

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee

Tuesday July 7, 2020

1pm – 2:30PM

Meeting held virtually due to COVID 19 emergency response

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Brian Jenney (DPH)

Karin Orr (DMH)

Mike Glennon (Suffolk DA's Office)

Nicole Robbins (Suffolk DA's Office)

Nokuthula Sibanda (DYS)

Barbara Wilson (Children's League)

Migdalia Nalls (CPCS)

Leon Smith (CFJJ)

Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)

Chief Kevin Kennedy (Chiefs of Police)

Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)

Other Attendees:

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)

Kristi Polizzano (OCA)

Alix Rivière (OCA)

Jasmine Jackson (CJI)

Leila Khelfaoui (CJI)

Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)

Naomi Bledsoe (Northwestern district DA's office)

Elizabeth Mulcahey (Northwestern District DA's office)

Brian House (Berkshire DA's office)

Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 1:03PM

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee meeting.. She explained some general guidelines for the virtual meeting and then introduced all the individuals in the WebEx video conference. Individuals on the phone introduced themselves.

Approval of Minutes from June Meeting:

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes.

The meeting minutes for June were approved.

Meeting Agenda:

Ms. Threadgill explained that there were two primary tasks for the committee today. First, the group will review the draft referral guidelines and information sharing guiding principles. Second, the group will discuss data collection and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) for statewide diversion.

Review Draft Referral Guidelines and Information Sharing Guiding Principles

Ms. Threadgill introduced the draft Referrals section based on last month's meeting discussion which reviews the process of how referrals to Diversion Programs are made. Members of the group discussed victims' rights in knowing about the outcome of a Diversion Program. Ms. Threadgill stated the OCA would add a section on the matter. Members of the subcommittee made other minor corrections to the document.

Regarding information sharing, Ms. Threadgill reminded the subcommittee that the Working Group dedicated to this topic will be meeting next week to discuss the topic in more detail. She then presented guiding principles and asked for feedback.

1. **Coordinators must respect the privacy of families and youth they serve and determine why additional information is needed for case planning.** Members of the

group discussed the reasons behind information gathering and how that information is used for the purposes of Diversion Programs. One member argued that this information collection process exceeds the information gathered at different points of the juvenile justice system. Other members argued that in order to help children in a meaningful way, the Diversion Coordinator should be able to understand the child's situation in detail. One member suggested that perhaps the solution would be not to collect paperwork/documentation, but to discuss necessary information verbally with the youth and those who care for them. This was debated by members of the subcommittee.

2. **Information requests should be individualized and only be used to support case planning.** The group suggested changing "should" share to "may share" information with other agencies.
3. **Information shared between agencies should not be used or held against the youth in current/ongoing or future disciplinary matters.** Members asked if this pertains to information shared between agencies or if it also pertains to information shared by the youth. The group stated there needs to be a distinction between information shared about the current case and information shared about any potential future juvenile justice system involvement. Another member noted that if there is no compliance from the youth to share information, that would be held against them and the Diversion Program would be discontinued.
4. **Coordinators should be transparent with youth and parents/guardians regarding what information they are requesting from/sharing to other agencies and why they are sharing that.** The group had no additional comments.
5. **Any individual information shared must abide by state and federal laws.** The group had no additional comments.

Ms. Threadgill said the OCA would incorporate the feedback from the group and continue to work on this in the Working Group.

Data Collection and Continuous Quality Improvement

Ms. Threadgill asked the group to give "big picture" feedback on the following questions and explained the group will be going into more details in future meetings.

1. How will we assess success? Ms. Polizzano asked the group how we can measure and define the following terms for the goals of Diversion established by this subcommittee:
 - a. **Reduce the likelihood of future offending by youth in the program and increase public safety.** Mr. Glennon explained that there are no ways to measure the latter. The group agreed. He laid out the ways in which the Suffolk D.A.'s office has measured recidivism and progress and highlighted the subjectivity of "success." The group discussed what might be the best measure of success and acknowledged the complexity of the matter.
 - b. **Hold youth accountable for their actions.** Ms. Nalls stated she has issues with the question of accountability, stating that a lot of minorities in low-income areas are victims of systemic racism and should be not held accountable for the adverse situations they live in. Mr. Smith explained that the document should avoid hard lines but focus on progress, growth and maturity. Ms. Threadgill added that the group had previously discussed "accountability actions," i.e. honoring the efforts they are making. The group also discussed the use of the word "accountability," which typically refers to some sort of punishment. One group member suggested "responsibility," others concurred.
 - c. **Promote and ensure equity in the process.** Ms. Threadgill asked the group how Diversion Programs should measure equity. She thought in particular to four different points of the process: referrals, number of diversion requirements, success rate, and ensuring the risk assessment tool used is equitable. Mr. Leon stressed the importance of ensuring that opportunity to enter a Diversion Program should be equitable. Chief Kennedy agreed and added that the Court should also look at the reasons behind referring a youth to a Diversion Program to ensure the decision was unbiased.
 - d. **Support positive youth development.** Ms. Threadgill asked the group how Diversion Programs should measure aspects of positive youth development. She noted, for instance, that part of the process is figuring out if youth have some goals they feel more strongly about. Other key domains could be

education, caring for community members, etc. Mr. Smith added that youth should be connected to supports and services that are actually “good fits” for the youth so as to ensure they are having a positive impact.

Ms. Threadgill also asked if there are any other indicators of success Diversion Programs should be measuring? One member said that input from the youth and their families would be important.

2. How will we learn from challenges? What are the CQI measures and metrics that need to be built in?
 - a. What is the process for reviewing individual cases?
 - b. What is the timeline and process for reviewing and evaluating the program?
 - c. What is the role of JJPAD/CBI Subcommittee in CQI?
 - d. How will we engage youth and family members in the CQI work? Post-program survey? Focus groups? All of the above? What else?
3. Finally, Ms. Polizzano asked the group what data Diversion Programs should be collecting/examining/reporting? She showed the group an example of data tracking sheet from Delaware that includes demographic information and services they have used, as well as whether the outcome was successful or not. She explained that in general, there is a need for information on demographics, case planning, and outcomes (including challenges youth faced).

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill explained that the OCA would take these recommendations and develop a document including all of the information above and have that ready by August for review, so that in the September meeting the group can discuss a “final draft.” She asked if the group had any questions about the process. The group had none. The next meeting is September 10th, from 2 to 4pm and will be held virtually.

Meeting adjourned: 2:31pm