

## **Renee Fulmer: SCDJJ Newberry County Director**

Good Afternoon. I have been asked to come in and speak to the committee about what the community service division does. We are the frontline staff for our agency. We are often the first point of contact for a juvenile and their family with the Department of Juvenile Justice. My county office staff provides everything from intake services, probation, parole services, to intensive supervision. That process begins with a referral, and those referrals come from law enforcement, parents directly, or from our school district. We look at those juveniles and we try to assess them to determine the best level of services and care that they need. Sanctions can include everything from arbitration, DJJ supervised contracts, to prosecution of cases that can result in probation, determinate sentences, and indeterminate sentences. We cover everything from status offences to criminal offenses. We are often, like I said, that resource for families. We provide them with referrals to other agencies. We work very closely with law enforcement, with our solicitor's office, with our other sister agencies such as Mental Health, DSS, Workforce (DEW), and various community partners. We're fortunate to have good relationships with our colleges, universities, and churches, and other employers, because one of the things we do is actually try and work with our juveniles and their families and when we've got a juvenile that owes restitution, they have to pay it in some way; so, we work to find employment in some way so that they can be accountable to the victims. Our goal is to provide effective supervision for the youth in the least restrictive environment. We provide support to the families, with the goal of reducing juvenile crime recidivism, and making our communities safer.

I've been with the agency for over 13 year and I've been through 3 agency directors. Each one has had their own and unique approach to how to address and approach problems with our juveniles. Judge Byars implemented the intensive supervision program. That program provides a higher level of supervision. The next director (Margaret Barber) emphasized prevention programs and services from the community standpoint, in an effort to try and keep the juvenile in a home before he or she had to be taken to a supervised facility.

Director Murray has been faced with challenges of supervision of our youth on our Main Campus, and she has faced those challenges with grace and style. She sought appropriate assistance to solve the problems our agency has faced. And then, she surprised me by taking time out of her demanding schedule to visit our county office. She came to Newberry County, a surprise visit, to find our volunteer at our front desk, myself at my desk, and our probation and intake office out trying to get a juvenile enrolled in school. Our intensive supervision officer was at a placement visit. She had a brief tour of the office, because our space is not large. Then she sat down at our conference table and went on to explain what's going on at our main campus, and what changes are being implemented, and then asked what concerns we had. She wanted to know what's going on in Newberry. My regional instructor has a saying, "What's good in our hood?"—he wants to know the positives that are going on in our county office. For Director Murray to come out and visit us, and not only did she come in for more than just 15 minutes and tell us how things are changing at DJJ and what's good, but she wanted to hear from us. Oftentimes in the county office you feel as if you're out in the nether regions of the agency. She took an opportunity to sit down with

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us, and not only was she not in and out in 15 minutes, but she was with me in my office for 2 hours. She was there long enough that all of my staff got an opportunity to come back in the office and actually sit down with her. She wanted to hear their thoughts, their opinions, and their ideas. To have someone in upper management sit down in your office makes you feel empowered. That she cared enough to come out for that visit, not just to tell us about the changes, but to hear from us, she wanted us to know that she cared about us. That we're the frontline of our agency, that we're passionate about what we do—we live in our communities with our juveniles and their families. Our kids go to the same schools. We want our communities to be a safer place. We want safe parks, safe streets, and safe environments for our kids to grow up in.

I'll be the first to tell you—you won't get rich working for DJJ. But for much of our staff, it's not about the money, but unfortunately as a supervisor, it's been an increasingly difficult struggle for us to find qualified staff to come on board with our agency and to stay. I have two gentlemen who have been with me a little over three years, one has already left my department, and both were working second jobs. It's sad to say that our state employees have to take other jobs in order to make a living and survive. Of course, I'm not the person who makes that call and I don't make those changes but perhaps with your abilities that you may hear. I know that times are tight and budgets are tight, but I'm sure that every DJJ employee would appreciate anything you could do for us. Thank you.

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