

Office of the Child Advocate  
Childhood Trauma Task Force Meeting Minutes  
Monday, December 4, 2023  
1:00pm-3:00pm  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Task Force Members or Designees Present:**

Maria Mossaides (OCA)  
Shawna Boles (DYS)  
Laura Brody (DCF)  
Claudia Dunne (CPCS)  
Mia Alverado (CLM)  
Avery Brien (DPH)  
Tom Skehill (Sen. O'Connor)  
Keesha LaTulippa (DPH)  
Jimmy Quinn (Probation)

**OCA Staff:**

Melissa Threadgill  
Alix Rivière  
Ari Fertig  
Audrey Smolkin  
Meg Crowley  
Arianna Turner  
Kristi Polizzano  
Bekah Thomas  
Morgan Byrnes

**Other:**

Emmanuel “Noble” Williams (TPP)  
Robert “Bobby” Iacoviello (TPP)  
Zoe Young (TPP)  
Charlotte L Williams (DYS)  
Jen O'Neill (DYS)  
Katy Perry-Lorentz (DYS)  
Ruchel D'Angelo (DYS)  
Amy Whitehead-Pleaux (EEC)  
Kelly English (MSPCC)  
Katherine Hughes (PCTR)  
Carisa Pajak (OBH)

Andrea Parker (FCSN)  
Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)  
Vandolyn Esparza (CSM)  
Mary-Beth Landry (FCSN)  
Edward Jacobs

**Meeting Commenced:** 1:02 PM

## **Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Childhood Trauma Task Force (CTTF) meeting. CTTF members and guests introduced themselves. Ms. Threadgill introduced the agenda for the meeting and welcomed questions.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed Ms. Rivière to introduce members of the panel presentation on trauma supports in juvenile justice settings. Ms. Rivière introduced the presenters and their presentation topics and then welcomed Noble to begin presenting on the Transformational Prison Project (TPP).

## **Presentations on Trauma Supports in Juvenile Justice**

### Transformational Prison Project

Emmanuel “Noble” Williams, Senior Director of Programming at TPP, began by sharing his personal experience with the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Department of Youth Services (DYS), and the Department of Corrections (DOC). He discussed his background growing up in public housing and how his lived experiences led to the creation of the Transformational Prison Project.

Noble presented background on the TPP, including the following:

- How it began at MCI-Norfolk
- The Goal: Creating a program for us, by us
- TPP is currently led by formerly incarcerated individuals

Noble highlighted one major flaw in the system, stating that individuals who commit violent crimes are often excluded from programming until near the end of their sentences, which limits their success upon re-entry to the community.

Noble then presented on TPP for Youth at DYS, highlighting the following key features of the program:

- Providing youth with direct mentorship by those with lived experience of the criminal system
- 2 regions, 5 units, over 80 youth
- Restorative Justice (RJ) circles: Building community with youth and staff inside DYS
- Working with families and caseworkers in the community to be a part of wraparound team for re-entry

Noble emphasized that one goal of the program is to explore youths' experiences and ensure that their feelings are validated by others with similar experiences. He also discussed the importance of approaching re-entry into the community as a process that begins while an individual is incarcerated and continues for many years after release.

Noble then presented on the benefits and drawbacks of the state's existing supports for youth at DYS, highlighting the importance of having staff that have shared experience, using restorative justice, and supporting staff who are experiencing their own trauma.

Noble then moved onto reimagining the future of our juvenile justice system and discussed the ways in which DYS can continue to improve. He emphasized the importance of being flexible with youth to ensure they feel safe to express themselves and continuing DYS' efforts to hire staff that have lived experience in the system.

Robert "Bobby" Iacoviello, Director of Community Outreach at TPP, then shared his experiences in DYS and DOC, reiterating the importance of preparing youth for re-entry. He also discussed the importance of caring for the youth in a positive environment while they are in DYS programs, rather than placing emphasis solely on security.

