

Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board

Community Based Interventions
Subcommittee Meeting

April 27, 2026

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Approval of March Meeting Minutes
3. ICYMI – 2025 JJPAD Annual Report
4. MA LGBTQ Youth Commission Presentation on LGBTQ Dually Involved Youth
5. Q&A

OCA Announcements: JJPAD Board's 2025 Annual Report

- Published early April: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/jjpad-2025-annual-report/download>
- Reports on 2025 activities of the CBI & Data Subcommittees, as well as the CTTF and JJPAD Board
- Highlights pending legislation related to the Board's legislative mandate and projects
- Highlights FY25 data trends: [Juvenile Justice Data Trends presentation](#)
- [View the JJPAD Annual Report Webinar here](#)

There may be an overrepresentation of LGBTQ+ and gender nonconforming (GNC) youth within crossover populations.

There is insufficient research on crossover prevalence rates for LGBTQ+ and GNC youth in part due to many CW and JJ systems not routinely or reliably collecting this data.

However, numerous studies suggest that there is an overrepresentation of LGBTQ+/GNC youth within each system:

Compared to their non-LGBTQ+ peers, **LGBTQ+ and GNC youth are more likely to be involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.**

LGBTQ+ and GNC youth face **elevated risk factors** that increase their likelihood of entering **both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.**

In one study in Los Angeles, there were **1.5 – 2 times** as many LGBTQ youth living in foster care as LGBTQ youth in the general population.

Source: (Wilson et al., 2014)

Risk factors include:

- **Higher rates of family rejection and maltreatment** due to sexual orientation or gender identity
- **Lack of affirming support services and placements** contributing to repeated or deepened system involvement

Sources: (Irvine & Canfield, 2015); (Wilson et al., 2014); (Irvine, 2010)

Risk factors include:

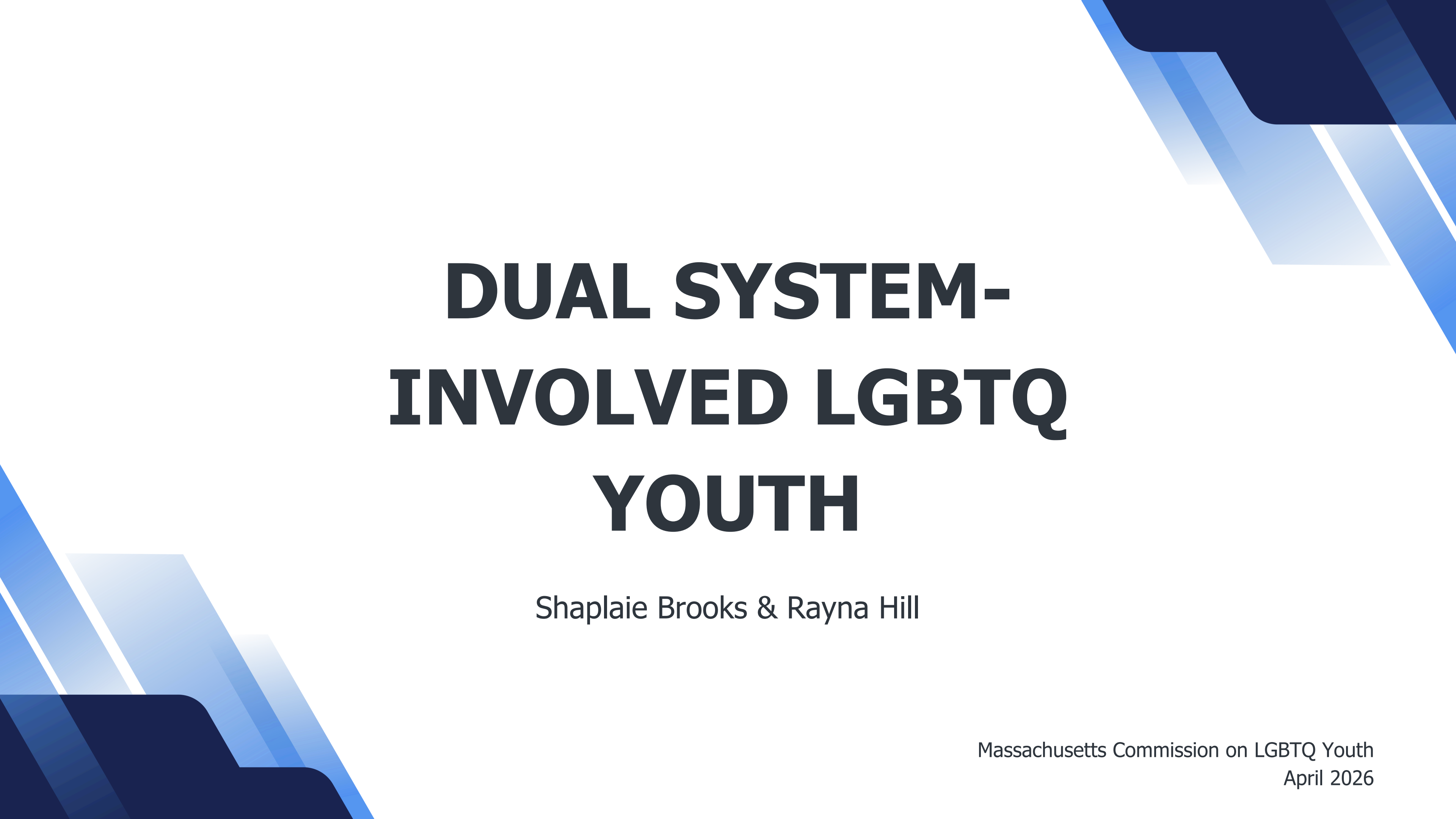
- **Higher levels of homelessness, mental health challenges, and substance use**
- **Criminalization of survival behaviors** that contribute to system involvement (e.g., running away, CSEC, etc.)

