

PRESS RELEASE FROM
LEGISLATOR SARAH ANKER

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Contact: Pamela Donovan

Office: 631-854-1600

Email: pamela.donovan@suffolkcountyny.gov

Helping Save Kids from a Life of Crime

Legislator Anker Focuses on Delivery of Mental Health Services to Prevent Recidivism



Legislator Anker joins Sheriff DeMarco and members of the Youth Re-entry Task Force at the new correctional facility in Yaphank. Pictured l-r: EAC Program Director Demishia Owens, Assistant to the Sheriff Butch Langhorn, Sheriff Vincent F. DeMarco, Legislator Sarah Anker, Suffolk County Assistant Deputy County Executive Errol Toulon, Suffolk County CJCC Chief Planner Robert C. Marmo and Stony Brook Masters Student Sara Kohlmann.

Mount Sinai, NY, April 2013—Suffolk County Legislator Sarah Anker's recently approved legislation IR 1026-2013 provides comprehensive data and recommendations to improve the delivery of mental health care and substance abuse treatment in Suffolk County's jail system.

Research has shown that rehabilitating incarcerated youth can reduce the likelihood of a return to prison, and associated crimes, thereby relieving the financial burden on our local taxpayers and enhancing safety. However, comprehensive data and analysis is an imperative first step to ensure that county resources are well-directed so problems can be identified and improved.

The legislation directs the Department of Health, the Sheriff's Youth Re-entry Task Force and the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) to conduct a study of existing behavioral healthcare services to determine how to improve the delivery of these services with continuity of care both before and after incarceration.

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“With approximately 1,780 inmates incarcerated at the county jail, and approximately 17% of those inmates under the age of 21, it is imperative that we provide effective mental health and substance abuse diagnosis and treatment to prevent recidivism,” said Legislator Anker.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 50% of inmates have at least one mental health condition and close to 70% of youth arrested in the United States have a diagnosable mental health disorder. The National Center on Addiction and Substance reports that 65% of the nation’s inmates meet certain medical criteria for substance abuse and addiction. However, only 11% percent received treatment for their addictions.

Since September 2011, Sheriff Vincent DeMarco’s Youth Tier Initiative has promoted the successful transition of incarcerated youth, between the ages of 16 to 19, from jail to community life. Participants in the program are housed on a separate tier within the facility dedicated to this program. The program encourages effective and open communication among the youth and the officers assigned to the initiative. The youth attend school at the jail, mentoring and substance abuse programs, and obtain pre and post-release case management. Educational, community and government agencies, as well as volunteers, comprise the Youth Re-Entry Task Force, which is working to make our communities safer and reduce inmate recidivism in Suffolk County.

“I want to thank Legislator Anker for her strong interest in mental health and substance abuse treatment for incarcerated youth. This study will provide us with important data and recommendations to help improve the delivery of health care in the county jail system,” stated Sheriff DeMarco.

“We all have a vested interest in making our society succeed as a whole. I’m thankful that we have individuals who think out of the box, and who provide direction for our future generations to succeed. Presently, there are no requirements to offer mental health services to kids being placed in jail. It’s much more likely for jailed youth to receive the wrong guidance and influence from cell mates than it is for them to receive guidance and direction from mental health professionals. It’s time to change the process, and in doing so, save our kids from a life a crime,” said Anker.