

LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

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Transformation of Youth Justice Symposium

On September 8th, Detention Manager, Vanessa Conwell and Probation Manager, Rickie Anders had the opportunity to travel to Nashville, Tennessee for the Transformation of Youth Justice Symposium presented by the Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps. The purpose of the symposium was for multi-disciplinary professionals and youth-serving stakeholders to learn, network, and become part of the nationwide movement to effectively transform youth justice and improve outcomes for children and families.

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“Probation departments and juvenile justice systems, like a number of other longstanding agencies, function within a framework of statutes, policies and practices that were established over the course of many years. Typically, there has been little time or effort to reflect on that framework to determine how well it is working and whether it functions in a manner that results in the achievement of desired youth outcomes and effective system performance. Further, a culture of doing things “the way we’ve always done them” often permeates daily operations and often undermines changes that incorporate evidence-based practices and the shift to using effective programs and services that positively impact youth outcomes and system performance.”
RFK National Resource Center

The Juvenile Justice System Reform History

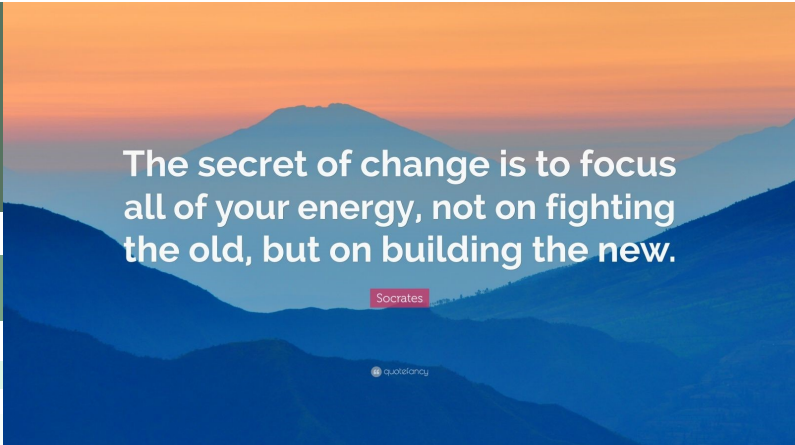
In 1974, Congress enacted the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) to support local and state efforts to prevent delinquency and improve the Juvenile Justice system. Since the enactment, there has been six amendments made to the Act. In 2018, Congress reauthorized and amended the JJDP with the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA). Washington State passed the Juvenile Justice Act in 1977. The Act established the intent of the legislature to create a “ system capable of having primary responsibility for, being accountable for, and responding to the needs of youthful offenders and their victim.” Since the passed, nearly every year the legislature considers various initiatives and bills that directly relate to the ever changing response on juvenile delinquency and prevention. As neuroscience progresses, there has been more understanding of the conjuncture between why youth offend and what happened to the youth to lead him/her to the offending behavior. Instead of asking why did the youth offend, the question posed now is what happened to the youth prior to committing a crime.



Probation Manager, Rickie Anders & Detention Manager, Vanessa Conwell

“If you are unable to understand the cause of a problem, it is impossible to solve it.” Naoto Kan

Renovation Updates



The secret of change is to focus all of your energy, not on fighting the old, but on building the new.

Socrates

quodididid

Beginning October 4th, 2021, the Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center will temporarily close for renovation. Juveniles who are detained will be housed at the Cowlitz County Juvenile Detention Center located at 1725 1st Avenue, Longview, WA. The anticipated closure will take place from October 4, 2021 to April 30, 2022. Juvenile Detention Officers will be available for transporting youth 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, including weekends and holidays.

It is the intent of the Juvenile Court to work in partnership with all law enforcement agencies and to assist in minimizing any burdens this temporary change may create. Upon the arrest of a juvenile, law enforcement either directly or through dispatch will contact the Lewis County Juvenile Detention at 360-740-2632. Once a juvenile has been approved for intake by meeting the intake criteria and under necessary circumstances, medically cleared, law enforcement will notify detention. Two Detention Officers will arrive at the transfer of custody location with a secure vehicle for transport. The Detention Officers will then transport the juvenile to the Cowlitz County Juvenile Detention Center.

