

## **Arlington Community Services Board – Children and Youth Committee**

**February 11, 2013**

Committee Present: Shauna Alonge, Janine Finnell, Betsy Greer, Linda Staheli, Marguerite Tomasek, Naomi Verdugo

Guests: Alisa Cowan, Judy Deane, Dusty Sparrow

Presenters: Leslie Weisman (CSB-BHC), Brenda Wilks (APS)

Staff: Tom Wallace (minutes)

1. Call to order: meeting called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Betsy Greer.
2. Governor's task force report: Betsy Greer introduced Leslie Weisman, Bureau Chief for Client Services Entry in the Behavioral Healthcare Division, who has been tapped to serve on the governor's task force on campus safety. Ms. Weisman discussed the makeup of the 18-person group and the work done thus far. Three of the issues the task force has recommended have been passed to the general assembly by the governor. They are: suicide prevention, more outpatient positions for child and family behavioral health services, and more dollars for crisis stabilization and mental health first aid. Ms. Weisman offered an overview of the rigorous train-the-trainer classes for mental health first aid, and she answered questions about the work of the local mental health/criminal justice group she has been working with for the past nine years. She also answered questions about implementing training in CIT techniques with children, and the logistical challenges of getting law-enforcement personnel on board with additional training.
3. Discussion with Brenda Wilks, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, Arlington Public Schools: Dr. Wilks outlined the multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that is in development. It provides a seamless process for addressing the educational and emotional/social needs of students, and will be rolled out to all teachers at all grade levels. MTSS addressed behavioral and academic needs, and involves constant re-evaluation to ensure that students with challenges in either of those areas are identified and provided with the most appropriate and effective services available. Dr. Wilks also aims to restructure the school assignments of psychologists and social workers so that they remain in the same elementary-middle-high pyramid, thereby getting to know their children and families long-term and serving them better.

Committee members shared some of their experiences with the school system and behavioral issues, and the need to increase awareness of mental health issues at each of the schools. The group discussed the possibility of implementing NAMI's Breaking the Silence curriculum, and the need to re-establish closer collaboration between DHS and APS. Among the topics addressed:

- Restarting the DHS-APS Mental Health Task Force. A meeting will be arranged for mid-March.
- Improving the level of cooperation between schools and transition services. Dr. Wilks suggested that a memorandum of understanding be drafted to spell out expectations for working together to ensure a smooth process for transition-age students. This will be explored.
- Joining one of the monthly meetings of the directors of counseling to reacquaint them with behavioral healthcare services and to clear up misinformation. This will be scheduled.
- Distributing the behavioral healthcare services brochure to students and families via hard copy in the first-day packets and on the schools' website. This is in process.

Dr. Wilks fielded additional questions, including one about suspensions data for students with emotional disturbance or other health impairments. Dr. Wilks referred the committee to Cintia Johnson, assistant superintendent for administrative services, who collects this data. Alisa Cowan will follow up and provide this data to Naomi Verdugo, who will share it with the rest of the committee. Ms. Johnson will also be able to provide information about graduation rates for children with mental health issues.

The committee and guests thanked Dr. Wilks for her presentation and discussion, and shared their enthusiasm about improved collaboration.

Meeting adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Next meeting: a tour of the Northern Virginia Juvenile Detention Home in Alexandria, Monday, March 4, at 4:00 p.m.