Gang Reduction and Intervention Task Force (GRIT)

Village Meeting Notes

January 19, 2022

Meeting called to order at 12:00 p.m. by Sarah Augustine, Executive Director Dispute Resolution Center.

Guest Speakers: Candi Shute, Yakima County Juvenile Court Administrator

These are notes from the meeting. Additional information can be found in the accompanying document, About Juvenile Crime in Yakima County

* Candi thanked Ann Dibble, DRC GRIT liaison, for help in collecting census and other data
* 70% of detained youth are Hispanic, which corresponds to community population
* Community members question if detentions are skewing up: No, they’ve been trending down for 14 years
* Why are youths detained: about 30% for assault, then theft, then lesser crimes
* In 2019, females accounted for about 25% of detentions, which is unusually high; generally, 1 in 14 detained youth are female
* 2019 - 372 youth were detained, and they averaged 1.8% detentions each
* 1% of 10- to 17-year-olds are detained, and they average 8 days of detention each. Some are detained a few hours to 24 hours; those with the most serious offences may be detained 1-2 years
* 32% of Yakima County is 19 years old or younger
* Approximately 30% of children in the City of Yakima live in poverty
* Recommendation: *Bridges Out of Poverty* book which speaks extensively on the language and culture of poverty
* Currently, all probation officers are bilingual
* The day in life of a detained youth
  + Arise 6 am, shower, eat, help with a chore (a teaching tool)
  + 7:30-11:30 am - school (earn school credits). This is sometimes interrupted by an appt. with an attorney or by court
  + Lunch
  + Resume school until 2:30 pm
  + Enrichment programming until 4:30 pm (faith, Planned Parenthood, etc.)
  + Dinner 4:30-6 dinner
  + Then movie, gym, write letters, buy snacks in exchange for points earned for good behavior
* COVID impacts
  + Phone calls are now no-fee
  + Allowed in the pods: papers, crayons, nerf hoop, pens/pencils, etc. For a time, family visits were eliminated due to COVID, necessitating more provisions for youth to keep themselves occupied and to feel less isolate. These allowances were not pulled once visit resumed.
* Detentions dropped 2/3 across the state when the governor issued stay-at-home guidelines in 2020 and then when 2021 changes in the law were implemented for lesser offenses.
* Yakima County detention compared with other counties: we run in the upper 1/3 for detentions because we are one of the larger counties. Today (1/19/22) 8 kids were in detention; two other counties in the state had more.
* Youths must be a serious risk to public safety to be detained, not at risk to themselves (runaway, drugs), which is dissimilar to before. This has brought numbers down statewide.
* Impact of domestic violence – There aren’t numbers available, but anecdotally, many youths in the juvenile justice system are exposed to DV as a witness or victim.
* What can community members do to help support juvenile justice work?
  + Educate themselves about changes in juvenile justice systems laws and be proactive in reaching out to legislators to share what they are comfortable or uncomfortable with.
  + Volunteer / investigate juvenile justice as a career
  + Volunteer to work with kids that aren’t in in the juvenile justice system
  + Reserve judgement of why youths are in the juvenile justice system

The meeting ended at 1 p.m.

The next GRIT Village meeting: February 16, 2022, via Zoom. Presenter details are being finalized.