

# Final Report Phase II

## Calhoun County Juvenile Home

April 12, 2005



## **Final Report Phase II Calhoun County Juvenile Home Team Rebuilding Project Analysis**

In February 2004, the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners and the administration staff requested an analysis of the Calhoun County Juvenile Home. The purpose of the analysis was to review the existing program and operating policies and procedures, report on program effectiveness, efficiency of operations, employee morale while creating an action plan to become the Juvenile Home's "Agenda for Change".

To capitalize on their analysis investment, this report was a major component in the selection process of the new Juvenile Home Director. The Director and staff embraced the action plan and worked to make significant progress in addressing the critical issues identified in the Phase I 2004 report.

The Phase I 2004 report recommended that a one-year follow-up analysis be conducted. Attached is the Phase II Team Rebuilding Project report. The Juvenile Home Teamwork Rebuilding Analysis is based on individual interview survey feedback from twenty-eight staff members and personal observations during two tours of the Juvenile Home facility. As in the Phase I report, a promise was made to staff that any feedback or comments shared with the interviewer would be incorporated into the report in such a manner that statements could not be identified by a particular staff member or staff position.

Recommendations are advisory in nature and based on observations at the Calhoun County Juvenile Home, staff interviews and reports. The final determination regarding future implementation of any or all of the recommendations is up to the County Administration and Calhoun County Juvenile Home staff in accordance with the approval of the Calhoun County Board of Commissioners.

Should you need clarification, additional information or assistance in implementing this next phase of the plan of action, please feel free to contact me.

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### Historical Perspective

In the beginning of 2004, Juvenile Home staff worked in a *negative culture*, a situation that can destroy good people, processes and quality programs.

Factors that contributed to the negative work environment included:

- ❖ A lack of empowerment
- ❖ A lack of community
- ❖ A lack of confidence
- ❖ A lack of communication

The first recommendation for the “re-building” of the Juvenile Home culture was to abandon “the old way of doing things” and to find more effective methods. A positive work environment does not just happen. It takes real communication, commitment from all staff, the ability to adapt to change, flexibility and hard work.

The report indicated that it would take a united workforce, committed to making changes, where everyone takes responsibility for the Juvenile Home's present situation and its future.

### Specific Recommendations in 2004

- ❖ Trust staff
- ❖ Communicate regularly with staff encompassing all areas of the organization
- ❖ Create a supportive work environment
- ❖ Include employees in the decision making process
- ❖ Research program options to minimize repeat resident offenders
- ❖ Recognize staff accomplishments
- ❖ Provide regular hands-on training, focus on proper restraint implementation
- ❖ Assess and rewrite, as needed, current policies and procedures
- ❖ Enforce rules, policies and procedures in a consistent manner
- ❖ Improve facility cleanliness
- ❖ Build a sense of community
- ❖ Use technology to maximize staff time
- ❖ Implement a mentoring program for new employees
- ❖ Ensure that all staff understand and are trained to complete daily responsibilities
- ❖ Establish a sound appraisal system, one that provides regular performance feedback to all employees
- ❖ Dismiss consistently poor performers if not able to determine improvement

Constructive change began with an awareness of the need for change and a commitment from all staff to make the needed changes. From day one the support from the administrative staff made a difference especially during the interim in selecting and orientating a new director and in the transition of hiring a new assistant director.

## 2005 Situational Perspective

### Employee's perspective on co-workers:

- ❖ Staff respect, admire the new director
- ❖ Like that administration asks for their opinions
- ❖ Noticeable improvement in morale
- ❖ Appreciate open communication
- ❖ "100% turn around"
- ❖ "You hear laughter now"
- ❖ Given more responsibility, feel trusted
- ❖ "Able to focus on the "kids" rather than worrying about protecting myself"
- ❖ Expectations are clearer, "know what's expected of me"
- ❖ Less pressure, lower stress level
- ❖ "Going in the right direction"
- ❖ "They listen to me"

### Employee's perspective on residents:

- ❖ Director in tune with youth
- ❖ Staff shows more concern, are more approachable
- ❖ Minimal restraints
- ❖ Less room confinements
- ❖ Fewer absences from school
- ❖ Repeat offenders struggle with new program at first
- ❖ Prefer teaching life skills rather than punishing
- ❖ No longer them versus us attitude
- ❖ Youth using phrases "please" and "thank you"
- ❖ Staff more in tune with youth needs