While it will be a drastic change to the daily roles and function of the Juvenile Detention Center, it will be an opportunity to reflect on how improvements can be made such as new programming for when the newly renovated Lewis County Juvenile Detention Center reopens.

The History of the “Becca Bill”

The “Becca Bill” is an example of reform that started off with good intentions but for a long time lacked little reflection on whether the statutes, policies and practices resulted in positive youth outcomes or whether the outcomes were more harmful to the community. There are strong opinions on both sides, either for or against Senate Bill 5439.

The “Becca Bill” was named after Rebecca Hedman. Rebecca, known by her family as “Becca” had been removed from her biological mother before the age of two due to being sexually abused. The Hedman family became her foster family when she was just fifteen months of age and then her adoptive family a few years later. At the age of five, Becca’s adoptive brother sexually abused her. Her parents had hoped that she would heal from the trauma with counseling; unfortunately, when she was twelve years old, Becca started to act out. Becca started to leave home without permission, skip school, and experiment with substances. Becca’s parents were at a loss of what to do since these behaviors were “status” offenses and not “crimes.” The passage of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) in 1974 put an emphasis on States to not incarcerate noncriminal youth so many States, Washington included, relied on the Department of Social Health Service (DSHS) to offer voluntary community based social services around non-secure Crisis Residential Centers (CRC). Becca’s parents decided to have her placed in a CRC and then moved to a group home. Becca ran away from the group home and was gone for forty-seven days. While on the run, she turned to prostitution and started using more illicit drugs. After nearly a month and a half on the run, Becca returned home to her parents house. Her parents enrolled her into drug and alcohol treatment and it was recommended that she go to in-patient treatment. At the age of thirteen, Becca was placed into an in-patient treatment center in Spokane. During the stay, Becca ran away from the facility five times; at no time was her parents ever notified. In October of 1993, during one of the periods of time where Becca had ran away from the facility, she solicited herself to a thirty-five year old man for \$50. Sadly, this man murdered Becca.

Rebecca Hedman’s parents helped lobby the legislature for what was appropriately named the “Becca Bill.” The Senate Bill 5439 passed in July of 1995 and amended the “Family Reconciliation Act.” The bill provided strict enforcement of truancy laws, allowed for youth to be involuntarily committed to treatment centers, incarceration for runaways, and the created a petition (At Risk Youth Petition) for parents who needed the court’s compulsion to control their children. In a letter from the Department of Justice to Washington’s DSHS program coordinator, a warning was given which notified Washington that it would lose all federal funding under the JJDP Act if the Becca Bill was enacted. The State of Washington reportedly faced a loss of ten million dollars in federal funding for enacting the Becca Bill.

Since 1995, Washington State has been the leading State in incarcerating “status” offenders. According to some reports, the State’s numbers are double that of the second leading State, Kentucky. In an effort to reduce the number of incarcerated youth for status offenses and to be in compliance with the JJDP Act, the legislature continues to amend the Becca Bill. In 2019, Senate Bill 5290 eliminated the use of detention for youth violating a civil order under the Family Reconciliation Act. In 2021, Senate Bill 1113 was passed.

To read more about Senate Bill 1113, further information is highlighted in the subsection to the right.

ESHB 1113 2021

Concerning School Attendance

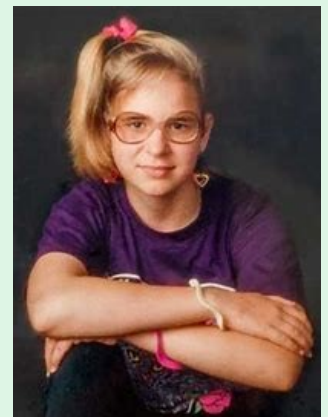
Effective 4/26/21

Sections 5-17 Effective 8/1/21

Rather than filing a Truancy Petition after the 5th unexcused absence in a month or 10th unexcused absence in a year, the school shall file a Truancy Petition after the 7th unexcused absence in a month or 15th unexcused in a year.

OPSI must publish guidance on best practices, based on Restorative Justice to reduce student absences. The plan must be routinely staffed with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee (EOGOAC).

Community Truancy Boards renamed to Community Engagement Boards.



