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Commission

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Conference Aims to Improve the Juvenile Court Response to Victims

The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission is hosting a conference designed to assist the 67 jurisdictions throughout the Commonwealth in improving the juvenile justice system's response to the victims of juvenile crime. The 2½-day conference will be held December 8-10, at the Harrisburg Holiday Inn East. Conference brochures and registration packets will be mailed to prospective participants in the coming month. The training conference will be co-sponsored by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Governor's Office of the Victim Advocate and the PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers.

The conference design is based on a recently released curriculum that was developed by the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges through discretionary grant funds provided by the national Office for Victims of Crime. The curriculum represents one of the final and most important phases of a multifaceted research, assessment, and consultation project which began in 1995. Pennsylvania was involved in an earlier phase of this project where juvenile court judges and crime

victims were brought together in one of four focus-group sessions conducted throughout the country to assess existing services and to gauge the extent of unmet needs of victims of juvenile crime.

In keeping with the tenets of the redefined purpose of Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act this conference will prepare system practitioners and policy makers to incorporate the best practices to enhance services to victims, and in doing so, enhance the community's perception of the system's purpose and value. In the system's striving to act in the best interests of the youthful offenders, the community, and the victims of crime, treating each as clients, public confidence in the system is bound to be improved. This curriculum offers practical and concrete steps to incorporate those refinements that have been demonstrated as being worthy of replicating.

The training, which is being adjusted to be made more Pennsylvania-specific by an interdisciplinary conference planning committee, will be led by a combination of national consultants, including judges, who were involved in the earlier research

and design of the curriculum, and several in-state experts. Among the presenters is Anne Seymour, a nationally recognized victims' rights and public safety consultant. Ms. Seymour has been a national victim advocate for more than 13 years and serves in an advisory capacity to many national criminal justice organizations on the rights and needs of victims of juvenile crime.

The targeted audience for this training conference is judges, masters, and other juvenile court professionals including juvenile court prosecutors, public defenders who serve in juvenile court, juvenile probation professionals and victim services personnel. Similar to the strategy used to convene county teams of judges and juvenile court professionals at the regional balanced and restorative justice implementation sessions, we will be asking the Chief Juvenile Probation Officers from throughout the Commonwealth to provide the leadership in assembling their county's team. We anticipate that teams of five including the above described professionals will attend the session from

each county. Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency grant funds will be utilized to offset the bulk of the costs connected with this training, including the cost of lodging for those participants outside a 50 mile radius of Harrisburg. There will be a \$50 per person registration fee to partially offset the cost of the continental breakfast provided each morning, refreshments provided at the breaks throughout the day, and lunches on Thursday and Friday.

The 17-module curriculum is designed to provide a comprehensive examination of the issues in the provision of services to victims of juvenile crime. The aspects of victim notification, meaningfully involving victims, how to best design and follow through with victim impact statements, and restitution matters will all be covered. The session includes interaction, group discussion and exercises. Participants will leave the session armed with effective strategies and skills to enable them to work in their own jurisdiction to improve the system's response to victims.

We believe that as each county strives to meet the challenges of incorporating the balanced and restorative justice principles that are a part of Pennsylvania's law this conference will be incredibly useful. The process of putting quality victim services into practice is arguably the area where we as a system have the greatest need for progress. This session holds the promise of providing many of the solutions we have been seeking.

Legislative Budget and Finance Committee Report on Children & Youth System

The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee (LB&FC) has released a report regarding Pennsylvania's Children and Youth System that was done in response to HR 426 of the 1997-98 Legislative Session. This Resolution, which was adopted by the House of Representatives (194-0) on May 6, 1998, directed the LB&FC to conduct a performance audit of the Commonwealth's children and youth agencies.

State and County Administration of Children and Youth Services

The LB&FC identified the following issues relating to the operation and management of Pennsylvania's children and youth service delivery system:

Unlike most states, in Pennsylvania responsibility for children and youth services is divided between state and county governments.

The LB&FC concluded that Pennsylvania is one of 15 states that operate a state-supervised/county-administered children and youth system. According to the LB&FC, such a system gives counties a relatively high degree of autonomy, but makes it difficult for the state to ensure that all children and families receive appropriate, high-quality services.

The LB&FC found substantial variation among counties in the percent of suspected child abuse reports substantiated, the ratio of child protective service to general protective service cases, the percent of children placed in institutional care, caseworker caseloads, and turnover rates.

