



Victoria Family Court & Youth Justice Committee

January 6, 2017

Saanich Police
c/o Mia Golden, Crime Reduction Education Division
Pacific Centre Family Services Association
West Shore Child, Youth and Family Centre
345 Wale Rd.
Victoria, BC V9B 6X2

Re: MYST (Mobile Youth Services Team)

Our committee is mandated by the Provincial and Federal Governments to be aware of the circumstances for youth and families who may come into contact with the justice system. This is a big job and to accomplish this we have had many speakers including:

- Panel Discussion on Secure Care with: Ceri Sanderson, Senior Advocacy Advisor, *Representative for Children and Youth*; Rick Schwartz, *Youth Justice Defense*; Gord Irving, Coordinator of *Victoria Boys and Girls Club*; and Dr. Grant Charles, Associate Professor, *School of Social Work at UBC* and Affiliated Associate Professor, Division of Adolescent Health and Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, *BC Children's Hospital*
- Communica – offering conflict management and communication courses and workshops, and dispute resolution services such as mediation, arbitration, parenting coordination, coaching, and group facilitation
- Rainbows - providing support to families going through a major loss in their family.
- Mary's Therapeutic Farm – supporting youth to engage with therapeutic animals
- Susan Gmitroski, *Island Health, Coordinator of Ledger House (Youth Mental Health)*
- Joel Conway, *Fortress Foundation* - focused on the education and empowerment of men, to address and eradicate the demand for sexual exploitation
- Gord Irving, *Victoria Boys and Girls Club* on Youth Support and Housing Initiatives
- Daren Reimer, *Sanctuary Youth Drop In Center*

With all of these 'experts' speaking on the issues affecting youth and their families, none is more important than Cst. Jennifer Gibbs, who knows the youth, their homes, their pressures and their supports. She knows their faces, where they like to hang out, who they hang out with and who may be trying to recruit them. Whether its gangs, drugs or the sex trade, our vulnerable youth need an advocate who is up to speed and able to jump in when the moment presents itself. While the Family Court and Youth Justice Committee wishes that the Mobile Youth Services Team had more resources, we recognize the incredible contribution that each municipality makes - through their police agency - to having someone who can follow the pimps and the johns and help kids stay safe from Sooke to Sidney.

I have watched as difficult transitions happened, as members moved into the MYST program and struggled with that transition - to learn the faces and the names, to connect the million dots, and to be accepted to advocate, coach, and support. With every change literally thousands of opportunities are lost.

Retaining the knowledge base of our team is critical to the wellbeing of our families and their youth. I believe the best way to do that is to extend the appointment of Cst. Gibbs for as long as possible and support her in that role. To that end we have sought to support the CRED (Crime Reduction Education Division) of Pacific Centre Family Services, offering professional counselling support for youth exiting or avoiding indoctrination into gangs.

Broad municipal support for MYST is at risk whenever this difficult job (a job that relies so much on the relationships with youth and youth serving agencies) is not done extremely well. It works best when the worker is consistent and experienced and every municipal government wants the best value for their budget dollar. Retaining Cst. Gibbs protects our investment in this CRD wide service and protects our continued investments.

Yours truly,

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