

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Friday December 16, 2022
11:00am-12:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Board Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides (OCA)
Cecely Reardon (DYS)
Nancy Connolly (DMH)
Naoka Carey (CfJJ)
Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)
Rachel Wallack (Trial Court)
Rebecca Brink (DCF)
Duci Goncalves (CPCS)
Yves Singletary (DPH)
Danielle Allard (Sen. Gomez)
Robin Richardson (PPAL)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Kristi Polizzano
Alix Rivière
Jessica Seabrook
Morgan Byrnes

Other Attendees:

Sana Fadel (CfJJ)
Omar Irizarry (DMH)
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)
Danielle Jones (Springfield FRC)
Jay Mohanka (Sen. Gomez)
Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 11:03 am

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Juvenile Justice Policy & Data (JJPAD) Board meeting. Members of the Board and guests introduced themselves.

Meeting Agenda

Ms. Threadgill presented the agenda for today’s meeting: a review and vote on the Board’s FY22 annual report and a review and vote on the previous JJPAD Board meeting minutes.

Approval of Minutes from the November Meeting

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous JJPAD Board meeting minutes. Naoka Carey, Maria Mossaides, Rachel Wallack, Rachel Gwaltney, Cecely Reardon and Danielle Allard all voted in the affirmative. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for November were approved.

OCA Updates

Ms. Threadgill reminded the Board that this would be the last meeting of 2022, and that the group would take a break to allow for any personnel changes that result from the change in administration, explaining that the group would reconvene sometime in 2023.

Review & Vote on the FY22 Annual Report

Ms. Polizzano presented the report’s key data findings:

1. There was an increase in the utilization of the state’s juvenile justice system between FY21 and FY22.
2. This increase was primarily driven by an increase in youth alleged of committing persons, weapons, and property offenses.
3. Compared to pre-pandemic (FY19), overall system use is still declining at deeper system process points (i.e., post-arraignment), as well as for misdemeanor offenses.
4. The Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA) of 2018 continues to limit the number of youth coming into contact with the juvenile justice system.
5. Most youth delinquency cases are dismissed or diverted, and therefore do not result in a trial or plea.
6. Black & Latino youth, and youth with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) involvement are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.
7. Many youth who remain in the system have significant and potentially unmet underlying needs that may be driving their delinquency system involvement.
8. A majority of youth entering the system – and a significant portion of those that process through parts or all of the system – are alleged of misdemeanor and/or non-violent offenses.
9. There remain many opportunities to increase the use of diversion -- especially for the youth in the previously mentioned categories

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions from the group. Member asked if DCF involvement was defined as historic involvement or concurrent involvement. It was explained that it was concurrent involvement. Members discussed the need for collaboration to try to address this population. The group discussed services that would benefit youth who are concurrently involved with DCF and DYS, including respite care and specialized education settings. Members suggested that in 2023, the Board should focus on understanding if youth are getting the services needed to thrive and tracking long-term outcomes for systems involved youth.

The group discussed the custodial arrest and summons data. One member noted that it was difficult to determine if cases would be good candidates for diversion based on the data available. Members discussed the possibility of doing a deep dive into a sample of these cases to better understand how to offer diversion to youth who are deeper in the juvenile justice system.

Members also suggested looking at how DYS involvement impacts youth 18-23 years old, often referred to as transition aged youth (TAY) as they age out of formal system involvement. Director Mossaides noted that in the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA)'s work with TAY, the office's largest recommendation is to increase data reporting and availability to better track outcomes.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed general edits or comments on the report. Hearing none, the Board voted to adopt the report.

The following members voted in the affirmative: Maria Mossaides, Dulcineia Goncalves, Naoka Carey, Danielle Allard (on behalf of Sen. Gomez), Cecely Reardon, Rachel Gwaltney.

The following members abstained: Yves Singletary, Rachel Wallack (on behalf of Thomas Capasso), and Rebecca Brink.

The report was adopted.

Ms. Threadgill thanked members for their work.

Board Member Updates and Closing Comments

Ms. Threadgill thanked the group for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned: 11:46 am