

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Thursday, March 28, 2024  
10:30-11:30am  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Board Members or Designees Present:**

Maria Mossaides (OCA)  
Cecely Reardon (DYS)  
Naoka Carey (CfJJ)  
Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)  
Heidi Gold (EOE)  
Nancy Connolly (DMH)  
Nina Pomponio (Probation)  
Janelle Ridley (JJAC)  
Duci Goncalves (YAD)  
Jennifer L’Heureux (Rep Nguyen)  
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)

**OCA Staff:**

Kristi Polizzano  
Melissa Threadgill  
Arianna Turner  
Morgan Byrnes  
Alix Riviere  
Jess Seabrook

**Other Attendees:**

Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)  
Katherine Perry-Lorentz (DYS)  
Sir Parrish (DYS)  
Sana Fadel (CfJJ)  
Deborah Bowden (DYS)

**Meeting Commenced: 10:32 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.

### **Approval of Minutes from the December Meeting**

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous JJPAD Board meeting minutes. Maria Mossaides, Cecely Reardon, Heidi Gold, Rachel Gwaltney, and Naoka Carey, all voted in the affirmative. Nancy Connolly and Nina Pomponio abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes from December were approved.

### **Meeting Agenda**

Ms. Threadgill presented the agenda for today's meeting which included:

- Updates from the OCA
- Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program Year 2 Data & Updates
- 2023-2024 Work Plan Updates
- Board Member Updates

### **Updates from the OCA**

#### Childhood Trauma Task Force Transition:

Ms. Threadgill began presenting on updates about the Childhood Trauma Taskforce (CTTF). She explained that because the Center on Child Well-being and Trauma (CCWT) has transitioned from UMass to the OCA, the CTTF will now be staffed by CCWT team members who are currently being hired. The CTTF is on a brief hiatus for the next few months while the new staff get acclimated.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions, and none were raised.

#### OCA Public Webinar:

Ms. Threadgill then shared information about the OCA's upcoming FY23 juvenile justice system data trends webinar and invited attendees to share the information with their networks.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions, and none were raised.

#### Legislative Updates:

Ms. Threadgill then provided updates on the OCA's priority JJPAD bills, noting where they currently stand in the legislative process. She also highlighted that there is language in the Governor's budget that would eliminate bail fees for all persons.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions, and none were raised.

### **Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP) Year 2 Data & Updates**

Ms. Threadgill welcomed DYS Commissioner Reardon to discuss updates on the MYDP.

Commissioner Reardon shared that the program was transitioned to DYS in the Governor’s budget via a line item, signaling the success, permanence, and importance of the program. Commissioner Reardon shared her enthusiasm for being a part of the project and the plans to hire additional diversion coordinators in busy sites while also preparing to add three new sites across the Commonwealth. She shared that the data for the second year of the program is promising but there are also areas of growth that DYS is eager to address.

Ms. Threadgill then presented the second year of programmatic data and trends including:

- Between CY22 & CY23, referrals increased by 119%.
- In all three pilot “Learning Lab” sites, referrals increased between CY22 and CY23.
- Compared to CY22, both Black and other / multiracial youth represented a larger percent of total intakes. She noted one goal of the MYDP is to help reverse the racial and ethnic disparities seen in the traditional juvenile justice system.
- Compared to CY22, girls made up a smaller percent of total intakes to the program
- The top three diversion requirements focused on connecting youth to behavioral health or educational supports/services.
- In CY23, 90% (n=160) of diversion cases closed successfully, up from 74% (n=45) in CY22.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions or comments about the diversion data.

Members asked several questions about the involvement of schools in diversion programs. Ms. Threadgill shared that schools can be a source of referrals (such as through school resource officers), and when they are, the school will be aware of a child’s program involvement. However, if the reason for diversion involvement comes from an incident in the community, the school may not be aware, and that can be a positive given the labeling effect associated with alleged delinquent events. Commissioner Reardon explained that if diversion coordinators identify that there are education needs, they may reach out to the schools. She shared that diversion programs are often local provider agencies, which helps maintain student privacy which DYS takes seriously.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed additional questions and thoughts. None were raised. She then welcomed Ms. Polizzano to present 2023-2024 work plan updates.

### **2023-2024 Work Plan Updates**

Ms. Polizzano introduced herself and began presenting on the two main JJPAD projects for the year: the pretrial phase and dually involved youth (DIY).

Ms. Polizzano provided an update on the progress of the pretrial project, thanking attendees for their participation in interviews. She reviewed key takeaways from the interviews conducted thus far, and discussed next steps for the project, including a project timeline.

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions on the pretrial project, and none were raised.

Ms. Polizzano then presented an update on the DIY project, recapping the project progress thus far and highlighting the data deep dive. She also discussed the case file review, which is designed to answer the questions of *why* youth are crossing over from the child welfare system to the juvenile justice system in Massachusetts, and how we can improve policies and practices to prevent crossover.

Ms. Polizzano then reviewed the next steps for the DIY project and welcomed questions. None were raised.

Ms. Polizzano continued, presenting on the work plans for the CBI subcommittee, the Data subcommittee, and the full board.

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions about the work schedules for the next year, and none were raised.

Ms. Polizzano then welcomed Ms. Threadgill to facilitate board member updates.

### **Board Member Updates**

Ms. Threadgill welcomed board members to share updates from their respective organizations.

Ms. Gold shared that Governor Healey signed an executive order creating a statewide effort to address childcare.

Ms. Perry-Lorentz then introduced two new local managers for the state's Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) program, Deborah Bowder and Sir Parrish.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed additional updates. None were raised.

### **Closing Comments**

Ms. Threadgill thanked attendees for their work and adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned: 11:15 AM**