

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Wednesday October 25, 2023
10:00am-12:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Board Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides (OCA)
Cecely Reardon (DYS)
Naoka Carey (CfJJ)
Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)
Rebecca Brink (DCF)
Heidi Gold (EOE)
Rep. Tram Nguyen (House Majority)
Maddie Holden (Sen. Gomez)
Dawn Christie (Parent)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Duci Goncalves (YAD)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Jennifer L'Heureux (Rep. Nguyen)

OCA Staff:

Kristi Polizzano
Melissa Threadgill
Arianna Turner
Morgan Byrnes
Ari Fertig

Other Attendees:

Sana Fadel (CfJJ)
Joshua Dankoff (CfJJ)
Shaplaie Brooks (MCLGBTQY)
Katie Perry-Lorentz (JDAI)
Omar Irizarry (DMH)
Audrey Hermann (Rep. Livingstone)

Meeting Commenced: 10:02 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:

- OCA updates,
- JJPAD Board project updates,
- and JJPAD subcommittee timelines.

Approval of Minutes from the May Meeting

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous JJPAD Board meeting minutes. Maria Mossaides, Commissioner Reardon, Rachel Gwaltney, Naoka Carey, Rebecca Brink, Maddie Holden, Duci Goncalves, and Dawn Christie all voted in the affirmative. Heidi Gold, Jenniefer L'Heureux, and Rachel Wallack abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for May were approved.

OCA Updates

Ms. Threadgill provided updates on current relevant legislation, including bills that were recently heard by the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities, and the Joint Committee on the Judiciary. She explained that it has been a busy legislative session and that she will update the group as bills relevant to this group move through the legislature in the coming months.

Ms. Threadgill provided an overview of the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP). She shared that the program, which launched in Fall of 2021 and began accepting referrals in January 2022, has been successful so far. Ms. Threadgill also shared that the OCA wrote an impact report on the first year of the program's implementation which will be published in October.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions about the MYDP updates.

Commissioner Reardon shared that DYS is very pleased to partner with the OCA on this effort. She stated that DYS has always been committed to prevention efforts and is proud to see the early successes of the MYDP.

Members discussed the gap in the numbers of referrals and enrollment counts. Ms. Threadgill shared that there is a delay between these two processes and that some youth may be enrolled

soon based on when the data was pulled. She also shared that sometimes the program is unable to engage a smaller number of youth and families despite best efforts.

Members requested future opportunities for further discussion of the data and collaboration following the publishing of the report. Ms. Threadgill stated that there will be an opportunity to discuss data further at future Board meetings. She mentioned that support for continued diversion program expansion and relationship building are always helpful to the MYDP.

Ms. Threadgill shared an update on the Center on Childhood Wellbeing and Trauma (CCWT), which will be transitioning from ForHealth consulting at UMass to a division of the OCA. She provided an overview of current CCWT work.

Ms. Threadgill then provided an update on the JJPAD Annual Report Timeline. She shared that the data section will be presented to, and edited by, the Data Subcommittee; after that process, the Board will have the opportunity to review and approve it before it is sent to the Legislature. Ms. Threadgill welcomed questions about the timeline, and none were raised. Ms. Threadgill welcomed Ms. Polizzano to present on project updates.

JJPAD Board 2023 Project Updates

Ms. Polizzano began presenting on the Dually Involved Youth (DIY) project update, reviewing the work plan, and highlighting the goal of the project to understand why youth are crossing over. Ms. Polizzano then presented data on the following topics related to the DIY project:

- FY23 detention admissions (noting that detention rates increased since FY22, driven by youth with DCF involvement)
- High level demographic data for dually involved youth including age, sex assigned at birth, LGBTQ+ status, and race
- Dually involved youth bail status information, as well as dually involved youth's alleged offense types and severity

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions on the data presented thus far.

Members discussed potential causes for the increase in detention rates for the youngest and oldest age groups of youth with DCF involvement. Commissioner Reardon discussed the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on these age groups, specifically in relation to essential programming and supports being cut. Ms. Mossaides shared that during the pandemic, there was interrupted visitation of family for children in DCF custody and that reunions were delayed, which may have contributed to the increase in detention rates.

Ms. Polizzano then provided an overview of the data deep dive that the OCA is undertaking by analyzing the data on each individual youth in the dataset just presented. She shared the hope that this analysis will help identify potential points of intervention and determine if there are specific supports needed for this group. Ms. Polizzano then discussed the following elements related to the project:

- Samples and key terms
- Data elements
- Case file review questions

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions about the data deep dive.

Members discussed including school and educational data elements. Ms. Polizzano shared that there are a few school-specific measures included in the draft data request, but will connect with the EOE Board representative for further discussion on how to incorporate educational data into this project.

Members discussed further exploration of how sexual exploitation may be driving the data. Commissioner Reardon shared that DYS is working on providing data about this topic. Members also discussed the overrepresentation of youth involved with DCF within the LGBTQ youth data, and opportunities to improve data collection on this topic. Ms. Polizzano closed out the DIY project update by discussing the timeline and next steps for the project.

Ms. Polizzano then transitioned into sharing an update on the pre-trial phase project, discussing the following topics:

- Research questions
- Data summary
- Research process
- Interview updates

Ms. Polizzano welcomed input from members about additional people to interview for the project. Members offered interview suggestions and connections. One member shared a recent effort to explore alternatives to the pretrial process and offered to connect with Ms. Polizzano to share that experience. Another member suggested interviewing Roca and the Parent Professional Advocacy League (PPAL). Ms. Gold offered to follow up with EOE and find out if there is a school safety group that could be a partner in the project.

Ms. Polizzano closed by sharing the pretrial project next steps and then welcomed Ms. Threadgill to share subcommittee work plan updates.

Subcommittee Updates and Timelines

Ms. Threadgill provided updates and expected timelines on the work of the Data Subcommittee, the CBI Subcommittee, the Childhood Trauma Task Force, and the full JJPAD Board.

Board Member Updates

Ms. Threadgill welcomed members to share any updates.

Ms. Gold expressed enthusiasm and gratitude for being a part of the board and shared the passion that EOE has for improving the well-being of all children.

Closing Comments

Ms. Threadgill thanked members for their time and set the next meeting for December 15 at 11:30am.

Meeting adjourned: 11:13 AM