### Employee's perspective on administration:

- ❖ Director best role model
- ❖ Believes in staff
- ❖ "Making progress", "Long way to go still"
- ❖ Administration respects staff
- ❖ Eager to move ahead
- ❖ "Backs up and supports supervisors"
- ❖ New programming causes changes in policies, hard to stay on top of changes, causes frustration
- ❖ Look for ways to build staff capacity
- ❖ "Are the right people in place to implement a positive program?"
- ❖ Need to find time to get to know the Assistant Director

### Work attitude

Staff comments centered on how they arrive at work and are happy to be there, looking forward to the day ahead, wondering what they will learn from Juvenile Home Director (Reggie) today, and no longer worried about what could go wrong at work today.

In regards to co-workers or supervisors, many staff felt that who they worked with made a big difference in making the day easier or harder. However, most felt that they could make a mistake and no longer fear negative consequences but rather learn how to handle a situation better.

When staff leave work, staff feel good about what they have accomplished, had a busy day and are tired but not drained like before, in a better mood so family looks forward to their coming home and they feel that their work was appreciated. Many staff shared they were surprised to find that they are no longer rushing to “punch out” and leave.

### Trust: *rated as better*

- ❖ See director collecting information, analyzing and evaluating then implementing and redesigning as necessary
- ❖ Still some hesitation from staff, seem to wonder if it's too good to be true
- ❖ Staff sense its “ok” to make a mistake, just need to learn from the mistake
- ❖ See administration looking for the positive not the punitive

### Cooperation: *rated as improving*

- ❖ See improvement from shift to shift
- ❖ Youth are more cooperative with workers who are in a better mood
- ❖ See staff listening more to each other
- ❖ Sometimes feel a bit “pushed” with all of the changes
- ❖ Easier to work out problems

### Consistency: *rated as improving*

- ❖ Regular staff meetings have made a big difference
- ❖ Changes not always clearly stated
- ❖ Comments shared on how difficult it is to get people to work day after day
- ❖ Policies and guidelines followed with more consistency

### Safety: *rated as better*

- ❖ Staff are more alert to an unsafe condition
- ❖ Fewer restraints are used, less acting out by youth
- ❖ A reduction in school absences
- ❖ Appreciate safety training: fire drills
- ❖ Still need to address shortage on some shifts/wings

Leadership Style: *rated as better*

- ❖ Leadership teams are aligned with each other and 95% of the employees
- ❖ Staff indicated that leaders are accessible, communicate honestly and provide clear direction
- ❖ See director as an administrator and a leader
- ❖ Administrator and assistant working as a team
- ❖ Talk to staff and youth
- ❖ Good sense of humor

Conflict Management: *rated as better and improving*

- ❖ Assertive not aggressive
- ❖ Handles conflict in a professional manner
- ❖ “No longer feel like I have a bulls eye on my back”
- ❖ Encourages staff to find solutions, less micromanaging
- ❖ Remember when establishing a new policy to explain why
- ❖ Listens to both sides of a conflict
- ❖ “Doesn’t shoot from the hip” or “Jump to conclusions”
- ❖ Deals with issues fairly, effectively and quickly

Recognition: *rated as better and improving*

- ❖ Staff meetings provide an opportunity to thank and recognize staff
- ❖ Encourages supervisors to give positive feedback
- ❖ Recognize all staff involved in an accomplishment

Professional Development: *rated as improving but need more*

- ❖ Training this year was good but all staff need to be involved
- ❖ Create training plans for all staff
- ❖ Continue to build capacity in all staff, no matter what their role
- ❖ Offer training in team building, understanding each other’s roles/responsibilities
- ❖ Need training in child development and critical thinking

Job Satisfaction: *rated as much better*

- ❖ 90%+ of employees spoke positively about their employment
- ❖ A majority of staff are inspired to go above and beyond the “call of duty” to help meet organizational goals
- ❖ Most feel that the basics “recognition, employee development and performance feedback” are done well
- ❖ Appreciate opportunity to try new ideas
- ❖ Feel skills and experience are appreciated by administration

Team Work: *rated as better and improving*

- ❖ Comfortable in sharing new ideas or concerns
- ❖ Team work visible between staff and administration
- ❖ Remember to be open to all perspectives
- ❖ Lack of consideration when staff call in sick and place an extra work load on others

