, Deputy District Attorney, and a handout from the Division of Juvenile Corrections (DJC), Department of Corrections (DOC).

Ms. Sappenfield briefly explained that Memo No. 3 provides an interstate comparison of ages over which juvenile courts have delinquency jurisdiction. Memo No. 4 contains an informational report on adolescent brain development. Mr. Kenney's letter includes a proposed Youthful Offender/Anti-Recidivism bill. A supplemented second page was handed out at the meeting to accompany it. The DJC handout answered statistical questions about the inmate population's ethnicity, as requested at the last committee meeting. Melissa Schmidt, Legislative Council Staff Attorney, explained that Memo No. 5 describes Wisconsin's Youthful Offender Program, which was never implemented as it was replaced in 1995 by the Serious Juvenile Offender Program (SJOP). She said that Wisconsin's extended court jurisdiction statutes were also included in the Memo because SJOP replaced this program as well.

### **Presentations by Invited Speakers**

[Note: PowerPoint presentations and other documents referred to by the speakers are posted on the committee's Internet site.]

#### **Victor Barnett, Executive Director, Running Rebels Community Organization**

Mr. Barnett provided an overview of Running Rebels, including how it was formed, what programs it provides, and how many juveniles it serves. He shared that he started this program 28 years ago by taking 50 young people under his wing and connecting with them through basketball and other activities. He said that Running Rebels now works with youth both in the community and in correctional placements.

Running Rebels operates the Serious Chronic Offenders Program and the Firearms Program for juveniles adjudicated delinquent through a contract with Milwaukee County. Mr. Barnett reported that 75% of Running Rebels' funding is from Milwaukee County; the rest comes from the City of Milwaukee, the state, and fundraising. In response to questions, Mr. Barnett said that Running Rebels serves roughly 100 court-ordered youth at any given time. He stated the organization also provides wraparound mentorship to roughly 300 youth and prevention services to 100-150 young adults ranging from ages 19 to 25.

Mr. Barnett stated that Running Rebels is successful because of relationships that staff members form with the youth. He said that Running Rebels effectively changes youths' mindsets because it has

committed staff already from the youths' communities. He shared two success stories of its alumni now attending college. The program has seen 10 alumni graduate from college and three obtain master's degrees. Mr. Barnett highlighted three upcoming events Running Rebels will hold to encourage its youth to attend college. He said that the organization is also very successful in helping youth find jobs because of the employment preparation it provides.

**Charles Glynn, Director, St. Charles Youth and Family Services**

Mr. Glynn described how St. Charles Youth and Family Services operates Milwaukee and Dane Counties' FOCUS juvenile justice programs. He explained that FOCUS is a court-ordered disposition, divided into multiple phases. He stated that juvenile program participants have a court order placing him or her in a juvenile correctional facility but that this is stayed while he or she successfully participates in FOCUS. St. Charles administers the first phase – the residency portion – which prepares juveniles for placement back into the community where they will then be supervised by probation and Wraparound Milwaukee. He said that St. Charles serves roughly 250 children annually in Milwaukee. The average duration of residency is four to six months. If during participation in FOCUS, the juvenile commits a violation, then he or she is sent to a DJC facility instead.

Mr. Glynn said that St. Charles's success is its emphasis on relationships with the children, as well as the keeping them in their own community. He said that children become comfortable with violence and that St. Charles builds relationships to help change this in the participants. He said that the FOCUS program has a 70% success rate in Milwaukee and that Dane County's rate is higher.

In response to questions, Mr. Glynn said that every child is at-risk and that this should be included in the definition of high-risk offenders. He explained that Wisconsin needs to aid children at a younger age because kids are starting to exhibit serious behavior as early as age nine. Mr. Glynn also encouraged the committee to explore Missouri's youth correctional system. He described the system as empowering the adjudicated juveniles.

**Eric Meaux, Administrator, Delinquency and Court Services Division, Milwaukee County**

Mr. Meaux provided an overview of the juvenile justice services that Milwaukee County provides. He explained that Milwaukee is constantly reassessing its programs as high-risk offenders can quickly drain resources. He stated that in 2007, the county processed 3,800 referrals, with 780 referred by warrants.

Mr. Meaux stated that Milwaukee's juvenile justice system works collaboratively with outside organizations to operate 12 programs. These include both traditional and non-traditional services. In response to questions, he listed FOCUS, Running Rebels, and Wraparound Milwaukee among the most successful programs. He stated that the county struggles with the day treatment program. Mr. Meaux stated that any legislation the committee proposes should include full funding for Milwaukee County, as it already uses 50% of its budget to provide services for 16-year olds.

**Peter Slesar, Manager, Adolescent and Family Services Division, Waukesha County**

Mr. Slesar began his presentation by explaining that Waukesha County's juvenile justice programs are successful because of prudent management decisions. He stated that county officials recognize that youth do not act in isolation, apart from their family situation, and that the court cannot

bring about lasting changes unless there is an impact on other areas in the child's life. He stated that Waukesha County's strategy is establishing and maintaining an active partnership with everyone helping the child as a way to ensure that there is consistency between services.

Mr. Slesar reported that the county designates certain types of juvenile cases for intensive services. These cases are reassessed every six months. He stated that the county considers how well a child has done, not what was done. He said that Waukesha currently has eight juveniles in juvenile correctional facilities. He said that because of the high cost of these services, that if one or two more juveniles are placed in a juvenile correctional facility, this would cost Waukesha additional Youth Aids funding, resulting in county programs having to be cut.

**Ron Hauser, Vice President, Program Services, and Heather Yaeger, Director Homme Home, Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin**

Mr. Hauser described the relationship that Lutheran Social Services (LSS) maintains with DJC. He stated that it provides residential treatment for adjudicated juvenile delinquents. He said that LSS is family-focused and treats children in a safe environment while keeping them in the community. He also stated that LSS maintains a continuum of care to ensure that no one falls through the cracks.

Ms. Yaeger stated that LSS operates three residential treatment facilities. She described the Homme residential treatment facility in Whittenberg, where most of the SJOP participants served by LSS are sent. Most of the adjudicated juveniles they serve are from Lincoln Hills School. She said that Homme is licensed as a residential care center for children and youth and also as a community-based residential facility so that it can serve young adults. Ms. Yaeger reported that Homme has good working relationships with employers such as McDonalds, which helps them find employment for the juveniles.

Ms. Yaeger said that one problem Homme faces is the three-year limitation on residential placement for juveniles in SJOP. She said that most of these juveniles have already been incarcerated for three years and that this prevents Homme from providing residential treatment for the children. Mr. Hauser also shared that Wisconsin needs to find ways to identify children who need help because early intervention is the key to success.

**Discussion of Committee Assignment**

Ms. Sappenfield explained to the committee that there will be a speaker from the National Conference of State Legislatures at the September 16, 2008 meeting who will provide information on other states' juvenile justice systems. Chair Carpenter expressed the desire to have someone from Missouri also give a presentation to the committee. Ms. Sappenfield said she and Ms. Schmidt are working to find a speaker from Missouri as well.

**Other Business**

(During the morning of the committee meeting, committee members toured Ethan Allen School for Boys. The tour lasted roughly three hours.) There was no other business before the committee.

### **Plans for Future Meetings**

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be *Tuesday, September 16, 2008, at 10:00 a.m., in Room 411 South, State Capitol, Madison.*

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

MS:ksm