
Interim Report of
The Special Committee
On Criminal Justice Reform

**SUMMER OF 2016
YOUTH ACTION PLAN**



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I. Introduction

Council President Darrell L. Clarke created the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform by unanimous vote of Council on December 10, 2015. President Clarke tasked the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform with investigating the following:

- Initiatives to reduce the pipeline to prison
- Strategies to prevent youth involvement in the criminal/juvenile justice system
- Systemic changes to reduce prison population
- Reducing recidivism by making improvements and enhancement to local re-entry programs
- Instituting evidence based programmatic reviews
- Fiscal sustainability in implementing criminal justice reform

In January 2016, Council President Clarke named Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr. as Co-Chair of the Committee along with Keir Bradford-Gray, Chief of the Philadelphia Defenders Association, and Kevin J. Bethel, Retired Philadelphia Deputy Police Commissioner. The Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform began its endeavors by holding two meetings on April 15th and April 18th of 2016. These meetings focused on developing an overview of the obstacles the City of Philadelphia faces in making the criminal justice system more just and more efficient.

After defining the problems, the Committee turned to the immediate task of developing a plan for this coming summer to prevent youths from becoming involved in the justice system.

A full listing of members and transcripts of the hearings can be found at the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform's website here: <http://phlcouncil.com/CriminalJusticeReform>

II. Purpose of Report

This Interim Report contains the recommendations of the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform that evolved from its hearings on youth crime prevention. The purpose of this report is to present a plan of action for the City of Philadelphia, which if implemented, will likely reduce youthful interactions with police and the criminal/juvenile justice system.

III. Committee Recommendations

Evidence Based Programming

Science can help criminal justice agencies and service providers do a better job of reducing crime and keeping people out of jail. Programs aimed at youths are no exception to this rule.

Recommendation

All providers and governmental agencies that deal with youths should strive to use research-informed and evidence-based programs as a standard practice. Resources such as the National Institute of Justice and the Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support Center (EPISCenter) should be consulted in reviewing the effectiveness of programming. In addition, applications for training and technical assistance through the EPISCenter should be pursued to take advantage of this support as soon as possible, since grant applications are presently being accepted until June 24, 2016.

Youth Employment

When youths are gainfully employed for a summer, they are much less likely to have contact with the criminal justice system. The Committee unanimously agreed that by implementing strategies that increase employment opportunities for summer jobs, Philadelphia's young people will have greater success this year. The following are recommendations for increasing summer jobs for youths:

Philadelphia Youth Network

Chekemma J. Fulmore-Townsend, President and CEO of the Philadelphia Youth Network in her testimony outlined the amazing work that the organization is doing to employ young people across the city. An area that was discussed was the gap in the number of youth summer jobs that are funded for the 2016 summer period. From her testimony, she outlined that based upon the present funding, they have secured 6 million dollars this year, which will enable them to employ approximately 6,000 youth. However, this is well below their goal of funding at least 10,000 summer jobs.

Recommendation

In an effort to reach the goal of employing 10,000 youths for the summer, the City of Philadelphia must increase the budget of the Department of Human Services, and the Department of Parks and Recreation, in order to increase the number of summer hires.

Parks and Recreation

Parks and Recreation outlined the vast amount of programs they currently provide over the summer. The sheer number of youth they employ is outstanding. However, as the frontline for youth engagement for the summer, the City must do more to support these efforts.

Recommendation

Testimony was provided that in previous years, Parks and Recreation was budgeted to hire 200-250 young people as Recreation Aid Trainees. This was removed from their budget during the economic downturn. It is recommended that these positions be immediately reinstated for this budget cycle and moving forward. These are key positions that not only provide employment opportunities to our youth, but also enables Parks and Recreation to expand their capacity to service those individuals visiting the centers.

The Recreation Department provides a number of camp opportunities for youth. Neighborhood camps have varying capacity levels, and the programs oftentimes include fees. Based on a review of their website, they also offer a variety of specialty camps ranging from Summer Art Camp, Tree House Adventure Camp, and Golf Camps, just to name a few. All in all, the Recreation Department offers roughly 19 camps. A good percentage of the camps, nevertheless, come at some cost to the parent. For example, the Young Performers Theater Camp cost parents \$340.00 for a six-week program, and an additional \$150.00 for bus service. If our goal is offer our youths healthy alternatives, while increasing their exposure to the arts and other stimulating activities, the City must create more opportunities to make this a reality. It is recommended that immediate steps be taken to increase the budget of Parks and Recreation in order to provide scholarships for needy youth interested in attending these programs.

