Advisory Council on Student Behavior and Discipline

Safe Schools & Climate Working Group

Minutes – August 24, 2018

The Safe Schools and Climate Working Group convened at approximately 10:30 AM on August 24, 2018. Dannie Garrett called the meeting to order. In attendance were: Ariel Test, Jill Lockhart, Rod Schlicher, Judge Kim Stansberry, Dr. Alan Coulter, Caroline Roemer, Laci Polozola and Dannie the first order of business Dannie Garrett was selected Chair and Judge Stansberry was selected as Vice Chair.

Discussion began on the subtopics provided by the ACSBD as to the priority for those subtopics. Mental Health was expressed by the membership as having the highest priority, and reference was made to Act 696 of 2018.

On the subtopic of “Zero Tolerance” the general consensus was that the issue has already been addressed by the ACSBD and need not be re-opened.

On the subtopics of Coordination and Communication between SPED and the Juvenile Justice System there was discussion of a disconnect between the two systems which created gaps as to services for students. There was the discussion that students are sometimes put in the justice system solely to access mental health services through programs such as FINS. There was discussion that is some communities that work around has been to create informal FINS programs. The consensus was that the educational issues surrounding the transition of students from the school setting into the justice system and back was already being addressed by an group created by Act 500 of 2018. There was the consensus that the Group needed input from DCFS, Office of Behavioral Health and OJJ to discern where each entity perceived its line of authority and obligation to lie and to determine any overlap and/or gaps in services or communication.

On the subtopic of Safe Schools and Climate the consensus was that school facility safety is already a hot topic being addressed and need not be part of the working group. However, school climate would be reviewed as it is more closely aligned with mental health issues of students and staff.

On the subtopic of providing mental health in the school setting, there was general consensus that providing mental health services is not the core mission of K-12 public education, but that the reality is that often schools may be the only viable avenue for providing students with needed mental health services due to family circumstances. Having information from DCFS, Office of Behavioral Health and OJJ as to when each would partner with the schools is needed. Also, obtaining some information from schools on how Act 696 of 2018 (Private Behavioral Health Providers on School Campuses) is working is important. Also, determining the number and plan of school districts and charter schools accessing Medicaid expansion to provide mental health services to students through the school district, is important information to have.

An informal report was compiled to be presented to the ACSBD and the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:30 PM.