

Minutes  
Subcommittee on Juvenile Matters  
Public Service and Trust Commission  
Committee on Expectations of the Public

January 14, 2009  
2:30 PM

Those in attendance: Atty. Cynthia Cunningham, Hon. Mark Gould (chair), Hon. Leslie Olear, and Atty. Brandon Pelegano.

The meeting was called to order at 2:39 PM.

1. Welcome and Introduction of subcommittee members – Judge Gould welcomed the members of the committee.
2. Discussion of subcommittee task – The subcommittee is looking at the process, procedures, decorum, and service in the juvenile courts and providing information that will make a difficult situation somewhat less fear-filled for parents and children. It was suggested that members of the subcommittee go to one or more of the juvenile courts and view them from the perspective of an inexperienced person going in with a child.
3. Review of materials available – There is not a great deal of material currently available.
4. Discussion of possible approaches – Attorney Pelegano and Attorney Cunningham provided an overview of the juvenile process, including the information that juvenile has both civil and criminal cases. Many people who come into juvenile courts are getting court-appointed counsel and obtain information from that counsel, but they have questions before counsel is appointed. Discussion ensued as to how to assist people at various stages of the process, including providing better signs and directories, greeters at the doors, information as to the privacy and confidentiality of proceedings, parking information, public transportation information, reading materials for children waiting at the court, meeting space for attorneys to meet with children and parents, information on frequently asked questions for teens and parents, i.e., on emancipation, information to people on the next steps they must take after the court hearing, and a video on juvenile courts.

Some of these suggestions for assisting people may be recommended to other committees, such as the idea of additional helpful signs and directories. With respect to the video, Atty. Cunningham will look into what is being looked at currently and the possible availability of grant money for making a video.

An issue that comes up in juvenile court is that clerks cannot provide information to people over the phone and instead tell them they have to come to the court because it is impossible to verify who the caller is. People are frustrated by the restriction, even though it is the correct response to a phone inquiry. The subcommittee might look at this issue.

5. Assignment of tasks – Judge Gould will plan to go to several juvenile courts. It is recommended that other members of the subcommittee also visit a juvenile court and view it from the perspective of a member of the public.

Also, members of the subcommittee are asked to bring to the next subcommittee meeting two concrete ideas, based upon the information discussed at this meeting, to reduce the anxiety of people who are coming into the juvenile court without any idea of what to expect.

6. Future meetings – The next meeting of the subcommittee will be February 4, 2009 at 225 Spring Street, Wethersfield in Room 133 at 3:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned 3:51 PM