

# STATE ADVISORY COUNCIL ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Lander, Wyoming  
May 6-7, 2004

## Minutes

**Council Members Present:** Stephen Aaron, Sarah DeMerritt, Adam George, Ric Paul, Scott Ratliff, William Runner, Ian Sandefer, Kelly Valdez, Hon. Bruce Waters, Charles Whiton

**DFS:** Lesley Osen

**Ex-Officio Members Present:** Aaron Holst

**Unable to Attend:** Sarah Ascienzo, Ericka Cook, Mindy Dahl, John Frentheway, Donald Fuller, Raine Holgate, Ronnald Jeffrey, Robert Mayor

**Guests:** Ken Griffin, Donna Sheen

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**Welcome and Introductions:** Chairman Bill Runner called the meeting to order.

Bill Runner asked for an introduction of the members attendance.

The Council reviewed the minutes from the last meeting, Ric Paul proposed a motion to approve the minutes, Charley Whiton seconded, motion passed

Appointments to workgroups were made for members who were not at the last meeting. Scott Ratliff – Systems and Grant Review, Sarah DeMerritt and Adam George – Title 14 Review,

Council members divided into workgroups for a work sessions.

Charley Whiton reported for the Data Collection group, would like to schedule a meeting with Rodger McDaniel regarding data collection and WYSAC. What data can DFS supply to WYSAC.

Charley Whiton proposed a motion that the Data Collection group meet with Joe Evans to discuss in detail the data collection system, Ric Paul seconded the motion. Motion passed.

A discussion followed regarding the Back on Track program and what data it can collect. It was suggested to have someone familiar with Back on Track do a demonstration for the council showing all of its capabilities.

Bruce Waters reported for the Systems Group, the group reviewed the Title 14 recommendations, the Systems Group would like to meet with Donna Sheen to get more information.

Bill Runner reported that he had spoken with Rodger McDaniel regarding the purpose of the Council and a job description for the council coordinator.

Bill Runner will contact the Governor's policy analyst for the Council, Ryan Lance regarding the Council's involvement with the Title 14 review per statute.

Ian Sanderfer then reported for the Public Relations and Collaboration Group, the next newsletter will contain an article regarding the mentor program run through Mercer House in Casper. Also an article regarding how national policy effects Wyoming.

Ian also reported on the collaboration efforts with other councils who deal with the juvenile justice system, Lesley Osen handed out brochures for the Alcohol Conference sponsored by the Enforcing Underage Drinking Laws program. Aaron Holtz will be attending the Drug Court Association meetings and will report back to the Council.

Next on the agenda was a report by Michael Bronson regarding the Wyoming Girls School, Mr. Bronson was unable to attend the meeting.

Bill Runner had Lesley Osen read an e-mail correspondence he had received from council member John Frenthway who could not attend the meeting. (e-mail is attached)

The Council stated their disappointment that Michael Bronson or a representative from the Department of Family Services was not in attendance to give a report on the current situation at the Wyoming Girls School and answer questions from the Council.

Ric Paul proposed a motion that a letter be drafted to Rodger McDaniel, with a copy going to Governor Freudenthal and Michael Bronson, Scotty Ratliff seconded the motion. Discussion followed regarding the content of the letter, why Michael Bronson did not attend the meeting and the Council's support of the Girl's School, (will it be as good or better). After the discussion the motion passed. Charley Whiton will draft the letter.

Next on the agenda was report by Lesley Osen on the Governor's Roundtable on Children and Families. She provided copies of a survey that was distributed at the Roundtable and asked Council members to take the time to fill it out and return it to Marilyn Patton at DFS. The information will be used in coordination with House Bill 33.

Lesley Osen next gave a report on the current JAIBG grants. A spreadsheet was included in the agenda packets which shows current balances for all the grants. Lesley also reported on the Wyoming Juvenile Justice Conference which is being funded by JAIBG funds, the conference is scheduled for June 17-18 in Sheridan. The Council was informed that the fifty dollar registration fee would be waived for all Council members.

Next on the agenda was a tour of the Fremont County Juvenile Detention Facility. Stacy Strassor and Rebecca Alexander first met with the Council to distribute information regarding the facility and its education process and answer questions.

Ken Griffin from the Wyoming Statistical Analysis Center was next on the agenda. Ken Griffin had sent a report to all Council members and asked if anyone had any questions or concerns regarding the report.

A discussion followed regarding the type of data that is compiled by WYSAC and who provides the data. The current report that is provided is a compliance report that is needed by the WCCA for their non-compliance grant.

Ken Griffin's recommendation was that a team was needed to address the research needs of the counties, it should include Department of Family Services, WCCA, and Council members. The data is needed to provide a picture of juveniles in the system. He will report to the Council on what the capacity of the current system is

Ric Paul proposed a motion to form a committee to work with the Council Data Group, Scotty Ratliff seconded, motion passed. The Data Collection Group will represent the Council.