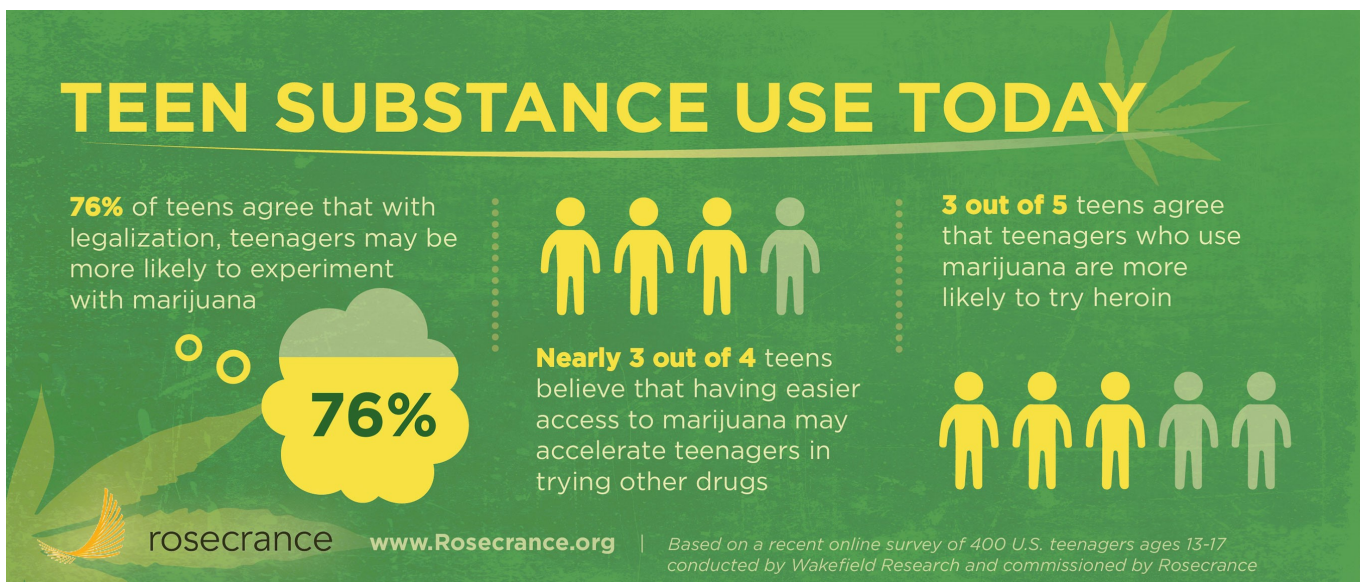
Rebecca Hedman

True North Student Assistance and Treatment Services provides guidance for students, families, and schools to assist in navigating difficult choices and decisions regarding violence, substance abuse, and mental health issues.

In Lewis County we have seen an increase in self-referrals. As students return to school and their communities, they are eager to access assistance in managing substance use and mental health challenges. In school perspective from a True North Student Assistance Professional, “It is wonderful to see students back in the hallways with heads held high! Many students are reaching out for help with substance use and mental health needs due to pandemic fatigue, stress, overwhelm, and even isolation. It feels rewarding to be with the students again, to provide extra support and a bridge to community services that is so needed right now.”

True North Student Assistance Professionals invest in youth and their future. “When youth start to realize that recovery is helping them achieve goals: such as academics, employment, driving, other responsibilities, and creating healthier relationships in their lives. When we see a client succeed in our program, we know we have made a positive and lasting impact.”

True North also provides services in Thurston County, Grays Harbor County, Mason County and Pacific County. True North is a certified provider for outpatient and intensive outpatient treatment services and are a service of Capitol Region ESD 113. You can reach True North in Lewis County at 360-748-2274.



Updates and Follow-Ups

Truancy Prevention

With summer over and schools back in session, Probation Officer, Megan Shepherd is out and about knocking on doors. With Juvenile Justice reform in mind, the Juvenile Court is continuing the efforts to assist schools in engaging youth back into school. It's more important than ever that work go into early prevention rather than being solely a responsive system. Senate Bill 5290 has eliminated the use of detention for youth found in contempt of court on Truancy Orders; without a safety net in place to make sure these youth do not fall through the cracks, the court's goal is to help schools eliminate absences early on.



