Joint Policy Statement on Aftercare

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

January 1, 2005

JOINT POSITION ON AFTERCARE FOR DELINQUENT YOUTH

We, stakeholders in the juvenile justice system of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, pledge to collaborate with each other and with other stakeholders to develop a model aftercare system in Pennsylvania for youths leaving delinquency placements. Effective aftercare furthers the Commonwealth's goals of promoting a balanced approach to juvenile justice while providing rehabilitation and treatment to delinquent youth, thereby encouraging continued life success.

Aftercare is the combination of services, planning, support and supervision that begins at disposition, continues while a youth is in placement, anticipates the youth's release from placement, continues until the youth is discharged from juvenile court supervision, and extends thereafter through connections to other opportunities, supports or services, such as those provided to dependent children. Aftercare is a key goal of the juvenile justice plan presented to Governor Rendell in 2003 by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee of PCCD. The plan recognized that aftercare is crucial if youths are to benefit from residential treatment programs and successfully return home; and that it is also a key element in promoting public safety.

It is our goal to support every Pennsylvania county in developing a comprehensive aftercare system by the year 2010. These comprehensive and coordinated systems will adhere to best practice standards. A model system must ensure that county children and youth agencies and juvenile probation departments, each year in their Needs Based Budget request, include services to support youth returning from delinquency placements. A model aftercare system must ensure that public schools work with placement facilities, juvenile courts and juvenile probation to guarantee every interested youth a prompt and smooth return to an appropriate classroom.

As the Commonwealth moves toward integrating services, it is critical that youth involved in the juvenile justice system are able to have timely access to necessary services that will ensure their successful re-entry into the community. A coordinated and integrated system will provide access to quality services and ensure better outcomes for these youth and their families.

To create a comprehensive system, Commonwealth agencies will work together to help adjudicated youth realize their full potential by providing them with the structure and tangible help they need to become productive citizens. We will help create a pathway to the programs and services necessary to adjust and succeed after leaving residential treatment. A comprehensive system should foster coordination between placement staff and probation officers to provide integrated planning and treatment. Services to assist delinquent youth in overcoming problems, building strengths and developing competencies should be provided consistently in placement and after the youth's return to the community. A comprehensive approach to aftercare will ensure that youth receive timely and appropriate social supports as demonstrated by the ability to: 1) enroll immediately in school or have a job waiting, 2) continue the follow-up services that are required for those who received physical or behavioral health treatment while in care, and 3) have strong adult support from family or other caring adults.

In particular, we will work together to create a system in which:

- Aftercare begins at disposition and is tailored to the individual needs and capacities of each youth.

- Juvenile probation officers and residential treatment staff collaborate on a single plan, developed within 30 days of placement, that integrates treatment and aftercare services, including appropriate education placements and goals developed in consultation with the appropriate school district.

- Juvenile probation officers, in cooperation with residential treatment staff, host school district representatives and resident school district representatives, refine the plan as youths move closer to leaving the facility to include post-release provisions that establish the services to be provided and planned conditions of supervision.

- There is systematic oversight to ensure that placement facilities link their "supervision, care and rehabilitation" within the facility to the plan for treatment and supervision in the community.

- "Competency development" is a key, well-defined part of residential treatment and of post-placement expectations.

- Juvenile court judges, at disposition review hearings, routinely inquire about a youth's aftercare plan, and enter court orders, in anticipation of discharge, that are sufficiently detailed to give direction to probation officers or treatment staff.

- Juvenile court judges and juvenile probation officers further the principles set forth in the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Standards Governing Aftercare Services.

- Juvenile defenders and prosecutors attend all disposition review hearings

- Juvenile defenders visit their clients in placement.

- Upon their request, the views of crime victims are invited and considered in aftercare planning and at dispositional review hearings.

- The aftercare plan addresses the youth's activities related to accountability to the victim and community.

- All probation officers have the skills to fulfill their obligations as monitors as well as planners for re-entry and supporters of youth who have left residential care.

- Intensity of supervision is proportionate to the risks and needs of delinquent youth.

- County children and youth agencies keep their doors, and cases open to youths who entered the delinquency system from the child welfare system and who should be

receiving foster care and other services as "dependent children" upon release from a residential facility.

- In appropriate cases, county children and youth agencies support the petitions of delinquent youth to be adjudicated dependent children prior to their 18th birthdays.

- Resident school districts promptly enroll all youth who wish to return to public school, working with the host school district and juvenile probation to ensure a seamless transition to an appropriate setting.

- Evidence-based prevention programs, such as the Blueprints for Violence Prevention, are considered for use as post-discharge services.

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