

LEWIS COUNTY JUVENILE COURT



Community Newsletter

Volume 2, Number 4



April 2022

"Houston, We Have a Problem"

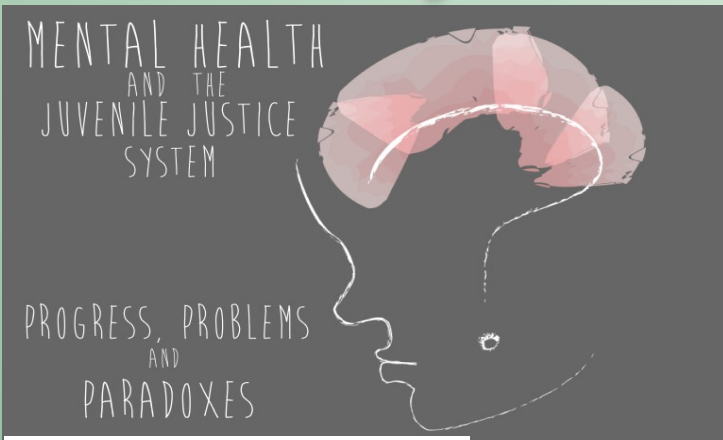


Illustration by Katy McCarthy / JJIE

Before the pandemic, Kaiser Family Foundation (KFF) conducted a study in 2018 and 2019 with non-juvenile justice involved children among the ages of 3-17. The results were that 5.2 million (8%) had anxiety disorders, 2.3 million (4%) had depressive disorders and 5.3 million (9%) had ADHD/ADD. Several bills that include funding related to children’s mental health have been introduced during the pandemic. The recently passed American Rescue Plan Act Allocates funding for pediatric mental health care access and youth suicide prevention. The American Jobs Plan and American Families Plan proposes additional funding for services to benefit children, including upgraded schools and nutrition programs. During the COVID19 pandemic, children have experienced major disruption as a result of public health measures such as school closures, social isolation and gap in health care access. Many parents reported poor mental health

outcomes throughout the pandemic. In May 2020, shortly after the pandemic began, 29% of parents said their child’s mental or emotional health was already harmed. More recent research from October 2020, showed that 31 % of parents said that their child’s mental health or emotional health was worse than before the pandemic.

In Washington State, suicide is the second leading cause of death for Washington Sate youth between the ages of 15 to 19. On average in 2017, nearly four youth killed themselves each week; sadly those statistics have increased. The American Academy of Pediatrics reported, “Results showed recent suicidal ideation was 1.60 and 1.45 times higher in March and July 2020, respectively, than in March and July 2019.” Doctor Yolanda Evans, clinical director of adolescent medicine at Seattle Children's hospital, reported on February 21, 2021, that more than 50% of visits to pediatricians are now for mental health issues, including eating disorders, anxiety attacks and depression. According to the Washington Chapter of The American Academy of Pediatrics, more than 50% of children between 11 and 17 years old have thought about suicide or self-harm over the past two-week period. According to Dr. Evans, Washington ranks 43rd for youth mental health access in our country– “Houston, we have a problem.” Better yet, “Washington, we have a problem.”

In Lewis County, out of 167 participants between 2020 and 2022, 43.2% of the youth who are involved with the Juvenile Justice system reported that they have been diagnosed with mental health problems, been prescribed mediation, and/or prescribed mental health treatment or a combination of both. Out of the 167 participants, 42% disclosed having serious thoughts about suicide; made a plan to commit suicide; had attempted suicide; felt like life was not worth living anymore; or has engaged in self-mutilating behavior. Amongst the 167 participates, an astonishing 74.3% have a history of depression and/or anxiety.

Even before the pandemic, the Lewis County Juvenile Court recognized a need for intervention. In March of 2018, the Juvenile Court contracted with Cascade Mental Health and their staff began coming into the Lewis County Detention Center on a daily basis to talk with youth who were in custody and to complete necessary evaluation.

The Juvenile Court has recognized a strong need to help youth who are out of custody as well. The goal is to help all youth receive the mental health care and services they need, remove barriers to treatment, and divert youth from initial or further involvement with the Juvenile Justice system by offering early intervention services and therapeutic court options.

In this issue

Words from a Recovery Court	
Graduate.....	2
Youth and Consent.....	3
Coordination of Services and GAL Updates.....	4
Words of Wisdom from Work Crew with Jerry Elliott.....	5
Meet the Team.....	6

Upcoming Changes!

The newsletter will be quarterly rather than monthly. Look for the June edition next!

