



TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2009

OREGON YOUTH AUTHORITY

LISTENING FORUM WITH MACLAREN TREATMENT MANAGERS

Fariborz explained that he has been at the OYA for less than 3 months. He is trying to reconnect the Central Office with those in the facilities and field. Everyone he has met has the main purpose of serving youth, although he has noticed a perception of disconnect between the Central Office and what happens within the facilities, with parole/probation staff, etc. The role of leadership is to set clear expectations. He is not coming here to tell people how to do their work. He will be meeting with various groups and individuals. He wants to know why that disconnect exists and how to bridge it? He *is* interested in finding out how everyone feels.

Fariborz asked if there are any questions or concerns and if everyone feels comfortable giving straightforward feedback?

What is your perspective about the treatment approach that OYA has taken in the past few years?

The skill-building groups are very important for the mentally disabled youth. However, in addition, there are many sex offenders and there are not enough hours in a day to provide all the treatment that is required. There is the hope that the new curriculum will be universal.

Would like to have more options for treatment, particularly with violent offenders. Agrees that there is not enough time to do all the treatment.

Likes the direction the OYA has gone with treatment. It has been good to know what youth have been doing, when they're moved around. A concern of age-appropriateness of the treatment being given. Example, the curriculum is not helpful for college-aged youth. Likes the approach, it's clear and concise.

Fariborz asked what the venue is to communicate with the Central Office about what is working?

Communicates to Program Directors and hopes/assumes that it gets back to the Central Office.

Nick Sotelo is a person who is a good go-between, and talks to Mary McBride.

In working with highly deviant sex offenders the material is highly manualized. It seems very simplistic for the sophisticated offenders. Doesn't know of any avenue to Central Office except of the new sex offender treatment program.

It was felt that moving to the one kind of sex offender program is a bad idea, it does not work for everyone.

Likes the part of keeping track of what youth have done in the past, so as to avoid doing the same thing over and over. For long-term youth, they run out of programs. However, a new treatment in SIP has begun. Agrees that one treatment cannot fit all youth. Much of the treatment is in a classroom setting—more of instructional-type treatment compared to what they used to do. It goes no deeper than the skin; never deals with issues from the past that addresses the issues inside. You can give youth all the tools in the world, but unfortunately a lot of our youth are going to prison and we are not giving them the skills to deal with that environment. The treatment is on a superficial level compared to what was done previously. A lot of people felt that when the new treatment process started, they were not validated with what had been done with the youth.

We have gotten away from a true behavior modification program. Youth are not made to do the full treatment program, and request to go back to a different cottage. Tied down with CPC to offer things that don't coincide with behavior modification programs. Why would a youth want to stay and do the tough part—treatment—when they refuse treatment. In addition, youth are staying too long in behavior modification programs—up to 3 years.

There is not a formal review process of the QA feedback to OYA Central. They have to adapt to their own way. They are not asked for feedback at CPC reviews. The responsibility of the individual youth is not being considered as far as treatment goes.

Geer 2 and Geer 3 have had struggles with the curriculum given to them—they require one set of youth because the group must begin and end without adding new members. Has talked with Dr. Zorich to modify programs. There is a technical concern of the tracking of the skills groups—JJIS doesn't identify what skills have been completed or who ran the group. Being able to track this would be better. Currently, it is in the notes sections, which is paragraph form—you have to look in various different places to find the information.

Five to 10 percent of the youth placed here are treatment resistant—and this percentage seems to be growing. They are oftentimes not willing to participate in treatment.

Staff are not allowed to go in depth in individual treatment when they're in a group setting. There is a formality that CPC says, "you do it this way." The Central Office person may or may not have the knowledge of the issues.

A couple of youth who recently left (back to DOC due to age) went through the "old" violent offender treatment. They both acknowledged that the old way of treatment worked, and it helped them change their lives around—the new way does not.

Fariborz asked that why, if the data shows that these programs work with regard to recidivism, does everyone think they're not working?

Comments that recidivism data was not kept prior to the LaTessa program. Have been told that they could not use the old programs any longer.

Have been told no more process groups; only evidence-based skills. Threw the baby out with the bathwater on that. The majority of youth coming now are gang youth. Also had those two youth that recently left OYA, and they remarked that they could finally tell their parents what they were working on. Needs to start looking at empathy.