Fiscal issues appear to consume an inordinate amount of state and county managerial effort. The LB&FC report found that the Commonwealth's children and youth system appears to be at, or at least very near, the point at which attending to fiscal matters is affecting the ability of the system to focus on its core mission.

County children and youth agencies are likely to come under increasing pressure as the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act and welfare reforms are implemented.

The LB&FC report concluded that county children and youth agencies will encounter increased pressure for services resulting from new demands placed on them by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act and welfare reform. The report concluded that welfare reform may result in families that are removed from the welfare rolls migrating to county children and youth agencies for services.

The number of children in out-of-home care has increased dramatically in recent years, and counties face a scarcity of foster care homes in which to place these children.

The LB&FC found that the number of children in out-of-home care has increased by 87% since 1980, from 12,640 to 23,653.

In Pennsylvania, as in many other states, children often remain in foster care for two or more years.

The report found that, in Pennsylvania, 46 percent of the children in foster care remain in
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Statewide Youth Aid Panel Conference Scheduled for October 2, 1999

The second annual Youth Aid Panel Conference, "Branching Out: Communities in Action" will be held on Saturday October 2, 1999, at the Glen Mills School in Concordville, Delaware County, Pennsylvania. This year's event is open to anyone in Pennsylvania who is interested in establishing new Youth Aid Panels or enhancing existing ones. There is no registration cost to attend.

The conference will feature a mock youth aid panel presentation, which will show how panel members engage in the panel process. Numerous workshops are planned, including YAP 101, Dealing with Conflict, Chemical Awareness, Recruiting Volunteers, and Contracts, Consequences and Accountability. Youth Aid Panel directors, coordinators, administrators, police officers, and other juvenile justice professionals will conduct the workshops. A chat room and an open forum on issues will be added to this year's conference to

facilitate the exchange of pertinent information.

Youth Aid Panels offer an alternative intervention for first-time offenders and involve community members in the process of juvenile justice. They provide for the protection of communities, accountability for offenses committed, and the opportunity for community members to have input into the competency development needs of the youth.

The conference is funded through a grant from the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency and is being hosted by The Community Dispute Settlement Program of Delaware County, Delaware County Youth Aid Panel, Delaware County Juvenile Court, and the Delaware County District Attorney's Office.

For more information on this conference contact the Community Dispute Settlement Programs at 610-566-7710.

Keith Graybill Joins JCJC Staff

The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission is pleased to announce that Keith A. Graybill joined its staff as the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG) Program Specialist on August 30, 1999.

Graybill brings a strong background in both juvenile probation and adult probation and parole to the Commission. He has worked for the Juniata County Probation Department for the past 18 years, serving as the Chief Adult and Juvenile Probation Officer for the past 12 years.

A member of the PA Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers and the Chief Adult Probation Officers Association, Graybill has been particularly active with the Pennsylvania Association of Probation, Parole and Corrections where he is currently serving as First Vice-President. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Social Work from Eastern Mennonite University and a Master of Science in Criminology from Florida State University.

Graybill can be reached at JCJC's administrative office in Harrisburg, 717-787-2860.

Cornell Abraxas

Positions Available

**Youth Workers, both full- and part-time;
Wilderness Youth Workers; Treatment Supervisor
Student Intern; Special Education Teacher**

All positions require at least 21 years of age and a high school diploma/GED.

Additional education and experience is helpful. Some positions require a bachelors degree. Bilingual applicants are encouraged to apply. Benefits for full-time employees include medical, dental, vacation days, sick days, holidays,

401(K), tuition reimbursement, free meals and more.....

Please forward resume or call for more information:

Susan Barber, Human Resources Specialist

Cornell Abraxas, P.O. Box 334, South Mountain, PA 17261

phone: 800-560-7731 fax: 717-749-3229

Cornell Abraxas WorkBridge Implements Innovative Project for Victims

Since 1987, Cornell Abraxas WorkBridge, in partnership with Allegheny County Juvenile Court, has been operating a comprehensive, community-based program serving the needs of delinquent youth aged 10-21 years. Cornell Abraxas WorkBridge Program offers many unique opportunities for supervision and rehabilitation that are mandated in Act 33 of Pennsylvania Juvenile Act, referred to typically as “the balanced approach” or “restorative justice.” During the past 12 years, Cornell Abraxas WorkBridge Program has experienced considerable success implementing goals that address the balanced approach theory.