#### Trauma Response Specialists (DYS)

Ms. Rivière then welcomed Ms. Perry-Lorentz to begin presenting on the DYS Trauma Response Specialists.

Ms. Perry-Lorentz, the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) Statewide Director, introduced herself and thanked Noble and Bobby for their presentations. She began by presenting background on the creation of Trauma Response Specialist (TRS) positions at DYS, highlighting the research done to explore how best to support staff experiencing trauma. She then presented the mission and goals of the team and welcomed Trauma Response Specialists to introduce themselves.

First, Ms. D'Angelo introduced herself and discussed the importance of caring for staff as well as the issues of understaffing.

Next, Ms. O’Neil introduced herself, sharing her experiences of loss and trauma working for DYS and describing how those experiences motivated her to support staff in the TRS role.

Finally, Ms. Williams introduced herself and shared her experiences growing up in DCF care. She discussed how her experiences motivated her to work in the state systems that had failed her.

Ms. Perry-Lorentz then continued presenting on the TRS team’s work, explaining how they turn staff feedback into policy and practice change. She ended her presentation by reviewing the TRS team’s current work and next steps, emphasizing DYS staff’s commitment to the youth they serve.

Ms. Rivière thanked Ms. Perry-Lorentz for her presentation and welcomed questions for the presenters.

One member asked about changing DYS incident protocol to center trauma support for staff rather than identifying missteps that may have led to an incident. Members discussed new DYS systems for incident reporting that allow for more support for both staff and youth who are affected.

Members next discussed opportunities for connection with TPP to support the programs at their facilities and incorporate the voices of people with lived experience in the leadership of restorative justice training.

Bobby then spoke about the ways in which loss affects everyone in a DYS facility, an issue that is especially prevalent in the greater Boston area. Members discussed additional resources for trauma support.

Ms. Rivière thanked the presenters. She then welcomed Ms. Threadgill to hold a vote on the previous meeting’s minutes.

### **Review and Approval of Minutes from October 2, 2023 Meeting**

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the October 2, 2023, meeting minutes. Maria Mossaides, Shawna Boles, Claudia Dunne, Tom Skehill, Keesha LaTulippe, and Laura Brody voted in the affirmative. Mia Alverado abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for October were approved.

### **Discussion and Vote on CTTF Annual Report**

Ms. Threadgill introduced the CTTF 2023 Annual Report, explaining the two main sections of the report and noting that the report focuses on description rather than recommendations. She shared that no edits were suggested by the task force prior to the meeting and asked for final edits, questions, and comments on the report. None were raised.

Ms. Threadgill then held a roll call vote on the approval of the CTTF 2023 Annual Report. Ms. Boles, Mr. Quinn, Ms. Dunne, Ms. Alverado, Ms. Mossaides, Ms. Brody, Mr. Skehill, and Ms. LaTulippe all voted in the affirmative. No one abstained or opposed.

The CTTF 2023 Annual Report was approved.

Ms. Threadgill explained that the report would be sent to the Legislature in the coming weeks and a final copy would be emailed to the members.

Ms. Threadgill then welcomed Ms. Smolkin to present updates on the Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma (CCWT).

### **Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma Update**

Ms. Smolkin introduced herself and expressed gratitude to the group and presenters for their continued work. She then began presenting on the CCWT, discussing the background of the center and its recent transition to the OCA from UMass medical. She then shared additional information on the following areas:

- Training and Technical Assistance
- Key Partners
- New Resources
- State Agency Partnerships FY24
- DCF Provider Agencies
- School Focus: Thriving Minds
- Offers & Asks

Ms. Smolkin then welcomed questions on the presentation.

One member asked how the center works with the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth. Ms. Smolkin and Ms. Threadgill discussed the ongoing relationship between the OCA and the MCLGBTQY and their involvement in the Center's work.

Ms. Smolkin welcomed additional questions. None were raised.

### **Closing Comments**

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members and other attendees for their time and continued efforts.

**Adjournment:** 2:31 PM