Frustration Level: *rated as better and improving*

- ❖ New program creates more paperwork
- ❖ Desire to implement program faster than staff able to accomplish
- ❖ “Increase in programming changes increases staff frustration but that’s OK”
- ❖ Staff less likely to make an incident worse
- ❖ Problems are dealt with quickly and professionally
- ❖ See and hear less venting from staff

Decision-making: *rated as better*

- ❖ Employees are active in the decision making process
- ❖ Asks for opinions and feedback
- ❖ Administration able to listen
- ❖ “Have more of a voice in the organization”
- ❖ Administration/supervisors utilize the staff’s strengths in the decision-making process
- ❖ Administration values staff’s years of experience and formal education

Power to change: *in ranked order*

- ❖ New Building
- ❖ Treatment Program
- ❖ Create new positions
  - Activities Director
  - Another supervisor
  - Class-room assistants
  - Counselor
  - Kitchen staff
- ❖ Provide a transition time for students before returning home
  - Allows staff to prepare student for returning home
- ❖ Engage youth in “real life” discussions: how to avoid gangs, drugs, alcohol, & sex
- ❖ Create an after-school program: art, creative writing, chess club
- ❖ Update job descriptions and needed employee skill set
- ❖ Review salary levels
- ❖ Review retirement benefits

Professional advancement: *rated as needs improvement*

- ❖ Desire to discuss career goals with administration
- ❖ Would like to see more defined career paths, i.e. probation
- ❖ Need more support for educational advancement

## Recommendations

### Communication

A crucial factor in building trust between managers and employees is effective communication. Employees crave information. Open communication with management helps to motivate employees and make them feel that they are an important part of the organization. Seek thoughts and opinions from all staff and find ways to give credit for their ideas.

It is more difficult to maintain effective communication with a 24/7 operation, nevertheless, the time spent will be worth the results. Sometimes when a work environment improves, management might consider minimizing staff meetings and utilize other forms of communication. However, regular face-to-face communication is a must and should never be compromised. Communication is essential in any organization as it empowers staff, builds confidence and motivates employees to do quality work. Juvenile Home staff value the face-to-face interaction that regular staff meetings provide.

### Trust

Building a solid level of trust with employees is a key factor in bringing about high levels of workplace satisfaction. Self-directed, trusted employees see a problem and initiate a solution, if they need support they tend to ask for it and they watch out for other colleagues who are under stress and offer a helping hand.

An important component in maintaining trust is keeping promises. With so many new programs and directions, all staff needs to be aware of the pressures to promise something that just is not attainable at this time. Set realistic goals and priorities and place other ideas or projects on a “parking lot” for later consideration and implementation.

To build trust all administration needs to get out and “meet the troops”. Find out about staff as a person, their families, likes/dislikes, etc. Spending time indicates administration sees staff as “equal partners” in the team building process.

Administration needs to be aware of a phenomenon referred to as “flash back”. Sometimes staff report feeling “odd” or “wary” of a particular situation, where in reality the similarities in the incident are just too close to previous encounters with the past director. Encourage staff to share when these feelings arise and deal with each incident appropriately. Over time and with better interaction techniques, the staffs’ initial reactions to conflict and emotional situations will improve.

### Cooperation

Take time to be supportive of co-workers and they will in turn be more supportive of each other. With increased diversity among staff, everyone needs to look for ways to be more flexible and adaptive, free from rigid attitudes that can interfere with cooperation and ultimately, problem-solving.

And always remember that an unwillingness to consider other ideas and points of view or create an atmosphere of “it’s my way or the highway” will certainly cut off communication and shatter trust.

### Consistency

With all of the new program changes, staff is frustrated at times with the “ever-changing” process but are aware of the long-term benefits for implementing the new program. This rapid change in programming requires everyone to remain focused on the long-term benefits, ensure that open communication is maintained, and that as a team all staff remain supportive of the process.

Resistance to change can be costly to an organization. Effective leaders and supervisors, rather than dictate procedural rules allowing little or no flexibility, should explain the purpose and work together with staff to establish appropriate goals and outcomes. Learn to see organizational changes as challenges rather than threats. Work to remain flexible and adaptable in the problem-solving process and be willing to try new ways of dealing with different situations.

