

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Friday December 17, 2021
1:00pm – 3:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Board Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides (OCA)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Tammy Mello (CLM)
Matthew Conolly (EOE)
Naoka Carey (CfJJ)
Rebecca Brink (DCF)
Cristina Tedstone (DCF)
Dawn Christie (Parent representative)
Danielle Allard (Sen. Gomez’s Office)
Bridget Nichols (DMH)
David Melly (Rep. Dykema’s Office)
Lindsey Tucker (DPH)
Dulcinea Gonsalves (CPCS)
Barbara Kaban (CPCS)
Fabiola White (Probation)
Joe Abber (Probation)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Kristi Polizzano
Morgan Byrnes

Other Attendees:

Matt Pecoraro (Judge Baker)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Rebecca Pries (JCC)
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)
Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 12:04 pm

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 which included updates on JJPAD initiatives, board member updates, a discussion around the JJPAD Board's 2021 Data Availability report, and Subcommittee updates.

Approval of Minutes from September Meeting

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous JJPAD Board meeting minutes. Maria Mossaides, Rachel Wallack, Dulcinea Goncalves, Tammy Mello, David Melly, Naoka Carey, Rebecca Brink, and Matthew Conolly all voted in the affirmative. Bridget Nichols, Dawn Christie and Danielle Allard all abstained.

The meeting minutes for September were approved.

OCA Updates/Board Updates

Ms. Threadgill announced Commissioner Peter Forbes, Tammy Mello and Josh Dohan would all be departing the JJPAD Board as they leave their positions in state government/non-profit. She thanked the departing board members for their work and invited Director Mossaides to speak. Director Mossaides wished Commissioner Forbes best of luck in his retirement, and congratulated Ms. Mello on her new position as Executive Director of the Key Program. Ms. Threadgill then introduced and welcomed the JJPAD's newest member, Dulcinea Gonsalves, the new Director at the Youth Advocacy Division (YAD) of CPCS.

Ms. Threadgill proceeded to give members an update on OCA initiatives. She first highlighted the Diversion Learning Lab, stating that three sites in Essex, Middlesex and Worcester County have launched. Additionally, she updated the board on the hiring of the diversion coordinators and outlined the training they have participated in. She noted that the Diversion Labs are now open for referrals.

Next, Ms. Threadgill gave an update on the Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma (CCWT). She highlighted initial projects as well as upcoming projects. She opened the group up for questions or comments. A member offered to connect the CCWT with housing programs, expressing a need for more trauma informed care in these organizations. A member added that the CCWT should also connect with a legislative work group that focuses on housing providers and sexual assault. Ms. Threadgill thanked the members and noted their recommendations.

As a final update, Ms. Threadgill reported that the FY21 Annual Report timeline has been delayed, as the OCA was still waiting on necessary data. She informed the Board that it will be updated with a new timeline once the data had been received.

2021 Data Availability Report

Ms. Threadgill introduced the 2021 Data Availability Report, explaining to the board that this report serves as an update to the Legislature on the progress made since the Board's 2019 recommendations, and details remaining challenges that act as barriers to evaluating the Commonwealth's juvenile justice system through a data lens. Ms. Threadgill opened the group up for questions and discussion on the general content. There were no questions or conversation on the edits made.

Ms. Threadgill reviewed the edits to the report submitted prior to the meeting. There was no opposition or discussion to those edits.

The final two edits suggested language that would add context to the second recommendation presented in the report, “The Legislature Should Consider Policy Changes to Improve Data Availability in the Short Term.” The proposed edits included language explaining the historical context of data collection in Massachusetts and more direction for the Legislature to pass certain bills related to data collection that would require reporting to the OCA.

Members discussed this edit, with some members being in favor of the edit and some against. Members in favor cited that the data in question has been requested without production, in some cases, for 15 years, and without those data, the JJPAD Board cannot function as intended. Members against cited that changing the language would alter the recommendation, therefore altering the report. Additionally, they questioned if it was appropriate for the JJPAD to make such recommendations to the Legislature. Members discussed various compromises, including adding language around the funding needs a statutory change would require, presenting the Legislature with a “menu” of different action items that would result in the data becoming available as well as various redrafts of the recommendation with new language. Some members noted that this change of language would inhibit their ability to vote on the report. Ms. Threadgill suggested that the vote and submission of this report be delayed. The Board agreed. She explained that the OCA would take the feedback given during this meeting and wordsmith various redrafts that would be submitted to the Board prior to the next meeting. There was no opposition to this plan. She welcomed members to volunteer to hear the different proposals.

FY21 Data Review

Ms. Polizzano presented the FY21 data to be added to the JJPAD Annual Report. She highlighted preliminary takeaways and presented on FY21 data for the following process points:

- custodial arrests,

- overnight arrests,
- detention admissions,
- the detention process,
- first time commitments,
- DYS revocations,

Ms. Polizzano also presented data in reference to the utilization of other state systems (e.g., Department of Public Health, Department of Mental Health and the Child Requiring Assistance process), highlighting that utilization is down across all points in which we have data. Ms. Polizzano opened the group up for questions or discussion.

A member asked if adjudication data included data on cases resolved by a jury or bench trial. Ms. Polizzano explained that the data is not available.

A member highlighted the number of *person* offenses and connected that with the complaints of serious assault by young people in Short Term Assessment and Rapid Reintegration (STARR) placements over the past year. Members discussed the importance of finding alternatives for these young people.

Ms. Threadgill flagged the race and ethnicity breakdown, noting that preliminary data suggests disparities decreased in the juvenile justice system. She thanked Ms. Polizzano for her presentation and welcomed the Board to submit thoughts and follow-up questions.

Subcommittee Report Outs

Ms. Threadgill moved on to the next part of the meeting's agenda. She updated the group on each of the two subcommittees work as well as the Childhood Trauma Task Force.

Data Subcommittee

Ms. Threadgill updated the Board on the Data Subcommittee's data section of the annual report, stating that is expected to be completed in early 2022.

Childhood Trauma Task Force (CTTF)

Ms. Threadgill presented the CTTF's annual report to the legislature, *Identifying Childhood Trauma: An Interim Report on Trauma Screening and Referral Practices*. This report focused on general background information about trauma screening and referral practices across various sectors, including K-12 schools, pediatric settings, child welfare settings and juvenile justice settings. A member asked how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted trauma screening. Ms. Threadgill explained that the pandemic pushed trauma screening to the forefront of the conversation in many child serving sectors, but especially in K-12 schools.

She noted that the report had been approved by the CTTF, submitted to the Legislature and was available on the JJPAD's website.

Community Based Interventions (CBI) Subcommittee

Next, Ms. Threadgill updated the Board on the CBI Subcommittee, highlighting the presentations given in the group's October and November meetings. In October, the group learned about CRA representation from the Children and Family Law Division (CAFL) of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS). In November, the group learned about DCF's new congregate care procurement. Ms. Threadgill also updated the board on the CBI Subcommittee's ongoing project to recruit youth and families for focus groups. She asked the members to share their recruitment ideas for these focus groups with the OCA.

Board Updates

Ms. Threadgill updated the Board on the JJPAD FY21 Annual Report, stating that it would cover the following topics:

- Summary of the CY 2021 subcommittee work
- FY21 data analysis

She informed the members that the next Board meeting would be in either January or February 2022.

Closing Comments

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

Meeting adjourned: 2:46 pm