However, until recently the WorkBridge Program has not been able to provide services to the victims of juvenile crime with any regularity. As of July 1, 1999, Allegheny County Juvenile Court, a strong advocate of restorative justice, increased Work-Bridge Program funding to provide enhanced victim services in collaboration with the Allegheny County Center for Victims of Violent Crime (CVVC). One such

enhancement is the development of a new and innovative project, the “Crime Repair Crew”. The Crime Repair Crew consists of sentenced offenders who have been court-ordered to perform community service hours, and an instructor. The Crew is available to victims, whether private citizens, businesses, or government entities. They receive assistance repairing damaged property within a day or two of the crime. Some of the benefits of the project include:

- ✓ Victims of property crimes experience a greater sense of immediate justice. Often many weeks pass before an offender is sentenced for a crime, leaving the victim without resolution for damage done, even though community work service and/or restitution have been ordered by the court.
- ✓ Communities benefit not only because damage is quickly repaired, but also because offenders are contributing their time and skills.
- ✓ The offender has an opportunity to repay the victim and a means by which to experience increased sensitivity toward the victim. All Crew members will

receive training in Victim Impact through the CVVC. In addition, the Crew Instructor and WorkBridge staff will facilitate the Victim Awareness Curriculum.

✓ The court has another avenue for providing immediate assistance to the public and humanizing the justice process. Law enforcement officers and social service agencies such as the CVVC can offer assistance to victims of property crimes by referring them to the Crime Repair Crew.

✓ Participation by offenders in work that improves the community and repairs harm done to victims has the potential for instilling in offenders a sense of investment in the community and provide victims with balanced attention and tangible benefits in conjunction with their interactions with the court.

Youth will go through a vocational training program prior to and during the operation of the Crew. Modules will be taught in the areas of basic tools and safety, window repair, interior wall repair, painting, carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and masonry. Youth will also participate in weekly workshops facilitated by an advocate from the CVVC. These workshops will provide instruction and training in areas such as conflict resolution, abuse, anger management, substance abuse, stress management, respect/self esteem, etc.

Participation and cooperation by those who deal with victims on a daily basis (juvenile court personnel, police officers and social service agencies) is the cornerstone of this project. They must have confidence that victims will a) receive a response from the Crime Repair Crew within a day or two, or even within hours; b) be dealt with in a respectful and

professional manner regardless of the victim's anger or lack of trust; and c) be satisfied with the quality of work. Prior to implementation of the Crime Repair Crew, WorkBridge will provide training and information to juvenile court personnel, police officers and social service agencies about the referral process to the Crew.

All the partners with Cornell Abraxas WorkBridge—Allegheny County Juvenile Court, the Center for Victims of Violent Crime, employers, and community and government leaders—are committed to the mission and principles of the Crime Repair Crew, which is to assist at-risk youth in becoming accountable and sensitive to their victims. *This article was submitted by Daniel Zarecky, program director for WorkBridge.*

LB&FC Report *cont'd from page 2*
foster care for two or more years.

Due in large part to the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN) Program, many more special needs children are now being placed in adoptive homes. The LB&FC found that in FY 1992-93, 731 special needs adoptions were finalized, while in FY 1997-98, this number had increased to 1,795. Much of this increase was attributed to the success of the Statewide Adoption Network (SWAN).

Pennsylvania's Adoption Act does not complement changes made to The Juvenile Act resulting from federal ASFA requirements. The LB&FC found that Pennsylvania's Adoption Act has not yet been amended to recognize federal ASFA requirements. A report from the Joint State Government Commission regard-

ing adoption laws is being developed.

The Department of Public Welfare (DPW) conducts thorough annual inspections of both county children and youth agencies and private providers. The LB&FC found that DPW inspections of county children and youth agencies and private providers were both thorough and comprehensive. In addition, the report concluded that these reports found the large majority of counties and private providers adhere to DPW regulations. However, for those few counties that have had difficulty meeting regulatory requirements, DPW has little choice but to continue granting provisional licenses and, if necessary, work with counties to improve their operations.

County caseload regulations are overly simplistic. The LB&FC found that DPW regulations require that county caseworkers be assigned to no more than 30 families. Although some counties may contract with private providers for virtually all direct services, they are not permitted to increase county caseloads beyond 30. In other counties, where caseworkers may be providing many services directly, the LB&FC concluded that caseloads of 30 may be too high and do not provide adequate safeguards for children.