MENTORING AND GUIDANCE OF YOUTHS

Another overarching principle the Committee found is that youths need guidance and mentoring to flourish. Youths that lack strong adult role models may gravitate towards unlawful and disruptive conduct with their peers. Many government and faith-based programs can fill this gap by giving young people positive adult interactions that are lacking in their personal lives. The following are recommendations for youth mentoring programs:

Police Athletic League

The testimony outlined by Lieutenant Bob Eddis, Commanding Officer of the Police Athletic League and PAL Executive Director Theodore Qualli demonstrated the strong commitment by the the Police Athletic League and Philadelphia Police Department to the Philadelphia Community; serving over 18,000 youth throughout the entire year is a major accomplishment.

Recommendation

The Philadelphia Police Department last year hired PAL personnel on paid overtime to staff the PAL facilities in order to allow the centers to remain open late on Friday evenings (until 9 p.m.), and for the first time in their history, the centers were open on Saturdays from 1 p.m. to 9 p.m. Fifteen PAL Centers participated in this expansion. The City should engage in an awareness campaign informing the community of the 15 PAL Centers participating in the extended hours and days. The extended hours of operations of the PAL Centers provides an opportunity for youths to have a safe haven on Friday and Saturday nights, improving the lives of both the parent and their child.

Big Brothers Big Sisters

Big Brothers Big Sisters' (BBBS) programming has been rated effective by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) in reducing drug and alcohol abuse and antisocial behavior for many of its programs.

Recommendation

Start a Big Brothers Big Sisters—Back on Track program that matches children in the juvenile justice system with adult mentors in Philadelphia. William DeVito, Director Government Relations, for BBBS is the contact person.

Support and expand BBBS of Southeastern PA's Positive Parenting Program in Philadelphia to provide therapeutic assistance to youths and their parents.

BBBS intends to work with the youth in the Juvenile Justice system that have been identified as victims of sex trafficking. This population has already demonstrated that they are at heightened risk of future detrimental behavior as a result of their history of abuse.

Free Library of Philadelphia

Siobhan Reardon, Director of the Philadelphia Free Library, testified that the "Library's Summer Reading Program" provides programming to 35,000 youths during the summer, from June 5th to August 8th. She further related that the Library initiated a program called "Jump Start" last year at three library sites that assisted youth with school preparation. Jump Start is designed to stop the summer slide that kids fall into during the summer break. The program is being expanded to eight additional sites this year. Ms. Reardon testified that about 100 camps have made requests to the Library to provide books and materials for their programs this summer. However, due to budgetary constraints they can only support 80 camps. Lastly, the Director indicated that in order to adequately support these programs most of the libraries should move to a Monday-Friday schedule.

Recommendation

Immediate steps should be taken to ensure the demand for the summer reading program is being met and not restricted by budgetary constraints. Reading is the foundation for our youth to succeed and any efforts put forth to fill this gap must be fully realized.

The Jump Start Program is an excellent program aimed at helping youths. In our impoverished neighborhoods, many young people are challenged by their inability to read at their present grade level. The Free Library's tireless efforts to address literacy in our poorer communities are admirable. The Free Library's Director outlined the expansion of Jump Start from three sites to eight. It is recommended that an immediate review be conducted to determine the cost of expanding Jump Start across the entire system, particularly in areas where the need is greatest. (These programs are discussed on page 287 and 288 of the Committee's transcripts).

INCREASE FUNDING TO WORTHY PROGRAMS

Increasing Public Funding

It is a perennial challenge to find public funds for any program, especially those programs that are preventative in nature. Public dollars saved through preventative programs, such as summer jobs and youth mentoring, frequently are undervalued by policymakers because the savings are often not realized until subsequent budgetary cycles. Nevertheless, the savings can be quite substantial to the City's bottom line. The public dollars invested in preventative programs today, will have a substantial payback in taxpayer dollars saved in the successive years to come.

Recommendation

All City departments that have the capacity to accept youth for summer employment should examine their budgets for unspent budgetary dollars. If the departments are below their projected staffing levels, and are not in the position to fill these vacancies prior to the summer period, these funds should be reallocated to hire youths for the summer. Absent additional funding, all City departments should be asked to take a hard look at their budgets to determine if they have the capacity to absorb these positions within their existing budgets. An additional four million in unspent dollars spread across the entire governmental system would potentially minimize the budget impact on any one particular department. Note, as outlined in Ms. Fulmore-Townsend's testimony, it only costs \$1,800.00 to employ one youth for the summer. There must be additional opportunities within City government to support this effort.

