

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

Thursday February 18, 2021

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Karin Orr (DMH)
Migdalia Nalls (CPCS)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)
Barbara Wilson (CLM)
Brian Jenney (DPH)
Nokuthula Sibanda (DYS)
Kim Lawrence (Probation)

Other Attendees:

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)
Kristi Polizzano (OCA)
Alix Rivière (OCA)
Leila Khelfaoui (CJI)
Jasmine Jackson (CJI)
Mike Glennon and Nicole Robbins (Suffolk DA's Office)
Other Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 1:03pm

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee virtual meeting. She introduced all the individuals in the WebEx video conference and individuals on the phone introduced themselves. Ms. Threadgill informed members of the subcommittee that, after reviewing and voting on the November 2020 meeting minutes, the meeting will begin with updates on the DYS/OCA Diversion Pilot.

Review and Approval of Minutes from November 2020 Meeting:

Ms. Threadgill held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes. No one was opposed or abstained from voting on the November minutes.

The meeting minutes for November were approved.

Update from DYS and OCA on Diversion Pilot

Ms. Threadgill announced that the OCA has received funding for the Diversion Pilots and that DYS has accepted to operationalize the site learning labs. She invited Ms. Sibanda to give the group an update on where the project stands. Ms. Sibanda explained that DYS is currently in the process of developing the RFR and that the OCA is working with the agency at every step. Their vision is to release the RFR for Diversion Coordinators at three potential sites by mid-March.. DYS is also looking to hire a Program Manager who will sit at DYS to oversee the three pilot programs. She will share more information with the group on this as it becomes more concrete.

Massachusetts State Diversion Program Model Program Guide Review and Discussion

Ms. Threadgill explained that she is hoping the group will finalize this Model Program Guide at the end of this meeting, knowing that this is not a final product, but rather a starting point which will be influenced by the above-mentioned diversion pilots/learning lab. The group reviewed the edited documents. Ms. Threadgill explained the edits fall in four categories:

- The opening section was restructured to explain what this guide is and what it is not. As such, the introduction highlights that the guide is a recommended model that does not obligate DYS to conduct their pilot programs in any specific way. The introduction also makes clear that it is a consensus document: even though there might be individual opinions on some sections of the document, it is overall the product of a consensus.
- Access to counsel: it became clear during the group's November meeting that there would not be consensus on the details of how access to counsel was facilitated.. As such, the OCA recommends that the guide not delve into the details on this question and let DYS determine the details of how this would be operationalized.
- Members of the Subcommittee suggested improvements to victim-related pieces of the document; meetings with Victim Services at DYS were helpful and provided feedback for edits on the Model Program Guide.

- The OCA also added details in the section regarding feedback from potential referrers and the degree of feedback that would get back to them. This is another section that will require further decision-making by DYS.

Ms. Threadgill asked subcommittee members about their thoughts on the above-mentioned edits and if there are issues they would like for the Model Program Guide to address that have not been addressed yet. Members made no comments. Next, a member made a motion to approve this version of the guide to present to the JJPAD Board. A roll call vote was held:

Karin Orr (DMH) - Yes

Migdalia Nalls (CPCS) - Yes

Leon Smith (CfJJ) - Yes

Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)- Yes

Barbara Wilson (CLM)- Yes

Brian Jenney (DPH)- Yes

Nokuthula Sibanda (DYS)- Yes

Kim Lawrence (Probation)- Yes

All members voted in favor. The Model Program Guide is finalized to share with the JJPAD Board.

Discussion of Work Plan for 2021

Ms. Threadgill explained that the CBI subcommittee would maintain an oversight/problem solving role on the Diversion program as data from the learning lab moves forward.

Additionally, this group will transition to examining issues outside of Diversion. Ms. Threadgill explained she will be presenting the work plan to JJPAD Board in two weeks. Once the Board has approved the 2021 Work Plan, she will present it in greater detail to the CBI. Until then, Ms. Threadgill wished to present the subcommittee with two topics members will most likely be tackling this year:

1. Regarding COVID-19: JJPAD received much positive feedback on the report published in 2020, which garnered interest in continuing this conversation. As such, the OCA suggests JJPAD and its subcommittees work on a follow-up report documenting lessons learned/silver linings as well as issues child-serving professionals are worried about for the future. She anticipates each committee to hold brainstorming session, after which the

OCA will write a draft report. A working group made of members from all subcommittees will then review this draft report.

2. Crossover youth: Ms. Threadgill defined the term crossover youth as youth who are maltreated and engage in delinquent acts. She explained that as the juvenile justice population has declined, the JJPAD has noticed two trends. First, there are increased racial and ethnic disparities. Second, although available data is limited, there may be an increased representation of dually involved youth. There have been a lot of local efforts in Massachusetts to tackle these issues, but no statewide solution has been found. The crossover youth project will be a multi-subcommittee work, with each subcommittee thinking through a piece of the problem. She proposed the CBI subcommittee will be looking at the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) system, which was intended to divert children from the delinquency system but has not achieved that goal consistently. The Subcommittee will also examine issues regarding overnight arrests, detention, and access to diversion. Members asked if agencies could send representatives that might be more attuned to the needs and problems of crossover youth. Ms. Threadgill explained that she is very open to having additional participants. She also noted that state agencies are welcome to change who will be representing them this year, if that makes more sense given the proposed work plan. Other members noted that this subcommittee should develop resource mapping, as there is unequal distribution of resources and services across the Commonwealth. FRCs were mentioned as a great source of information, as they tend to collect data on services provided. Ms. Threadgill explained that the OCA will conduct numerous qualitative interviews and would welcome ideas on stakeholders to talk to. She added that during the March meeting this subcommittee will be examining key topics that will need to be examined in 2021 and suggested members think about areas and topics they would like to be investigated further.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members for their participation and informed them that the next meeting will take place on Thursday March 18, from 1:00pm to 2:30pm.

Meeting adjourned: 1:30pm