Youth Recovery Court– A Letter From a Graduate



The Lewis County Juvenile Recovery Court is a court-managed, drug intervention treatment program, designed to provide a cost-effective alternative to traditional criminal case processing. It may be offered if a youth is arrested and it is determined that the youth's offense was drug related. If the youth is eligible and chooses to participate in this program, the youth must be willing to commit to the entire program. The program may be successfully completed in 12-18 months. At any time during the youth's participation, the youth could be terminated from the program for noncompliance with rules and treatment plan. A Judge would then impose the youth's original sentence.

Recovery Court is a three phase program lasting between 12-18 months.

On March 8th, 2022, a youth graduated from the Lewis County Juvenile Recovery Court and read the following letter out loud. The youth gave permission to share the letter:

Recovery Court Team

Judge Toynbee

Prosecutor Alexandra Flynn
& Travis Johnson

Probation Officer Dulce
Cabrera

Defense Attorney Rachael
Tiller

SUD Provider Stacy Mueller
with True North

MH Provider Michael
Blankenship with CMH

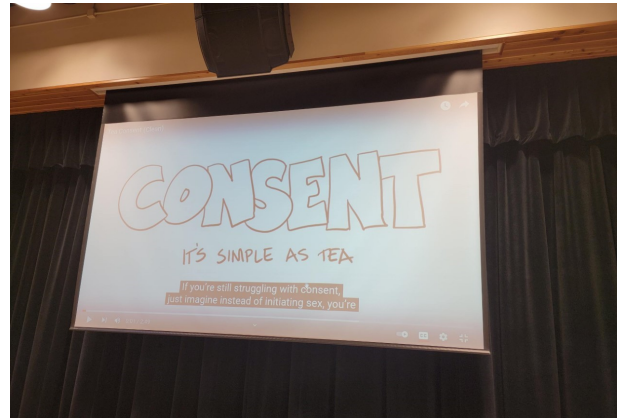
“Hello everyone. I am going to talk a little about my journey through Recovery Court. Before entering in this program, I was stuck in this mindset where I didn't care. I didn't care where I was going, who I was around or what I did as long as I was satisfied with doing it. I thought I was fine. When I first got into this program, I was still stuck in that mindset of not changing. I thought I loved who I was and nobody could tell me different. I thought I could “trick” the system and get about with things I shouldn't have been doing. But as I got further into the program, it really opened my eyes. I started looking at everything different. I started working n myself to better myself. Some of the things I have succeeded in this program is my mental health and ways to cope with my sober lifestyle. I've gotten caught up in school; I've managed to keep my job and got my driver's license. I think the thing that I struggled with the most in this program was finding myself and who I truly am. I learned a lot in this program but the thing that stands out the most was learning a lot about myself and what I want to do in life and who I want around me. After graduation, I plan on still graduating from school early and getting in to real estate. And I am still going to work. My plan to maintain a healthy, sober lifestyle is to stay busy, find more hobbies I like to do and set boundaries with myself and others around me. I would also like to thank all of you for supporting me and helping me to become the person I am today. If it wasn't for all of you, I don't know where I would be, so thank you.”

The Lewis County Juvenile Court is exploring creating a new Individual Treatment Court to replace Recovery Court, as a therapeutic court approach working to address mental health, substance use issues, trauma, and other factors that are contributing to criminogenic behaviors in a collective and holistic way. Probation Officer Dulce Cabrera has been tasked with researching and visiting other courts to gather insight on how Lewis County can better serve youth who have individualized needs.

CONSENT

RCW 9A.44

(2) "Consent" means that at the time of the act of sexual intercourse or sexual contact there are actual words or conduct indicating freely given agreement to have sexual intercourse or sexual contact



On Monday, March 7th, Probation Manager Rickie Anders and Sex Offender Treatment Provider Deborah Darnell presented on the topic of consent to each freshman student at Centralia High School. The morning session started at 8:45am with a large room filled with big circular tables that sat four students per table. Discussing the issue of consent with a few hundred young high school youth was intimidating at first but the students asked great questions and made excellent points. On Monday, March 21st, Probation Officers Dean Durant and Dulce Cabrera presented along side Deborah Darnell to the sophomore class and received a similar response. On Monday, March 28th, Probation Officers Jay Nedry and Dulce Cabrera presented along side Deborah Darnell to the junior and senior classes.

