



Tonya DiMillo Consulting

– Raising standards, preserving potential for youth in Maine –

Identified issue:

The bottom line, algorithm is simple. If we seek to nurture a youth in crisis and in challenge toward healing, then we will raise our standards of care across the state of Maine, through the *guidance and support of appropriate and independent oversight. Such oversight, must be inclusive of pediatric and adolescent expertise in brain and body development.*

Oversight models:

Children’s Cabinet: The Children’s Cabinet is an important collaborative model to implement policy and practice, learn from the field and adjust as needed. The limitation of this model is the inherent nature in the design of the committee, it is not free from political persuasion or fiduciary lens.

Juvenile Justice System: There is likely no current independent oversight in the juvenile justice system, for youth placed at LCYDC (inactive review board), or youth supervised in the community. The juvenile justice task force may be acting in oversight capacity however, it is co-chaired by the DOC Commissioner, and a state legislator. Recent task force reports suggest regional committees provide added oversight to community-based care programs.

The Maine Child Ombudsman office is designated to assist in “resolving concerns and complaints” regarding Child Protection Services. *Limited scope to open cases in child welfare, versus welfare of children.*

The Child Advocate Office: New Hampshire. Newly devised model and steadily growing in other states. Although independent, it is *limited in pediatric expertise, and member capacity. Which may increase bias, and decrease innovation and research driven standards.*

Policy effort:

Pediatric Oversight Council: The best model based on numerous iterations, pairs pediatric experts in brain, body and neuro health with youth champions, in a compassionate space such as a council, to reconcile the past, reflect the present and guide the future. Such a council informs safe responses versus reviews current standards of care in our care systems, to create consistent healthy outcomes for our youth.

Improved oversight standards potential impact:

Independent Pediatric Oversight Council:

- Informing safe responses, increasing accountability, providing transparency and creating mechanisms for continued improvements.
- Consistent healthy youth outcomes.
- Public reporting, education and awareness.
- Raise standards of care in intervention, and prevention systems practice and policy approaches.
- Experts in the driver seat, market and politics removed from health policy lens.
- Collaborative, multi system impact and integration.
- Expert and research driven comprehensive evaluations of strengths and unmet needs for all youth.
- Identify compassionate and equal pathways forward in all systems of care: health and wellness, education, as well as juvenile justice, child welfare.
- Long term research to develop effective intervention and intervention systems.
- Inspire innovation to address social determinants and impact policy and practice.



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