

FINAL CONSULTANT REPORT
TASK ORDER: VI-06-051-FG-0827
September 19-20, 2006 – Follow-Up Site Visit

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On June 14, 2006 at the Divi Carina Bay Resort on St. Croix, the VI Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Symposium entitled “Strategies and Solutions for the Virgin Islands” was convened. There were 175 participants present for the symposium. I provided keynote remarks and also a training presentation on the framework that CWLA has developed to use with state and local jurisdictions to address the issues confronting improved systems coordination. This provided participants with an opportunity to understand the range of issues involved in this work and a chance to construct initial steps in their work to approach this issue. The symposium featured several legislators, an impressive array of print and media coverage, and several system leaders (including the President of the US VI Senate).

The Chief Judge for the St. Croix Family Court was also present for this event and provided luncheon remarks. I was able to meet with her at the close of the symposium and secure a commitment from her to convene a group of key leaders to further the discourse on this topic and organize a governance structure to address the issue of maltreatment and delinquency. This was a very promising development for further action resulting from this provision of technical assistance.

As a result of this interest, Kimberley Causey Gomez and Judge Steele provided leadership in coordinating an initial convening of an Executive Committee to consider next steps in the address of the dually involved youth and families. This meeting was convened at the Family Court building on St. Croix, US Virgin Islands on September 20, 2006. The following key leaders from multiple youth serving agencies and organizations (public and private) were in attendance after accepting the invitation from Judge Steele to participate:

Patricia Steele, Presiding Judge
Family Court Judge STX

Kimberley Causey Gomez, Administrator
Division of Children, Youth & Families, Department of Human Services

Ada-Luz Rivera, District Manager
Office of Intervention Services, Juvenile Unit, STX

Rita Dudley Grant, Clinical Director
Virgin Islands Behavioral Services

Dara Hamilton, Staff
Supporting Our Sisters Transitional Living Program

Wanda Wright, Co-Director
Childworth Support Services for Families

Chris Finch, Executive Director
Lutheran Social Services-VI

Jesse Forti, Unit Leader
STX Mental Health, Department of Health

The meeting purpose included a review of CWLA work in other state and local jurisdictions. This review was focused on the mobilization components and advocacy efforts to build support for conducting the study and analysis necessary to construct new policies and protocols to improve outcomes for dually involved youth. The discussion included consideration for the formal construct of the Executive Committee to oversee this work and the roles and responsibilities for which the committee would be responsible.

The group agreed that funds would need to be secured to support ongoing technical assistance and consultation for this effort. As the initial step in initiating this work, Kimberley Causey Gomez, Administrator for the Division of Children, Youth & Families agreed to author a grant proposal for this purpose. Chris Finch, Executive Director of the Lutheran Social Services for the US Virgin Islands agreed to assist in this grant writing process.

It should be noted that Kimberley Causey Gomez organized a meeting of her Division management staff on September 19, 2006 to discuss data issues (i.e., current capacity to gather and analyze, data needs to inform case management and policy recommendations, etc.) and invited my participation. I attended and participated in this meeting immediately subsequent to my arrival on September 19, 2006.

There were no problems in delivering this technical assistance. Kimberley Causey Gomez and her staff did an outstanding job of making full use of my time and consultation and organized the two meetings to ensure maximum opportunities to meet with key personnel and discuss in detail next steps.