Guardian ad Litem Program

In August, Guardian ad Litem Program Coordinator, Angela Cothorn became the full time GAL for the Family Recovery Court Team at Superior Court. The position remained vacant while the Juvenile Court searched for a new Coordinator. The Court is happy to announce that Christine Dickenson who was formerly a legal assistant, has been hired as the new GAL Program Coordinator.



Need Housing Resources?

Gather Church is the coordinated entry agency for Lewis County, so anyone who is homeless or at risk of becoming homeless (within 14 days) should contact them to do an intake. Gather Church refers people to housing programs in the county and most programs require that people go through a coordinated entry intake. People can contact Gather Church directly at (360) 827-0264 and press 1 for housing and homeless services.



We are still hiring!

Juvenile Detention Officer (Casual On-Call)

Department	Superior Court - Juvenile Detention	Documents
Job Type	On Call	Job Description Juvenile Detention Officer Casual Job Posting
Pay Range	\$22.25/hr.	Apply Online
Opens / Closes	Open until filled	
Notes	Employment standards are those posted in the job posting.	

Juvenile Detention Officer (Regular Part-Time)

Department	Superior Court - Juvenile Detention	Documents
Job Type	Part-Time Regular	Juvenile Detention Officer Job Posting Juvenile Detention Officer Job Description
Pay Range	\$3,857-\$5,186/month	Apply Online
Opens / Closes	Open until filled	
Notes	Employment standards are those posted in the job	

Meet the Team

I graduated from Eastern Washington University in 2003 with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice. To fulfill the requirements for my degree I completed a 400 hour internship at Naselle Youth Camp (N.Y.C), a state run JRA institution. After completing my internship, Naselle hired me. While there, I worked in various positions including security officer, counselor assistant, and DNR security for their work/fire crews.

I left N.Y.C. in the Spring of 2007. Soon after, I was hired as an adult Pre-trial Services Officer in Spokane Washington. While working with adults, I soon realized I preferred and missed working with youth. An opportunity to work at Spokane County Juvenile Detention Center became available and I was hired there at the end of 2008. I worked as a Juvenile Detention Officer in Spokane for 6 years.

One of my favorite and most meaningful memories of my career was in Spokane. One shift, late at night, I was working in the control booth and the phone rang. When I answered the phone there were two ex-residents on the line. These were kids that spent years going in and out of Detention for both new crimes and probation violations. While in Detention, one of these youth once told me that she would purposely commit fairly minor crimes from time to time to get arrested and, "take a break from the streets." She told me that Detention was the only place she knew she would be safe, clean, and cared for. During the phone conversation I learned that these two youth had moved in together somewhere in the Seattle area. They were clean and both had jobs. They both thanked me profusely and asked that I tell all the staff how much we meant to them and how much of a difference we made in their lives. That is why I do this job and enjoy working with youth. It is the hope that someday they will grow into caring, successful, and responsible people.



Jay Nedry

While in Spokane, I got married and we had our first child. My wife and I then decided we needed to be closer to family so we moved back to the west side where both of us are from. I was hired in my current position as a Juvenile Probation Officer for Lewis County in March of 2016. I started with Truancy and At Risk Youth. I was able to meet many school personnel from all the school districts throughout Lewis County and get comfortable in the courtroom. Those relationships built with school staff are invaluable to my work as a Probation Officer. During that time, I also helped schools and Juvenile Court navigate the new truancy board legislation. Truancy boards were eventually established in every school district. Next, I was given the opportunity to become our Court Officer. That is when I learned the ins and outs of the courtroom. Once again creating invaluable new relationships, this time with our judges/commissioner and attorneys.

Today I am the field P.O. for high risk youth in the Centralia area. Each day is different. I am never quite sure what I will discover when I get to work in the morning. It takes all my experience, and often times the help and advice of my co-workers, to try to help the youth as best I can.

When I am not working, I spend most of my time outdoors with my family. My wife and two kids are truly amazing. We enjoy hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, kayaking, golfing, gardening, yard work, basically anything outside. My kids are getting old enough to start youth sports now too so that is consuming more and more of our time.