Next on the agenda Donna Sheen reported on the Juvenile Court Enhancement Initiative. There are four courts who are currently attending training, Sweetwater, Sheridan, Teton and Park. She next reported on House Bill 33, the survey, which was handed out at the Governor's Roundtable is available on the DFS website. The steering committee is being appointed by Governor Freudenthal. She recommended that whatever issues the Council want to convey to the steering committee be sent in a letter to Rodger McDaniel and Marilyn Patton. She will contact Marilyn Patton regarding the Council's involvement with House Bill 33. She also recommended a letter be sent to Alfrida Gonzalez, Governor Freudenthal's senior policy analyst, requesting a member of the Council be on the steering committee. Charley Whiton would be willing to serve on the committee.

Scotty Ratliff proposed a motion for Bill Runner to contact the Governor regarding the Council's involvement with House Bill 33, including support of any members who may have already submitted their names. Charley Whiton seconded the motion. Motion passed.

The Council had Donna Sheen review Wyoming Statute 14.10.101, which created the Council.

The Council decided to continue working and complete the last item on the agenda, a review of the strategic plan.

The Council did a page by page review of the strategic plan. Lesley Osen will make the suggested changes and send the new document out to members for approval.

The next meetings of the Council are scheduled for August 12 and 13 in Worland and November 4 and 5 in Casper.

Bill Runner adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lesley Osen

**E-mail from John Fretheway to Bill Runner as Chairman for the State Advisory Council on Juvenile Justice.**

Gentlemen

I hope you will be able to go the meeting this week. I have to go with my son to California and the National Gymnastics finals.

I really can't express how upset and frustrated I am about the changes of the girls school. It seems that if there were any changes to make at the institution the baby didn't need to be thrown out with the bath water. The following are a few facts that I sent over to Tony Lewis in a response to the closing. I really wish I could be there this week to listen to the reasons that Mike Bronson gives to you. I hope that one of you will hold his feet to the fire about why Gary was put into a position to resign. My E-mail States more of my concern. If there is anything we should advise on, it should be on this. I know from experience that we have lost a very valuable asset to the juvenile system.

JEF

Tony (directed to Tony Lewis, Deputy Director, Department of Family Services, LO)  
Thank you for stepping forward and answering my Email. After I read through my Email I realized that I had stooped to the same level I was complaining about. I don't want to get into a spitting match with you or any one else. I apologize to you or anyone else that may have been offended by my approach in my Email , but the substance is valid. I am sorry you can not understand my frustration. As a GAL I do have the responsibility of gaining the facts in order to recommend placements or dispositions that are in the child's best interest. Over the years I have been spoiled. The directors of the private institutions have taken it upon them selves to contact me and others in the system to inform us of what they are about. Many times I have been contacted by the managers of facilities, in state and out of state, who have explained what they are trying to do, what type of child they are trying to serve, what model

they are using, the benefits they hope to achieve for the community etc. In deed they have even invited me and others for input in the development of their treatment systems and models. They have taken time to go to the Judges and other stakeholders in the system to give them information that will aid in the process of making decisions which are life forming.

FACT: Gary did that with the Girls School through out the years. It was obvious to all who visited there that he, his predecessors and staff are the experts. If there were concerns about the system he would discuss them openly. Gary was always open to change if it was in the best interest of the children. Gary is a man of high integrity and moral foundation. I have never observed or heard of any activity that would indicate otherwise. His product supported that. There is nothing, nothing, that has ever indicated otherwise. If there have been problems, and there have been in the past, he always took the approach that was best for the girls and second for his staff and last for himself, if he ever thought of himself. When I got a report that he resigned because "changes were to be made", I have cause to wonder what changes were being demanded. He would not just get up and leave after thirty years unless he truly believed that the proposed changes were detrimental to the girls, staff or both. It could possibly be that the "messenger" was hostile in his/her approach because of what he was demanding. I have talked to staff since his resignation and I have been told that the message and the messenger were hostile. The term "hostile take over" was not mine but was told to me by the staff. That kind of attitude is not good for my clients and sets up some real concern for me for the future.

FACT: As I said in my previous Email, the success of the system at the Girls School under Gary's administration, that I have witnessed, cannot be impugned. Mike Bronson told me directly that "the direction was going to change from a therapeutic model to a corrective model". That Gary has been using techniques that "were used in the 1970's" and needed updated. I felt that the statement was cavalier, arrogant and obviously lacking in research in light of the results. I was absolutely stunned that we would no longer have the resource of what has been called "The best adolescent treatment facility in the country". I told him that the Girl's School was originally labeled as a penal institution and if that was what the future was going to bring then he shouldn't be upset if we used the local services and other facilities.