Recommendation

The Committee recommends that a certain percent of all realized savings to the City from general criminal justice reform efforts be dedicated to funding summer jobs and youth mentoring programs, beginning in budget year 2018. With dedicated funding, successful pilot programs that begin this summer can be carried through and funded in subsequent years.

Recommendation

Many of the City's libraries close on Saturdays during the summer months. It was not apparent in the testimony as to whether these closures were done to satisfy the weekly programming, or done to ease budgetary constraints. Budgetary cuts to libraries were made during the great recession to save money. Now that the economic recovery has begun, however, a review must be initiated to determine the viability of keeping libraries open year-round, from Monday through Saturday. Particularly in the summer months, when the youth have much more free-time, Saturdays can be spent at the libraries, providing a viable and safe haven for youth to engage in positive programming.

Recommendation

BBBS currently serves 2189 children and youths in the City of Philadelphia. BBBS would like to be able to serve an additional 100 youths. It costs \$5,000.00 (yearly) per child to provide full services to the BBBS match. Most matches are required to fulfill their commitment for a minimum of a year. In order to match and service 100 youths, BBBS would need at least \$500,000 additional moneys in their budget. They have the training and infrastructure to bring their programs to scale.

In order to expand these and other programs, the City needs to appropriate more money to BBBS. BBBS currently services at-risk youths that are identified by the City's Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS, in turn, provides funding to support the match with the youth and adult mentor. This program is cost effective and produces positive results for the child and their families. BBBS combines research and data to enhance their programs. Their model has been proven successful through data analysis, which found their program to have an 85% success rate for the youth involved. This statistic means that many of the youth do not have further involvement in the justice system, resulting in success at school, home and with peer relationships.

Generating More Private Funding of Public Programs

Yearly, a strong campaign is conducted to raise private donations to support the Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN) in their summer employment efforts. Nevertheless, more must be done. Ms. Fulmore-Townsend testified that each year she starts with a zero budget, forcing her to spend valuable time conducting fund raising events each summer. PYN has a robust website that fully outlines the role employers, corporate, and philanthropic organizations can play to support summer employment.

Recommendation

City Council, working cooperatively with the City Administration, should immediately create a public campaign that challenges all the aforementioned entities to participate in this fund raising effort. We should raise awareness amongst the business community of the value these youth programs bring to the City, which will, ultimately, increase the number and dollar amount of individual and corporate donations.

Improvements to Information Sharing about Youth Programs

It can be difficult for youths and their parents/guardians to find out about the various programs and services available to them. A centralized location containing all programs aimed at youths, such as job opportunities, summer internships, recreational classes, and educational supports would simplify the process.

Recommendation

The Mayor's Managing Director's Office should task an individual to create and maintain a one-stop-shop website containing all youth activities, job opportunities, and educational programs in the City. Posters and other materials advertising the website can be placed in schools, recreational centers, bus stops, malls and other areas that young people frequent.

Comprehensive Youth Specific Re-entry Programming

There is a lack of comprehensive youth-specific re-entry programming and support services in the City. Youth have specific needs that are different from adult needs. Once these specific needs are met, recidivism rates will be reduced and so will the overall cost of the criminal/juvenile justice system. Youth are more likely to commit certain kinds of offenses. This age disparity needs to be addressed with a comprehensive intervention strategy that is youth specific.

Recommendation

Create and expand comprehensive youth-specific re-entry programming and support services, to include the following: job skills training; housing opportunities; educational opportunities; establishing financial literacy; and teaching healthy lifestyle habits.

Surveys and Research to Discover Where Youth Problems Begin

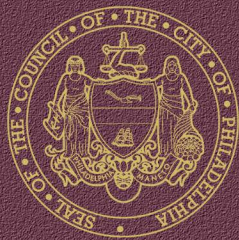
Knowing which problems to focus on first is a vital component in the plan to tackle the problems identified in this report. Research is an invaluable tool in discovering where to prioritize our public dollars.

Recommendation

Urge the School District of Philadelphia to enroll in the next Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS). By enrolling in PAYS, the City's leaders and the School District will gain valuable insights into school age children's risk for substance abuse, antisocial behavior, trauma, family conflict, gang involvement, and a host of other social issues. This data will be invaluable to decision makers in targeting which types of youth programs are needed, and where.

IV. Action Plan

Councilman Jones and Councilman Johnson will jointly submit a Resolution to the Philadelphia City Council asking the Council to support and implement the recommendations of the Special Committee on Criminal Justice Reform. It is expected that City Council will support this Committee's work, and that they will pass the Resolution at their meeting of June 9, 2016. Once the Resolution is enacted into law by City Council, members of Council will work to incorporate the recommendations into the Annual Budget and into the plans of the agencies under the Mayor.



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