Sources: (Kynn et al., 2024); (Irvine & Canfield, 2015); (Wilson et al., 2014); (Irvine, 2010)

The proportion of LGBTQ+ justice-involved youth is as much as two times greater than the proportion of LGBTQ+ youth in the general population.

Sources: (Conron, 2020); (Irvine & Canfield, 2018)

Guest Presentation: Massachusetts LGBTQ Youth Commission



DUAL SYSTEM- INVOLVED LGBTQ YOUTH

Shaplaie Brooks & Rayna Hill

Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth
April 2026



ABOUT US

The Commission was founded in 1992 by Massachusetts Governor William Weld as the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth to respond to the high suicide risk among LGBTQ youth in the Commonwealth. In 2006, the Commission was established as an independent state agency and tasked with issuing recommendations to the State on how to help all youth thrive in Massachusetts.

The Safe Schools Program for LGBTQ Students is a collaborative effort between the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth and the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). The program was founded in 1993 to address concerns of bullying and suicide risk that faced LGBTQ youth in Massachusetts public schools. Today, the Safe Schools Program remains an important part of implementing the state's anti-bullying law and protecting the health and safety of students.

OVERVIEW

Research suggests that LGBTQ+ youth are overrepresented in dual status populations across the nation. Youth with multiple marginalized identities who transition between or receive services from multiple state agencies concurrently are often underserved in Massachusetts.

- DCF has recently started collecting data on gender identity and sexual orientation and currently shows that at least 21% of youth in DCF services identify as LGBTQ+
- Per its FY 2023 Annual Report, approximately 6% of DYS youth identify as LGBTQ+.

RISK FACTORS

Per the Massachusetts Youth Risk Behavior Survey, approximately 1 in 4 high school students identify as LGBTQ+ in the Commonwealth.

- LGBTQ+ face high rates of familial rejection and maltreatment, especially transgender and gender expansive youth.
- LGBTQ+ youth without affirming placements are more likely to crossover into the juvenile justice system; LGBTQ+ youth are more likely to be placed in group homes.
- In the 2024 MA Youth Count, 26.3% of unaccompanied homeless youth identified as LGBTQ+.
 - Criminalization of commercial sexual exploitation/exchanging sex for needs, sleeping in cars/on the streets, running away, etc.