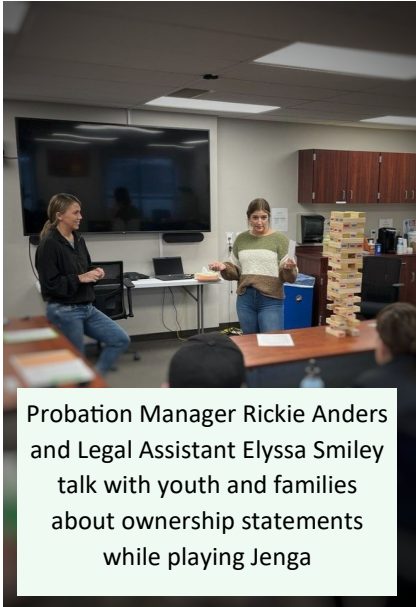
Each presentation covered the legal definition of consent and when consent is required. The Probation staff and Deborah Darnell role played various scenarios and asked the students whether consent was given or not. The school district as well as the Juvenile Court believes that it is important to have these talks with youth in an effort to help educate youth about what consent is, when it is required, what happens if consent wasn't given, who to report an incident to, and how to be a good friend when you hear about a situation.

In Washington state, 12.3% of 8th graders, 18.9% of 10th graders, and 25.2% of 12th graders have been forced into kissing, sexual touch, or intercourse when they did not want to. Female students who identify as multi-racial experience higher rates of victimization than their white counterparts (2018 Healthy Youth Survey). A new Healthy Youth Survey question introduced in 2018 shows that 24.6% of 8th graders, 31.1% of 10th graders, and 31.4% of 12th graders have seen someone around their age pressure someone else to kiss, touch, or have sex when they did not want to (Healthy Youth Survey, 2018). In 2018, 5.8% of 8th graders, 9.5% of 10th graders, and 10.4% of 12th graders had their activities limited or were threatened by someone they were dating (2018 Healthy Youth Survey).

In Washington state, 11.7% of 8th graders, 9.1% of 10th graders, and 7.4% of 12th graders reported being harassed in the past 30 days because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual (Healthy Youth Survey, 2018).

The goal is to help eliminate those statistics and to help youth understand healthy boundaries.

Coordination of Services (COS)



Probation Manager Rickie Anders and Legal Assistant Elyssa Smiley talk with youth and families about ownership statements while playing Jenga

On March 12th and 13th, Probation Officer Lee Montgomery and legal assistant Elyssa Smiley put on the first COS class of the year. Saturday included presentations by Probation Officer Megan Shepherd on the five love languages, Hope Alliance with their program “In Their Shoes,” and Probation Manager Rickie Anders presented on ownership statements while turning it into a game of jenga. Sunday included presentations by Lindsey Shankle and Sara Bumgardner with the Lewis County Health Department on adolescent brain development, Probation Officer Lee Montgomery on growth mindset, Jami Lund on educational opportunities, Sophie Moerkie (2021 Miss Lewis County) created youth time capsules with the youth while Probation Officer Lee Montgomery talked with the parents about adverse childhood Experiences (ACES) and resiliency.

What is COS?

COS is an educational program targeting low-risk juvenile offenders. Its purpose is to intervene with youth and their families at an early point in their involvement with the courts in order to avoid continued participation with the Juvenile Justice System. The program teaches them skills that can be used immediately and connects them with resources in our community that can be contacted should the need arise. The COS program consists of 12 hours of highly interactive instruction, offered over one weekend, Saturday and Sunday, 9am to 3pm. There are 5-8 sessions presented by professionals from the local community along with ice breakers and transition activities led by Juvenile Court staff. Each youth is required to attend with a parent or highly connected adult (i.e. grandparent, uncle, aunt). Some sessions will involve all participants together while other sessions will separate the youth from the adults.

Guardian ad Litem Updates

Elyssa Smiley who was previously a Detention Officer has been hired as the new legal assistant that helps with the GAL Program as well as other legal assistant duties.

Interested in volunteering to be the voice for an abused and/or neglected child? The Lewis County GAL Program will be starting the new online class April 11th, 2022. If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Christine Dickenson at 360-740-2625 (phone) Christine.dickinson@lewiscountywa.gov (email) or Susan Wickert at 360-740-2623 Susan.wickert@lewiscountywa.gov (email).



There are currently 114 children in foster care from Lewis County. Out of those 114 children, 15 do not have an advocate because the program needs more community members to volunteer to be the voice for these children.