Another thought was that the "new clientele," re-enacting prior incidents that got them here may not be a good idea. Process groups were not always the best.

If we never touch on what makes people angry, and try to help them work through that to get past that point in their life, they will be angry for a long time. The process groups would help them resolve that. Many times the youth will hold it inside and never talk about it. Empathy is very important for their experiences in life, or they may never change.

We're dealing with sometimes, third generation gang members—we may never be able to change that core belief. However, we can teach them skills to, hopefully, have a better outcome.

Youth skills are very important for day-to-day living and building a future. Today, the youth are a lot more organized and a lot more family members are thrown into being a gang member. Many youth have very dysfunctional families or no families at all, which is sometimes why they gravitate toward gangs.

There needs to be a happy medium. Everything being used now is good, it's working. But there are times when it might make sense to go through the processing piece to learn what they are carrying inside them.

A lot of the gang youth is a lifestyle choice. They respond to peer pressure and gang pressure. The consideration is not whether they are committing an act of violence, it is responding to their lifestyle choice.

If we aren't talking about what got the youth to the point they're at, and identify the problems in their life, if we're not able to work with them with the pitfalls in life, they will probably not be successful when they are back to the community. The appropriateness of them talking about what happened to them as they were growing up, is not allowing us to give them the best treatment possible.

By making a blanket statement that everyone has to provide the same treatment is not a good idea. Having a specialty for each unit may make them more useful. The curriculums are effective, but are not as useful as they could be.

The treatment we are providing is a heartless treatment, a lack of investment, the youth don't feel that we're going to get to the heart of the matter—doesn't really get to the issues, just goes through the motions. The youth can sign off that they did the treatment, but didn't necessarily learn anything from it. The ART treatment lasts only 10 weeks, for a youth who has had a lifetime of issues—then if they have problems, they are sent through it again.

Fariborz asked how morale has been?

Everyone agreed that institution morale has gotten much much better since Mike Riggan began his job here. Communication is better and more open. For the first time in a long time, he is looking forward to the future.

Agency morale still has a ways to go.

Fariborz asked what we should do with this information? Where do we go next? How would you modify the treatment approach at OYA?

Would like to be a part of the planning process. It always came from downtown, nobody—to his knowledge—ever came out prior to implementing. Was never asked what he thought of it. Watched a video of a group in RiverBend and made a statement that half the youth were not even involved in the group. He was never asked to be a part of the group again.

We are doing a great job but people who make the decisions do not come out and watch the actual groups. All the evidence-based treatment in the world doesn't make good parenting. She doesn't want the processing of the parenting piece to get lost—a lot of the youth don't have parents.

Put together an agency improvement plan with a tracking of process with the teams to see what has worked and what hasn't worked. From that, develop a treatment plan.

Fariborz asked how well this group works together?

They are becoming a team again. The past couple of years have been trying. Starting to build relationships again.

They rely heavily on each other. They each have their own network of who to call, etc. The curriculum review board is somewhat detached. Have Central Office sit in on the groups to find out if it makes sense and what are the pitfalls—versus the CPC reviews.

A lot of decisions come from Central Office for the work that they do. All the different people that work with the youth all day—Central Office staff should work for a few months and participate in activities at MacLaren to see all the really good things that go on here. How else do you capture that information? And get it to the legislature?

Fariborz noted that the conversation today is to help re-establish the communication with Central Office. We need to find a way to discuss issues and work together with the Central Office. Good things are happening here, but many are frustrated because the link is missing. The Central Office staff face a whole different set of challenges. Legislators are focused on numbers and dollars which is putting much pressure on the Central Office staff.

No one is pointing fingers. The first step is that Fariborz is here asking.

This conflict is not new. CPC is not the report card to determine how well a unit is functioning. The system is not distilled, lots of youth are placed in programs that don't fit their profile, which makes the CPC review go down. There are other ways to determine and show value. We've lost the ability to talk to youth about how they should do something to give back from the community, because they took from the community. Treatment managers advocate and push back with the concern of protecting the treatment for their group.

If the relationships aren't there, the numbers can't be there. He spends more time justifying what he's doing on paper so that when the CPC review comes, everything is in place.

Fariborz noted that the first step is listening. "Anytime you need/want to send an email, please do. We all have to work together."

Dave Hanson volunteered to be a part of the group that meets with Central Office staff to shape future treatment approach.