GAPS IN SERVICE

Numerous barriers and gaps in service provision can lead LGBTQ+ youth to interact more with the juvenile system.

- Racial bias, microaggressions, homophobia, and transphobia
 - Systemic racism can lead to removals or failure to place youth in kinship placements
 - Youth who are marked as 'problem' children often informed by racial bias
 - Failure to advocate for LGBTQ youth needs
- Systemic delays & gaps in policies and resources
 - Delays in immigration documentation, legal name change paperwork, access to gender-affirming care
 - Lack of communication from workers, staff, and attorneys
- Leads to homelessness, declines in mental health, substance use, CSEC/ESN, gang affiliation, incarceration, recidivism, drop-outs

KEY MENTIONS

High Acuity Placements

- High acuity placements:
 - Victims of domestic violence, CSEC, a general trauma history, or lack a home to which they can safely return
 - Suicidal ideation or self-harm or medication noncompliance
- 60-80% of youth in the child welfare & juvenile justice system nationally have a diagnosed mental health disorder
- ESN MA: 19.8% of unaccompanied homeless youth; national data 1 in 6 AWOL youth report CSEC & at least 50-80% were previously involved in child welfare
- LGBTQ Youth homelessness: 26.3% MA unaccompanied youth → important to note access to Youth Count

CSEC/ESN/Sex Work

- Challenges:
 - Lack of appropriate systemic approaches for screening and identifying those at-risk of CSEC
 - Lack of safe, specialized placements that include trauma-informed care
 - Lack of training for staff
 - Inadequate funds and strategies to leverage existing resources, such as maintaining placements while youth are missing
- Risk Factors/Red Flags:
 - Youth in need of gender-affirming items
 - History of going AWOL, living in group homes, homelessness

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DCF

01.

Improve recruitment and training of LGBTQ-affirming placements.

02.

Improve family preservation services to safely monitor and mitigate concerns that may lead to the removal of a child, with particular consideration to ensuring de facto parent preservation.

03.

Improve interagency work to support “warm hand-offs” for transition-aged youth attempting to access services, in partnership with the Department of Mental Health, MassHealth, and the Department of Youth Services.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DYS

- 01.** Establish an LGBTQ+ caregiver education program within juvenile diversion programs.

- 02.** Continue to expand data collection and reporting efforts on LGBTQ youth in DYS custody.

- 03.** Improve interagency work to support “warm hand-offs” for transition-aged youth attempting to access services, in partnership with the Department of Children & Families, the Department of Mental Health, and MassHealth.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE STATE

- 01.** Youth-serving agencies should invest in caretaker engagement and education to support LGBTQ+ youth and limit involvement in the child welfare and justice systems.

- 02.** Explore the creation of an LGBTQ youth maltreatment code system within the Department of Children and Families.

- 03.** Expand mental health services for youth in state systems, including foster care and the juvenile legal system.

CONCLUSIONS

Needed Strategies & Supports:

- Advance economic stability for youth in the child welfare and justice system, particularly those aging out of care
 - Support & stabilization preparation and funding
 - Income gained through employment cannot be calculated into income from YASP payments
 - Payments not contingent upon CW's subjective beliefs re compliance.
- Engage with youth, especially QTBIPOC youth, to better identify areas of improvement to better support multisystem-involved, dual-system-involved, and crossover youth.
 - Frequent failures of state systems to collaborate, communicate, and support youth puts them in vulnerable positions and compounds negative outcomes.
 - Ex. Trans immigrant youth with dual system involvement: Docs in order? What is needed?
- Increase training opportunities for child welfare staff and providers to improve the safety, permanency, and wellbeing of LGBTQ youth.
 - Trainings specific to youth needs. Special teams are not enough as they are taxed with all cases specific to the issue ex. Missing and or absent workers

CONTACT US

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**Next Meeting:
(meeting date change)
May 18, 2026
11am-12:30pm**

(All meetings are virtual; Zoom information is in each calendar invitation)



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