Child abuse substantiation rates vary widely from county to county. In 1998, 24 percent of all reports of suspected child abuse were found to be substantiated, meaning that either child abuse occurred or the investigation found substantial evidence of such abuse. County substantiation rates varied from 9.5 per-

cent to 47.7 percent in Pennsylvania counties.

The ratio of child protective services to general protective services varies widely from county to county. The LB&FC found that six counties reported spending more on child protective services expenditures than on general protective services, while 31 counties reported spending more than twice as much on general protective services as child protective services.

In 1996, Pennsylvania had the second lowest rate of substantiated reports of abuse and neglect in the nation. The LB&FC report concluded that, in 1996, Pennsylvania substantiated only 2.1 reports of abuse and neglect per 1,000 children, the second lowest rate in the nation. The report concluded that Pennsylvania's rate is low, in part, because Pennsylvania includes only severe cases of abuse and neglect in its figures, whereas most other states have broader definitions of abuse and neglect. The report noted that the Child Welfare League of America, which compiled this data, noted many differences in state policies and reporting practices and cautioned against direct state-to-state comparisons.

Many, but not all, counties are experiencing high caseworker turnover rates. The LB&FC found that, in 1997, the statewide turnover rate for the entry-level Caseworker I position in the county children and youth agencies was 33 percent, varying from 0 in 25 counties to 100 percent in 4 counties. Turnover rates for the Caseworker II position were better, averaging 19 percent statewide. Low salaries, high

stress, large caseloads, and excessive paperwork were some of the factors cited for high turnover. The average salary for a Caseworker I was found to be \$20,008 as of June, 1998. Recruitment and retention problems resulting from the civil service system were also determined to be contributing factors.

PACWIS, a new statewide management information system, should be a more effective tool to monitor county performance than licensing inspections and child death reports.

The LB&FC noted that PACWIS, the Pennsylvania Child Welfare Information System, is expected to be operational in late 1999. In addition to automating routine clerical functions and providing operational information to both state and county managers, PACWIS will also collect outcome information that should provide the basis for a results-based, rather than process-based, management system.

Act 29 of Special Session No. 1 of 1995 requires that schools refer habitually truant students to county C&Y agencies, but neither DPW nor PDE has provided guidance to implement this requirement.

The LB&FC found that although Act 29 requires that school districts refer habitually truant students to the county children and youth agencies, neither DPW nor the Department of Education has issued any regulations or policy statements to provide guidance when such students should be referred to the agency or what these agencies should do once they receive such referrals. As a result, practices were found to vary widely from county to county and from school district to school district.

Pennsylvania does not have a penalty for false reporting and provides no additional punishments for assaults on children and youth workers.

Recommendations

The LB&FC included the following recommendations in its report.

1. The Department should take steps to resolve, or at least diminish, the fiscal issues that separate it and the counties.

Specifically, the LB&FC recommend that DPW improve communications with the counties, especially on how it arrives at a county's certified need figure; hire sufficient staff to process tentative and final allocation letters, quarterly advance payments, and quarterly reimbursement payments in a timely manner; establish realistic Title IV-E reimbursement goals; modernize and streamline the needs-based budgeting appeals process; and continue its efforts to obtain federal (Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act—CAPTA) monies, estimated to be about \$800,000 per year.

2. The Department should consider allowing counties to receive quarterly advanced payments of 20-25 percent, rather than 12.5 percent, of their certified needs.

The LB&FC report noted that county mental health and mental retardation programs receive quarterly payments of 25 percent of their certified needs.

3. DPW should modify its regulations governing caseload size to reflect the type of service being rendered.

4. The Department should use the PACWIS system to "benchmark" counties.

5. DPW should develop a policy for child death reviews.

The LB&FC reported noted that 52 children died due to abuse in 1998 and that Pennsylvania, unlike many states, does not require a formal review when such an event occurs. House Bill 519(1889) would mandate such reviews in all cases of child deaths where child abuse is suspected and where a county agency has investigated child abuse or neglect reports related to the child or to other children of the child's parents or has provided protective or general protective services to the child or siblings.

6. DPW should review its regional office staffing needs.

The LB&FC reported noted that DPW's four regional offices, with a total staff of 49, conduct licensing inspections and provide technical assistance to counties. The report included that recent legislation and new DPW policies will increase workloads at the regional offices. The report noted, as well, that county C&Y administrators commented that the regional offices, which they believed to be understaffed already, will be key to successful implementation of these new requirements.