### Safety

Continue to plan, act upon and review safety policies and procedures. Encourage staff to take responsibility and share their concerns immediately should an unsafe issue come to light.

### Leadership Style

Help staff feel valued and in control of their work situation by continuing to be positive in interacting with them. Emphasize what administration wants rather than what administration does not want and assume control only when no other valid alternative exists.

Cultivate staff feedback. Look for ways for staff to provide honest feedback on current or proposed programming, staffing, scheduling, etc. An open dialogue with employees is the best way for administration and supervisors to improve their own performance and increase staff's job satisfaction. Some staff may experience limited discomfort with this method; yet, the information that is gained is well worth the process.

### Conflict Management

In the workplace there are two types of conflict: substantive and personalized. Substantive conflict deals with issues regarding decisions, ideas, directions, and actions while personalized conflict deals with a personality conflict. Usually personalized conflict occurs because substantive conflict has been handled poorly.

Provide staff with training that focuses on how to effectively deal with emotional situations and stress. This will be time well-spent and will dramatically impact on the unit's performance ability and effectiveness. Locate staff training that focuses on problem solving with new techniques designed to enhance staff achievement. Conflict cannot always be resolved, but it can be managed in ways that lead to a win-win situation.

Differences of opinion and conflict are common to any organization. Too often, however, interpersonal conflict is suppressed in favor of group harmony. Currently there are two difference of opinion regarding the programming component at the Juvenile Home. The differences can be categorized in two camps: the "seasoned" staff's viewpoint and the "new" staff's perspective.

The reason people have a difference of opinion is that they have different values, beliefs, experiences and knowledge. In the creative management of conflict, all parties need to first find their common ground on the issue to begin to resolve their differences and talk about those common items and the differences. Remember that failure to share one's ideas and feelings allows the other person to "fill in the gap". People begin to read into the situation, looking for the negative which in turn generates anxiety, leading others to also look for the negative in the situation. Subsequently trust begins to deteriorate and staff can become suspicious and defensive. That was the situation a year ago.

This is an opportunity to deal with a difference of opinion in a constructive manner and come to a consensus for future programming initiatives. Addressing this important area of conflict can serve as the foundation for resolving future differences.

### Recognition

Administration and supervisors have created systems to encourage staff when doing a "good" job. Everyone receives a "pat on the back" for a job well-done with a variety of effective methods of recognition. The staff is well aware of how counter-productive constant criticism can be and appreciates the positive comments.

Each form of recognition should be individualized and deserved. Remember, whatever the award; only give it when the award is earned to avoid the problem of "whose turn is it next?" Potentially someone could end up with the award when they really did not deserve it. Unwarranted recognition impacts the meaning of the award for previous award winners and minimizes it for future employees who will receive the recognition.

So continue to be creative in designing a formal awards program but remember a daily positive comment goes along way to encouraging each staff members to do their very best!

### Professional Development

One area of training that would be beneficial for the entire staff is the *Art of Listening*. Too often communication can be both parties speaking and no one really listening. Listening requires the skill to be able to focus, concentrate and empathize with a colleague or supervisor.

Most employee development happens on the job. Supervisors/administration should look for ways to give employees new opportunities to perform, learn and grow on the job. This is a great way to show you trust and respect staff and that you have their best interests at heart.

### Job Satisfaction

Overall all levels of employees shared a high degree of job satisfaction, however, there were some less tangible factors shared in which staff hoped there could be some improvement. These factors included more scheduling flexibility to meet family and personal needs, better salary and benefit package for all levels of job placement, and more defined job advancement. Staff that has more seniority tends to be more satisfied with their benefits and amount of time off but employees who have worked fewer years are more likely to be very satisfied with relationships among employees.

The administrative staff is encouraged to look for innovative methods to address these concerns. The time invested to research, design and implement new policies to address these concerns, especially work flexibility, would be rewarded with higher ratings in both job satisfaction and job performance.

### Team Work

Maintaining good relationships with each other in the Juvenile Home is a key way to avoid burnout. Positive working relationships provide avenues to effective problem-solving, avoiding feelings of alienation and encouraging everyone to be an important part of the team.

With a 24/7 operation, it can be difficult to maintain working relationships across all staffing levels and within the different “wings”, however, if staff make this a priority and allocate time to relationship building, the time will be well spent by reducing staff stress and increasing team efficiency and effectiveness.

