

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee
Thursday, April 28, 2022
2:00PM-3:30PM
Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides (OCA)
Thula Sibanda (DYS)
Amy Ponte (CAFL)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Brian Jenney (DPH)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Karin Orr (DMH)
Susan Gil-Hickey (DMH)
Brian Blakeslee (CPSC)
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)
Dawn Christie (PPAL)
Barbara Wilson

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Kristi Polizzano
Alix Rivière
Morgan Byrnes

Other Attendees:

Lynn Tubbs (New York State Office of Children and Family Services)
Karen Sessions (New York State Office of Children and Family Services)
Teresa Scanu-Hansen (New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services)
Erica Bromley (Connecticut Youth Services Association)
Katie Perry-Lorentz (DYS)
Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola (DYS)
Daniele Rose (DYS)
Araya Landry (Family Continuity)
Katherine Hughes
Leigh Mahoney (RFK Community Alliance)
Other Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 2:03 PM

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee virtual meeting. She then presented the agenda, explaining the group would hear

presentations from representatives from New York and Connecticut on how they reformed their CRA systems after reviewing and voting on March's meeting minutes.

Review and Approval of Minutes from the March Meeting:

Ms. Polizzano held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes. Susan Gil-Hickey, Rachel Wallack, Amy Ponte, Thula Sibanda, Karin Orr, Brian Blakeslee, and Leon Smith voted to approve the minutes. Kimberly Lawrence and Barbra Wilson abstained. No one was opposed.

The meeting minutes for March 24, 2022, were approved.

Presentation on New York's Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) Reform:

Ms. Polizzano introduced the first presenters Lynn Tubbs, Director of Cross Systems Supports from New York State's Office of Children and Families and Teresa Scanu-Hansen, a Community Correction Representative from New York State's Division of Criminal Justice Services. Ms. Scanu-Hansen and Ms. Tubbs introduced the subcommittee members to New York State's Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) system. Ms. Scanu-Hansen continued the presentation, providing background on the PINS system, including:

- An overview of the 2005 PINS and Detention Reform Law that mandated each county determine a "lead agency" (either Local Department of Social Services or Probation) who would work with PINS petitions and require each lead agency to submit annual PINS Diversion Service Plans
- An outline of lead agency responsibilities including case management protocols, diversion efforts and family engagement
- An overview of PINS diversion services, including screening tools used, strategies for success and data on PINS diversion outcomes

Ms. Scanu-Hansen then welcomed Ms. Tubbs to continue the presentation, with a focus on the 2019 reform and how that impacted school-based PINS petitions and out of home placement for PINS youth. Ms. Tubbs continued, covering the following:

- Special provisions for school-based behavior, including requiring the lead agency to review steps taken by the school and deem if all alternatives to a PINS petition were exhausted prior to filing

- A special provision for truancy that mandates no placement shall be ordered for youth whose only finding is truancy
- An overview of services for runaway/stayaway PINS youth.
- Time limitations on PINS placements, including a 60-day cap prior to a court review and a limit to only two extensions on out of home placements

Ms. Tubbs and Ms. Scanu-Hansen ended the presentation by outlining lessons learned, highlighting the overall shift of the PINS system away from the juvenile justice system towards the child welfare system. Ms. Polizzano thanked the two presenters, and asked members to hold their questions until the end of the second presentation.

Presentation on Connecticut's Family With Service Needs (FWSN) Reform:

Ms. Polizzano introduced the second presenter, Erica Bromley. Ms. Bromley is a Juvenile Justice Consultant with Connecticut's Youth Services Association and chairs the Diversion Work Group of Connecticut's Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC), the group that recommended reforms to Connecticut's "Family With Service Needs" (FWSN) system.

Connecticut eliminated school based FWSN filings effective August 2017, and effective July 2020, the remaining FWSN petitions were also eliminated by statute. Youth formally caught in the FWSN system would now get referred to community-based services to address the underlying issues. Ms. Bromley briefly introduced the FWSN system, including what constitutes a status offense in Connecticut, why changes to the system were made and introducing the role of Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs), the local service bureaus that act as coordinating units connecting youth to community-based services. She then brought members through the logistics behind the implementation and outcomes of these reforms, highlighting:

- The new regulations around truancy, including an outline of how schools should be dealing with chronic absenteeism, and the expectation that schools must complete several internal actions and have parents sign off prior to recommending youth to a YSB
- An overview on how both community and school-based offense should be referred to YSBs
- An overview on YSB intake of all referrals, including their use of screening tools and how they match services to each youth

Ms. Bromley concluded the presentation by giving members an overview of the barriers and challenges faced when implementing these reforms. Ms. Polizzano thanked Ms. Bromley for her presentation.

Q&A and Discussion:

Ms. Polizzano then welcomed questions and discussion from members. Members discussed the two presentations. A member asked the representatives from New York to expand on the services utilized for runaway youth. It was explained that to best serve the runaway population, probation officers leverage both shift work, and staffers who are savvy with social media to help track this population. Additionally, Ms. Scanu-Hansen explained that many community-based organizations have youth, and their families create a “stress pass,” where the youth can stay overnight at a designated location during times of stress.

Members discussed the differences between runaway youth and stayaway youth, with one member asking how they are differentiated. It was explained that the difference is codified into regulation and that generally community-based organizations specializing in homeless youth and family mediation take on those referrals.

Conversation shifted, with members asking Ms. Bromley to further explain the communication strategy with schools and YSBs regarding the new standards around truancy. Ms. Bromley explained that ultimately the success of this transition came from connecting YSBs, who were already embedded in the communities, to the direct service staff at each school. These connections, and on-going communication regarding the reform eventually allowed for stronger relationships, with schools recognizing that YSBs were there to assist them.

Ms. Polizzano thanked members for their questions. Before adjourning the meeting, she asked the presenters to share any recommendations that had for the subcommittee, as it begins to craft recommendations on Massachusetts’ CRA system. Ms. Bromley began by stressing the importance of creating an extensive logistics plan that outlines what the system will look like post reform. Additionally, the plan should include clear guidelines for all stakeholders involved. She also mentioned the importance of educating stakeholders on what is an appropriate referral,

and who the referral should be made to, noting that in Connecticut at first stakeholders thought they should be referring youth to DCF as the court was no longer an option.

The representatives from New York agreed, noting that in New York referrals to the child welfare system and the juvenile court are down. They agreed with Ms. Bromley, that aligning all stakeholders around the same message is an important factor in success. Ms. Polizzano thanked the presenters and informed the group that whatever question was not answered should be submitted and will be answered by the OCA at a later date.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Polizzano thanked the members for their participation and informed the group that the next meeting will take place on May 19, 2022.

Meeting adjourned: 3:32 PM