

Oak Park and River Forest Youth Services
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, December 2th 2015

In attendance: John W., Marge T., Ana S., Ade O., Keith B., Willie M., Kim F., Molly U., George B., Dick B., Pat B., Lynn H., Bob G., Amy H., Ashley S.

Call to Order: 6:50pm

Approval of last month's minutes: Marge motioned, Molly seconded, motion passes unanimously.

Public Comments: none

Director's Report:

Mentoring session went really well. John was expecting to see 18 registered attendees and was pleasantly surprised to see 32. The group engaged in a very active dialogue and John has since received a lot of positive feedback about the session.

A new alternative program (Menta) has opened. Schools seem to be referring a high volume of students there for a variety of reasons. There are some concerns that this program is being used as a "one stop shop." They do not have any curriculum specialists and based on visits made from committee members, the staff at Menta don't always seem to be on the same page. The overall concern is that youth are not benefitting as much from this model as before where students were referred to specific programs, like FACE IT or T.I.M.E., which specifically addressed their individual situations.

John was approached by Big Brother / Big Sister and is working on helping them find a place to do their mentoring.

In Late November, John met with representatives from Concordia to discuss launching a pilot program. The program would begin with 3 students (potentially this coming semester) and then expand to 21 students (next Fall). This program would be different from other programs in that it would be a 10 month program instead of a 12 week program. The goal of the program is to get students out into the community to work with at risk kids in grades 6-8 who are on track to not graduate. Students would then be able to enroll for internships through the township or social service agencies connected with the Township. There are several logistical issues to still work out, but overall, it was a positive and productive meeting.

The Interventionists are seeing a lot of cases that involve hospitalization, shifts in guardianship, a rise in domestic violence between kids and parents/guardians and more mental health issues that are either being misdiagnosed or going undiagnosed.

Liaison Reports:

Mental Health Board is looking to set up strategies that will help them be more proactive with the issue of homelessness.

More promotional work needs to be done. People in the community don't have an understanding of all the services the township provides until they need it. Township supervisor, David Boulanger, will be attending a town meeting with Mayor Anan which will give him the opportunity to pass on information about the Township.

New Business:

October reports for several of our contractors were reviewed.

Going into the next cycle of contracting, mentoring will continue to be a focus. It has taken some time, but contractors are now understanding how to integrate this into their respective programs

A discussion was opened on how to think outside the box. The big question for the coming cycle is what kind of process will we use to encourage contractors to create programs that allow underserved youth to pick up new knowledge and skills and help them feel good about themselves?

Community involvement is key in the coming contract cycle. The committee would like to see some kind of showcase or performance from programs.

John suggested changing the bucket item from "job readiness" to "STEM" which was well received by the committee.

A sign-up sheet for site visits was passed around.

January 6 will be a combination mentoring + contract networking event.

Meeting adjourned: 8:53 p.m.