To minimize stress, it is important that each staff member understand their own responsibilities and the negative impact not fulfilling these responsibilities has on their

co-workers and the unit's overall productivity. Each employee needs to be well trained to do their own job and take pride in fulfilling those responsibilities daily. Ensuring that each employee is held accountable for fulfilling their daily tasks should increase staff engagement in the Juvenile Home's overall effectiveness.

### *Frustration Level*

View stressful situations as a challenge to staff's creative thinking abilities. Staff should use positive self-talk, give positive reinforcement to others, take responsibility in completing their part of any task and most importantly, maintain a sense of humor.

Learn to be able to "roll with the punches". No matter how well things are going, not everything will be successful. Being accepting of this reality will help staff from overreacting to disappointments, and learning its "ok to have to pick yourself up and start over."

### *Decision-making*

Involving employees in the decision making process shows employees that administration respects their opinions and it also ensures that as an organization you will get the best possible input during the decision-making process. Often employees who are closest to the problem can see the best options for possible solutions. As you involve others in the decision-making process you increase their commitment to solving the current challenge, increase their overall commitment to the organization and help ease the buy-in for the implementation of a new process or organizational change.

Remember, that the participatory decision making usually takes longer but will save time in the long run. Having people make a commitment up-front to support a new venture or a change in policy is time well-spent.

## Summary

Overall I found the Juvenile Home to have a positive, open, and more trusting atmosphere than a year ago. Pro-active behaviors were apparent. More employees had the skills and confidence to share their ideas or concerns with administration. Invisible barriers that were found last year negatively impacting staff productivity and effectiveness have virtually been dismantled and visible improvements in all areas can be observed. Open and honest communication at all levels has made the difference. The staff is building their future together and moving ahead.

As part of “Lessons Learned” I would encourage the Juvenile Home and County Administration to see that checks and balances are in place, and adjust as necessary, to ensure that the past challenges and issues can not reoccur. Once this review has taken place, take time to share the process that is in place to reassure staff and relieve their anxiety.

A healthy team has the same goals, a common focus and purpose, and takes on the responsibilities to accomplish tasks at-hand. Healthy teams take the initiative to get the job done, focus on team contributions and concentrate on solutions. They work together cooperatively, looking for ways to improve their quality of service. They take appropriate steps to prevent emergencies and look for ways to save money and improve quality. All of these healthy team traits were apparent at the Calhoun County Juvenile Home during the Phase II analysis. Therefore, I believe that the differences in opinion that exist between “seasoned” and “new” staff regarding the type of programming needed and the best way to implement the program should be addressed now. The potential for increasing conflict does exist since the team has competing interests and goals and, more importantly, different ideas about the best methods to ensure successful attainment of the Juvenile Home goals.

I found that the top six most important factors that influence the culture at the Calhoun County Juvenile Home have more to do with interpersonal relationships than with tangible factors. The most critical factors include the quality of the decision makers and the decision-making process, relationships between administration and supervisors with employees, open communication, a high work ethic for all staff, a safe and nurturing work environment and the sense of personal achievement rated much higher than their concerns about the amount of time off, benefits, work hours and salary. Time will be best spent focusing on continuing to build solid relationships between administration and supervisors with staff by ensuring open and effective communications throughout all levels of staffing. Consequently, administration is encouraged to discuss with staff possible innovative approaches that could be implemented to improve each of the above quantitative factors: work schedules, salary and benefits.

Staff understands it takes time to “grow” a program and is committed to learning and implementing a successful program at the Juvenile Home. Staff is now proud to say they work at the Calhoun County Juvenile Home.

Using descriptive words, please paint me a picture for the current Juvenile Home from your perspective, from a resident's perspective and from administration's perspective.

Using two to three words, describe how you feel when you arrive at work and two to three words that describe how you feel as you leave work.

In the spring of 2004 Administration committed to rebuilding the Juvenile Home culture and creating a healthier work environment, please rate the level of success for the following topics. From your perspective, rate the work environment in each of these areas—better, improving, the same, or worse. In each of these areas, what issues still need to be addressed?

Trust

Cooperation

Consistency

Safety

Leadership style

Conflict management

Recognition

Professional Development

Job Satisfaction

Team Work

Frustration level

Decision-making

If you had the power to do things differently, what things would you change?

What do you see for your own future opportunities for professional growth and advancement?

Any other comments you wish to share?