7. DPW should provide additional guidance to its regional offices regarding provisional licenses.

The report indicated that DPW is in the process of developing a policy regarding provisional licenses that will clearly articulate steps to be taken when a county receives two or more consecutive provisional licenses.

8. DPW should develop a program to assist the counties in recruiting foster parents.

The report noted that half of the counties surveyed in conjunction with this report cited a lack of foster parents as a major problem.

9. DPW should report to the General Assembly about the feasibility and merits of a subsidized custodianship program.

10. DPW should expand the drug and alcohol training included in a county caseworker's core certification training.

11. DPW should explore the need for additional mental health services.

12. The Departments of Public Welfare (DPW) and Education (PDE) should develop a joint policy statement regarding truancy referrals.

13. DPW should work with the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission and the Pa. Conference of State Trial Judges to develop a training program for judges and court masters.

The report noted that additional training could serve to strengthen cooperation and

collaboration between the Commonwealth's juvenile courts and child welfare officials. The report noted that new federal funds may be available to support such training.

14. County C&Y officials should consider conducting follow-up visits.

The LB&FC recommended that counties conduct at least one follow-up visit to families after all the assessed risks have been addressed and the case is closed. The report noted that foster parents, in particular, expressed concerns about the need to follow-up once children are returned home to ensure the continued safety of the children.

15. County C&Y officials should begin to implement relevant recommendations contained in this report.

The report recommended that counties begin now to implement recommendations such as expanded D&A training for caseworkers, developing policies for habitually truant students with school districts, conducting follow-up visits, and modifying caseload sizes to reflect the types of service being rendered.

16. The General Assembly should consider imposing penalties for false reporting and additional punishments for assaults on children and youth workers.

The report noted that SB624(665) would impose penalties for false reports of child abuse, while HB 457(477) would increase penalties for assaults on children and youth caseworkers.

17. The General Assembly should amend the Pennsylvania Adoption Act to complement changes in The Juvenile Act resulting from federal ASFA requirements

18. The General Assembly should consider raising the age at which children can refuse mental health services.

The report noted that, under the Mental Health Procedures Act, children aged 14 and older can refuse mental health services. Act 53 of 1997 raised to 18 the age at which children can refuse drug and alcohol services. HB 342(355) would do the same for mental health services.

Staff Development

The Center for Juvenile Justice Fall Staff Development training series has received an overwhelming response in registration. More than 800 participants will attend the twenty CJJT&R-sponsored workshops this fall. Several programs, including "Working with Girls," "Working with Client Resistance," "Victim/Community Awareness Curriculum," "Male Issues and Violence" in Allentown and Pittsburgh, and "Enhancing Parent Effectiveness,"

have been closed to additional registrants and waiting lists have been established. Several other programs are near capacity.

In several dynamic sessions early in the fall season there is still space remaining. The "Intergroup Relations" workshop will be held on September 22 & 23 in the Harrisburg Holiday Inn East. This program will offer participants the opportunity to develop a personal, as well as organizational, strategy to value diversity and manage conflict. This program will be led by Dr. Violet

Plantz, an associate professor in the Lincoln University Master of Human Service Program. Dr. Plantz worked in a variety of direct-service settings directing drug and alcohol and child welfare programs earlier in her career. She is a gifted trainer who has directed Center-sponsored programs in the past and has received consistently positive feedback.

In addition, both of the regionally conducted sessions titled "Introduction to Balanced and Restorative Justice," held on September

23-24 in the Pittsburgh area, and on October 21-22 in the Allentown area, still have space remaining. This program is designed for probation officers and other practitioners who want to understand the fundamental principles which underlie the practice of juvenile justice in Pennsylvania. Participants will come to understand balanced and restorative justice values in greater depth and become empowered to begin to plan for meaningful reform needed in their local jurisdiction. These sessions will be co-led by Valerie Bender, an independent consultant with a background in both victims' services and juvenile

justice; Michael McCalpin, Administrator of the Blair County Juvenile Probation/Children and Youth/Cost and Fines Agency; and Susan Blackburn, Balanced and Restorative Justice Specialist for the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission.

To register for any of these workshops or to inquire further about these or any other Center-sponsored training please contact John Herb 717-477-1185 or fax your registration request to 717-477-1236.

CJIT&R Has a New Telephone Prefix

Please note that the Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research has a new phone prefix effective **August 1, 1999**. The new three-digit prefix is **477**. The main number will now be 717-477-1704.