

[REDACTED]

Sugarmon, Tarik <Tarik.Sugarmon@shelbycountyttn.gov>
To: Black Clergy Collaborative of Memphis <blackclergycollaborative@gmail.com>

[REDACTED]

Wed, Apr 3, 2024 at 3:38 PM

Greetings Director Bondon,

On behalf of the entire Juvenile Court of Memphis & Shelby County Team, we are extremely grateful for your support and leadership in ensuring the community is able to collaborate around developing all youth. We are working every day to live our Mission, which is to provide interventions that results in positive outcomes for families and children, by addressing family matters with dignity and respect, and when necessary, holding youth accountable in ways that are developmentally appropriate.

All youth in the care of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office (SCSO) should be provided for, and population size is not an excuse. The Youth Justice and Education Center is below maximum capacity (which is 144) and thus Sheriff Bonner's reference to anticipating 40-60 youth is erroneous.

We have had numerous correspondence and meetings with the Sheriff and members of his team. Per our discussions, each of the **9** classrooms can accommodate **16 youth** (with an **8:1** staffing ratio) which totals **144**. Since we remain below the 144 thresholds, it appears there are no physical facilities limits to school attendance. However, it would require **18** SCSO staff be dedicated to daily school attendance. We recognize staff are necessary for other areas on occasion: limited youth remaining on pods, court/medical transport, attorney visits, assessments, etc. We desire 90-95% school attendance, but unfortunately due to SCSO being short-staffed only 50-60% of students have been allowed to attend school.

We have also met with the SCSO numerous times about resuming parent visitation which has been suspended for four years. We agree it is harmful to children and the community at-large to withhold in-person visitation. The SCSO indicated the court would have to mandate parent visitation via a court order. A court order was sent to the SCSO leadership team on February 28, 2024. We received a response indicating the SCSO would comply with the order. To-date in-person visitation still has not resumed.

Furthermore, in-person visitation should not be supplanted by virtual visitation. The SCSO is fully aware the court is in no way a barrier to the process of starting virtual visitation. The following outlines the steps the court has taken to support the SCSO with allowing virtual visitation in addition to in-person visitation.

- Dec 2023 – Juvenile Court was successful in setting up needed data exports for ViaPath
- Worked with ViaPath/GTL to test interface - Process updates data daily
- Feb 20, 2024 – ViaPath states to Chief Tuggle and Chief Lee - “We are ready to turn the Video Visitation system up at the Juvenile facility. Can you please help us answer the below questions

so we can move forward?”

-

Feb 20, 2024 – Chief Tuggle Responds in the affirmative - “ That sounds great. Thank you so much.”

-

Feb 26, 2024 – Juvenile Court - We email all to see if there was anything needed from the Court to proceed

-

Feb 26, 2024 – Debra Fessenden “We are waiting to hear from the County Attorney’s Office regarding this matter”. She also mentioned “ We think there should be written agreement in place along with insurance coverage as the court will be providing protected information about the youth to an outside vendor”

-

March 1, 2024 – Court and ViaPath – JC CTO reached out to ViaPath via virtual meeting - They once again substantiated that they had all that they needed from the Court. They also have already gone onsite to the YJEC and successfully tested the virtual visitation solution.

-

Next steps are with the Sheriff’s Staff and include training them to use the system

We stand in solidarity with you and all of the organizations that have signed onto the letter to Sherrif Bonner. We expect the SCSO to comply with the court order to allow youth in-person visits and to ensure all enrolled youth receive their state mandated education.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]