

Office of the Child Advocate
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, October 16th, 2019
1:00pm-3:00pm

Task Force Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides, Chair (OCA)
Brian Jenney (DPH)
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)
Gretchen Carleton (DCF)
Marlies Spanjaard (CPCS)
Sharifa Garvey (DYS/JDAI)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)
Melissa Williams (OCA)

Meeting Commenced: 1:12pm

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the and reviewed the agenda.

Presentation from JDAI on Youth Survey Results:

Ms. Threadgill introduced Sharifa Garvey, JDAI Coordinator for the Department of Youth Services, who will be presenting on the initial results of the gaps in community-based services youth survey.

Ms. Garvey explained the purpose of the survey was to gather youth's perspectives on gaps in community-based services. A total of 43 youth responded to the survey and Ms. Garvey acknowledged that the data collected does not fully represent the entire youth population in MA. However, the data does provide a snapshot of what may be happening across different regions of MA in terms of services offered by community-based and DYS programs. It was up to the adult staff of various congregate care/detention programs to distribute the survey to their youth clientele.

Ms. Garvey stated that youth from Boston, Lowell, and Brockton had the highest rates of response. All of the youth who participated in the survey are involved with a state agency or state-funded program. When asked what services they are currently involved in, DCF and DYS

were the most common responses. Over 15% of the respondents were dually involved youth with both DCF and DYS.

When asked how old they were when they first interacted with the system, 17 years-old had the highest response (30%).

Youth were asked about the experiences they have faced or are currently facing at the time of the survey. 33% of youth stated that DCF had been involved in their lives, 15% stated that they have a disability/mental illness, 12% have experienced family violence, and 7% have experienced homelessness or are currently homeless.

One of the survey questions asked youth if they are aware of organizations that provide specific types of services such as job and professional development training, volunteer opportunities, family crisis support, and mental health/substance abuse support. Analysis showed that youth are aware of the various programs in their communities. However, youth also responded that they believe their communities are lacking services related to job and professional development training, leadership development, and mental health support.

Youth responded that they have been referred to various services in their community, with the most frequent response being community service/volunteerism and behavioral or mental health treatment. Even with referrals, youth are experiencing significant barriers to accessing the community-based services. The barriers that were identified include transportation, family engagement, and youth willingness to participate in the services.

Ms. Threadgill commented that the results on identified barriers matches up to the practitioner's perspective that was received through the practitioner survey.

Youth were also asked if they felt they had access to basic needs growing up such as food, housing, and clothing. Almost 80% believe that they did have access to their basic needs.

Finally, Ms. Garvey summarized the community assessment of the survey which revealed that youth do have pride in their communities, identify having access to basic needs in their community, are being referred to community programs, and that community programs are lacking certain resources that youth feel would allow them to be successful.

The group discussed the results, including concerns about the lack of geographic diversity in the results and overall low response rates, which unfortunately limits the conclusions the subcommittee can draw from the results.

Ms. Threadgill wrapped up the conversation by stating the survey results did align well with the responses from the providers/practitioners on similar questions.

Fall Legislative Report Review and Discussion:

Ms. Threadgill briefly spoke about the legislatively mandated JJPAD Report titled “Improving Accessing to Diversion and Community-Based Interventions for Justice-Involved Youth.”

Ms. Threadgill has written a draft version of the report and is asking the CBI subcommittee members to provide feedback and comments. Once Ms. Threadgill makes the necessary changes, the subcommittee will then vote on the report in November and if approved, will present the report to the overall JJPAD Board for final approval.

The subcommittee reviewed the report and decided on the following edits:

- Add the word “perceived” to Finding Six to make it clear that the finding is based on the perceptions of the survey respondents.
- Making it more clear that administrative probation cases are not necessarily “low-risk” cases, and that those numbers can encompass a range of case types that may not necessarily be good candidates for diversion.
- Noting that different counties are currently diverting youth at different rates
- Making it clear that the case study on page 29 is written from a DA’s perspective
- Adding a reference to services that respond to the impact of racial trauma in Recommendation 7.

The group also had a discussion about what types of cases not currently being diverted would/could be appropriate for diversion, various challenges/concerns related to data collection and information sharing, particularly regarding youth who have been offered diversion multiple times, as well as how to coordinate with JDAI on the development of these recommendations.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill wrapped up the meeting by discussing the next steps. She will be taking all of the feedback from today as well as the feedback she received through email and update the draft.

Ms. Threadgill stated that she will send the report to everyone on the subcommittee at a minimum of a week before the next meeting (November 12, 2019). After the subcommittee approves of the report, it will be sent to the full JJPAD Board.

Adjournment: 2:48pm