FACT: Mike explained that, as a result of a suicide attempt, all the dorms were going to be made secure. Knowing that a high level of security already existed, I can only believe that he was stating that the new approach would be locks and bars. That is a giant step backwards. One of the benefits of the Girls School is the openness, homelike and peace of the campus. Many girls have reported to me of the safety and security and peace they have felt there without unnecessary punishment. Many parents have been encouraged to go to the school and see that their daughters were going to be treated like developing youths and not little adults. Many parents have thanked me and the court system for using the Girls School for their daughters because of the environment there. Mike

indicated, to me, that he or DFS was going to change that.

FACT: Mike indicated that the population was too high and girls would be released. Within the week of Mike's call I learned of one of my client who had been released without the benefit of an MDT. An now this case where this girl was in Colorado, with out a plan, hanging with "some friends" but still in the custody of the State of Wyoming. Again we did not have an MDT and nobody knew she was coming or that she was released. These things just didn't happen under Gary's administration. I do not believe the remaining staff would do such things except for the changes indicated by Mike.

FACT: I have communicated with staff concerning other young ladies who are being considered for release. During the communications I was told that they (the staff) feel a continuous stress and pressure. I further learned that the staff is directed to use systems and models that are "180 deg. from the way we did it before". It was during these conversations that I learned that Gary Gilmore did use the term "hostile take over" when he first came to "investigate" the circumstances there. The individuals I talked to were present at the meeting. I have always found them to be trustworthy and honest in the past. I also learned that Mark Robinson was released? and Todd Richins is on administrative leave.

FACT: Not withstanding the intendment in your response, I know better then you of my responsibilities. I take my work seriously and continue to do it because I know what "Mother Wyoming" can do to children and for children. As I said, I can not, in good faith or conscience, refer clients to places that are not proven by time or explained to me. If a system is not proven by time and comes without an explanation then it is an unknown. I can not refer my clients there. That is the ominous question mark I was referring to. The fact that it is a state institution does not always give it a green light in my book. Had I known that the system was going to be changed, and if I knew what it is changed to I would have had the opportunity to argue against the system. The MDT's for each of the girls, who are there, based their decisions on sending the girls there with the understanding of what the model was at that time. It seems that there is a due process problem because the girls are now in a system that was not even offered to the MDT's.

At this point we, down in the trenches, are over a barrel. I really don't like my clients being used as tests cases in a new system. You have suggested that I need to do my home work so I will begin at this time. I will collect the names of all of my clients at the Girl's School and we will begin to review all of their cases. I will honestly try to help reduce the population as much as I can by seeing if we can place the girls in a lesser restricted facility, in their best interest.

JEF

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> Thanks for the update on . This type of thing happened rarely

> 15 years ago. It hasn't happened in many years because of the system we

> all have worked to try to achieve the last two decades. I believe that

> it is indicative of what we will continue to experience from the girls  
> school now that there has been a "change" without any consideration to  
> what has been developed over the last 25 years. What has happened is  
> exactly what we had tried to avoid when we suggested to Mike Bronson to  
> not change the Girl's School from the great system it was.

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> I'm saddened, disheartened, and guarded about what to expect from the  
> Girl's School at this point. I have no desire to send any of my clients  
> there at this point. My clients do not need to be treated as prisoners.  
> They need to be given structure in a secure but safe non hostile  
> environment set up for the purpose of bringing about a lasting change in  
> them. I know that is what the Girls School did in the past because I  
> personally witnessed the change in hundreds of girls. The Judges,  
> educators, parents, therapists, case workers, community members, clergy,  
> friends etc who have reported to me through the last twenty years have  
> confirmed my perception. They, like me, will be considered as part of  
> the uneducated hick Wyomingites who really don't know and are easily  
> misled by our perceptions. I guess we should all be grateful for those  
> great knowledgeable ones from the "real world" to lead us poor minions to  
> greater light.

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> At this point I feel I will be sending my clients to a complete unknown  
> facility whose workers have not been given information of the future  
> goals of the program. I can not in good faith support an institution  
> that is represented by an ominous "question mark". I guess that's  
> good because from what I have heard through the grape vine Mike doesn't  
> want them any way. To my knowledge (no one has contacted me about what  
> is happening for 3-4 weeks when Mike called me and announced the take  
> over and that Gary had "resigned") they have ordered that "no child will  
> be admitted to the facility without the superintendent's authority".

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> The unfortunate thing is that the good people who were there and who are  
> still there will get the blame for the system breaking down. The saddest  
> thing is that the program, that has stood as a life changing experience  
> for thousands of girls, has been lost in one single swipe in the form of  
> a "hostile take over" (those are the words used by Gary Gilmore when he  
> and Elsa and the "Team" came in to make the changes according to those  
> who were in attendance at the initial take over meeting). If changes  
> needed to be made they could have been done in less acrimonious and a  
> more organized way

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> JEF

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