

VIRGINIA COMMISSION ON YOUTH

June 6, 2018

11:00 a.m.

House Committee Room C
Ground Floor, Pocahontas Building

MEETING MINUTES

Attending:

Senators Barbara Favola, Chair, Dave Marsden
Delegates Richard “Dickie” Bell, Vice-Chair, Emily Brewer, Jay Jones, Mark Keam
Citizen members Avohom Carpenter, Deirdre “Dede” Goldsmith, Chris Rehak
Invited members of the Select Committee on School Safety: Delegates Steve Landes,
Charniele Herring, Vivian Watts

Not Attending:

Senator Charles “Bill” Carrico; Delegates Chris Peace, Todd Pillion

Staff Attending

Amy Atkinson, Will Egen, Christine Wilcox

I. Call to Order and Opening Remarks

Senator Barbara A. Favola, Chair

Senator Favola welcomed Commission members and meeting participants and asked for introductions.

II. Approval of Commission on Youth 2018 Study Plans

The 2018 study plans to be considered are:

- *Collection of Evidence-based Practices for Children and Adolescents with Mental Health Treatment Needs*
- Barriers to Obtaining a Driver’s License for Virginia’s Foster Youth
- Review of the Standard of Proof to Determine a Founded Case of Child Abuse and Neglect
- Review of Virginia’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program – Workforce Development and Childcare
- School Resource Officers: Overview and Presentation of Strategies in Virginia

Senator Favola requested a motion to adopt the study plans by unanimous consent. The motion was made by Senator Marsden and seconded by Delegate Keam. The motion was adopted unanimously.

The Study Plans, as adopted by the Commission, can be accessed on the Commission’s webpage under the Studies tab.

III. School Resource Officers

Senator Marsden stated that the purpose of the remainder of the meeting was to gather information about how school resource officers operate in Virginia schools. Three presentations were made to the Commission, as listed below. The full content of these presentations are posted on the Commission’s website under the Meetings tab.

- **School Resource Officers in Virginia**

Donna P. Michaelis, Manager, Virginia Center for School and Campus Safety, Division of Law Enforcement, Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services

Ms. Michaelis reviewed the history of SROs in Virginia and presented data and information concerning SRO demographics and training. Key points include the following: SRO training and certification is mandatory only for SRO positions that are grant funded. Local Sherriff departments are responsible for sending SROs to trainings, for their conduct in the schools, and for addressing complaints. Trainings are well attended by SROs, but attendance by school administration partners is not well attended. School Threat Assessment Teams can recommend services for at-risk youth but do not have the authority to mandate services.

- **What the Data Tell Us: Influences on Keeping Kids in the Classroom, and Out of the Courtroom**

Gerard Lawson, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS; President –American Counseling Association; Professor of Counselor Education, School of Education, Virginia Tech

Dr. Lawson presented findings from part one of Virginia Tech research concerning SROs' role in Virginia schools in relation to the "school-to-prison pipeline." This study was prompted by findings of the Center of Public Integrity (CPI) that Virginia led the nation in student referrals (15.8 per 1000 students). Key points include the following: CPIs findings do not capture student outcomes in relation to court involvement; the Virginia Tech study found that only 2.3 per 1000 Virginia students appear before court intake officers. However, Virginia schools are referring disabled students and some minority groups to SROs at a disproportionate rate. This disproportionality is not increased by SRO or court action.

- **An Investigation of School Resource and Safety Programs Policy and Practice in Virginia**

Laura E. Welfare, PhD, LPC, NCC, ACS; Professor of Counselor Education, School of Education, Virginia Tech

Dr. Welfare presented findings from part two of Virginia Tech's research, which surveyed SROs and SSOs, their supervisors, and their school liaisons. Key points include the following: Surveys revealed that SROs believe that more training is needed on mental health issues and on working with special needs students. In regard to SROs becoming involved in school discipline, 50 percent of SRO liaisons report that they request this type of assistance once a month, about 17 percent request it once a week, and 20 percent never make this request.

- **Further Action**

- Senator Favola directed staff to develop recommendations on training.
- Senator Favola requested information on best practices in school discipline at the December meeting of the Commission on Youth.
- Senator Favola requested more information about how to bridge the gap between threat assessment and ensuring proper follow-up treatment for at risk youth.

IV. Public Comment

- **Kerri Wright, Hanover County Public Schools**, spoke in favor of school resource officers. SROs provide a positive image of law enforcement at schools. SROs do not enforce school policies.
- **Lt. Jason Seamster, Chesterfield County Police Dept., School Safety Unit**, spoke in favor of school resource officers. SROs can make positive differences in the lives of students and can help them become effective community members.
- **Chad Knowles, Chesterfield County Public Schools**, spoke positively of school resource officers and shared his belief that SROs are an extension of the community policing idea. SROs play a critical role for our school community.
- **Donna Sayegh, Citizens for Self-Government**, expressed concerned about the lines of communication at the local school level and how it impacts the way discipline is carried out. Ms. Sayegh provided written comments to the Commission.
- **Alana Simmons, Ph.D., Parent/Community Activist**. Dr. Simmons was unable to attend the meeting in person but provided video and written comments to the Commission. Senator Favola shared Dr. Simmons' comments with the Commission: Dr. Simmons believes that there needs to be more training for SROs on cultural and other differences and on the ability to relate to a diverse student body.
- **Beth Tolley**, suggested that National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) may be a resource to provide training for SROs, and noted that NAMI trainings are available across the state.

V. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:55 p.m.