Words of Wisdom From Work Crew with Jerry Elliott

Work Crew March 26, 2022

This was a special crew made up of only Truancy youth (5) and AT Risk youth (2). We had a great day and we had a different kind of day than our normal work crews. After picking up the youth, we went to Lewis County Coffee and I purchased them all a \$1.00 hot chocolate. I shared my concept of a “drink and drive” and how relaxing and fun it can be. We then drove around looking at various cars and trucks parked along streets and in parking lots and driveways. We then went to AWESOME Ford. It was there that a preplanned agenda was started. A sales consultant named Kyle Day did a wonderful job of walking the youth through what the process of purchasing a new car looked like. The youth enjoyed this time; Very educational for them. We then proceeded to drive through the Toyota dealership, the Dodge dealership as well as the Chevy dealership prior to arriving at Bryant Auto Sales in Centralia. The kids were really loosening up as they chatted about what cars they liked. At Bryant’s, the owner Duane Bryant did an absolute knock out job of sharing with the kids about every aspect of buying a car and the business of a car lot. From there we drove through many small car lots as we returned to the LAB. We had lunch at the conference table in the LAB and then had yet another good talk. It was here I connected the dots. I shared why school and education matter now and how it impacts life down the road. We talked about college and trade schools; about how that impacts what kind of vehicle you can afford to drive at age 20, 25, ect. We talked credit scores and jobs that can afford to buy a home and how it all works. I really felt like these kids got it. Their feedback and engaging conversations were great. Finally we walked into the sandbag building and wow, did they get after that. They did a great job. Before returning to Spiffy’s and dropping off youth, we stopped by a horse arena. I had picked up on the conversation that one of the youth had never ever seen a real horse let alone petted one. I knew what we had to do. All the kids enjoyed this so much. As for curse words I heard a lot of cartoon character words today as well as a few slip ups but the kids caught themselves. All in all this was a really fun day and I believe some new friendships were bonded.

This was the first work crew in my nearly 4 years of leading this that all 7 of the youth reported that they do not have a dad in the house or in their lives. The openness of the youth Saturday to talk about and share their experience of no dads was sobering. This conversation happened as we sat around the table in the LAB. Two Dads have been deported; Two Dads are deceased; One Dad is in Prison and one youth has never met their Dad. These youth connected on this one issue alone. Their sensitivity towards each other was amazing to witness. Myself, being a dad and a grandpa, I feel for these kids. It certainly exposes the truth that many of our youth need some of the new social outings that we have been talking about. Now here is some surprising information- Not one single kid liked or thought Ford Mustangs or Chevy Camaros were cool and we looked at some hot ones. Not one single kid wanted a truck or seen one they liked. Most cars the kids thought were “mom cars.” The kids for the most part didn’t care for SUV’s or vans. I thought they would like the Dodge Chargers or Challengers but they thought they were just okay. Hands down their most favorite cars were the little sporty looking ones and the foreign models. We saw a few classic cars on our coffee drive they thought were okay. When I was young all of us teenagers liked two door cars. Today’s kids, like mostly 4 doors.



Meet the Team



Probation Officer Megan Shepherd

I grew up in and graduated from Adna, and have only been away from Lewis County for a brief period in my adult life; I guess you can say I like it here! Prior to working for Lewis County Juvenile Court starting in 2017, I worked as civilian staff in a county jail and I held that position for 10 years before briefly transferring to a legal assistant job within that facility. During my time at the jail, I went back to school to finish a bachelor's degree and through my course work discovered my interest in working in the juvenile justice system. In 2014, I started as a volunteer Guardian ad Litem with Lewis County and held that position until my last case ended in late 2017. I was proud to be an advocate in court for kids who were in dependency and because of their age, could not express what they wanted. I'm thankful for this experience, as I learned a lot about the court and the dependency process, but it led to a friendship with the boy I was a GAL for and his family, and I have been able to watch him grow and flourish.

In my role with Lewis County as a Probation Officer, I've been assigned to Diversions, Truancy, ARY/CHINS, facilitated Coordination of Services (COS) class, and handled dependency cases in the beginning stages as a GAL. I am proud to say I work with each of my co-workers and appreciate that I can learn from them. I love seeing the youth we work with gain confidence and mature. One of my favorite memories was seeing the excitement in a young girl who had finished her diversion requirements and was bursting at the seams to tell me what she had done. This youth had went from being ashamed and embarrassed with herself, to being proud of her accomplishment and feeling proud that she had learned from her experience. During the pandemic, I was able to try to help our local school districts make contact with youth/families who weren't engaged with school by using the tools I have available and making home visits, with the goal of reengagement/reenrollment. In addition to visits throughout the county, I was able to work with Centralia Futurus High School Principal James Bowers to make home visits to Centralia district students/families just about every Wednesday during the school year. Student reengagement is not always perfect or quick, but I firmly believe that we as a community can make a difference- showing up, genuinely caring, and providing encouragement.

Outside of work, I enjoy spending time with my daughter and husband. My brother and his family recently moved back in the area, so I've really enjoyed spending more time with my niece and nephews. I like going to concerts, watching hockey games and seeing plays, and I am hopeful that I will be able to travel a bit more in the future. My favorite place to go is Depoe Bay, Oregon.