

Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board

Community Based Interventions
Subcommittee Meeting

February 24, 2025

Agenda

1. Welcome New Members and Introductions
2. Approval of November Meeting Minutes
3. OCA Announcements
4. Dually Involved Youth: Project Update & Discussion

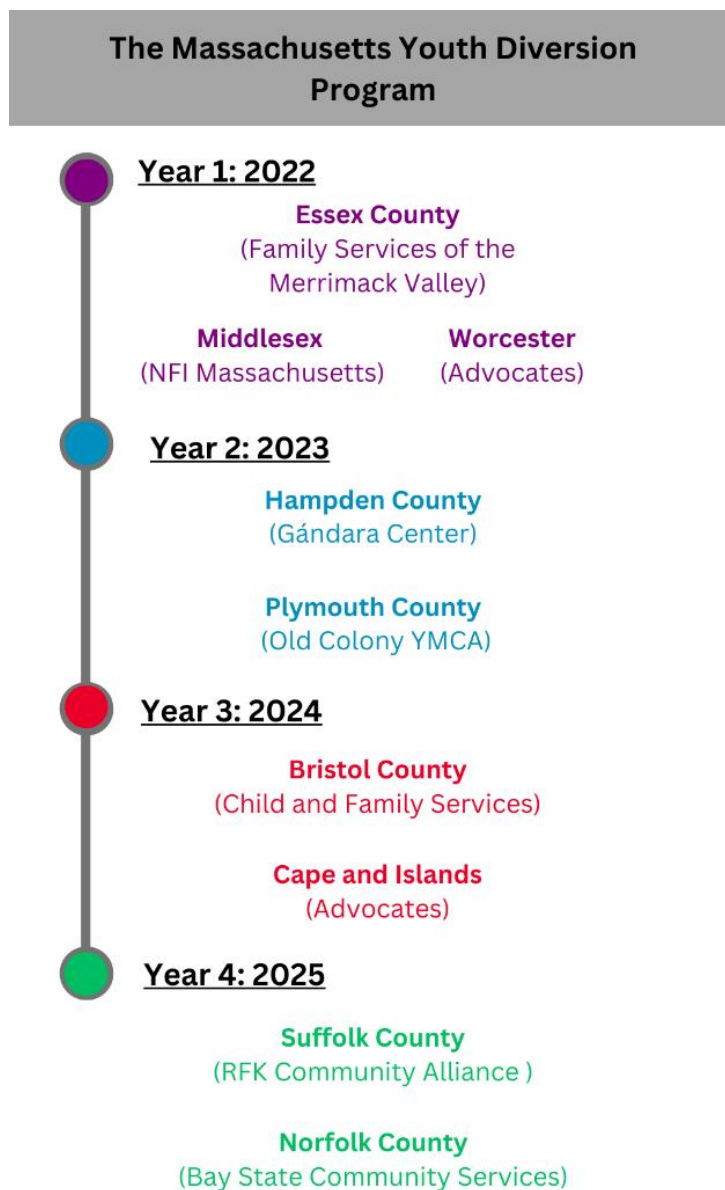
OCA Announcements

Pretrial Report:

- Published January 2025 here:
<https://www.mass.gov/lists/jjpacttf-legislative-reports-and-key-documents>
- OCA will monitor implementation of the Board's recommendations and provide updates when possible
- OCA to present the report to the Criminal Justice Reform Caucus 3/26

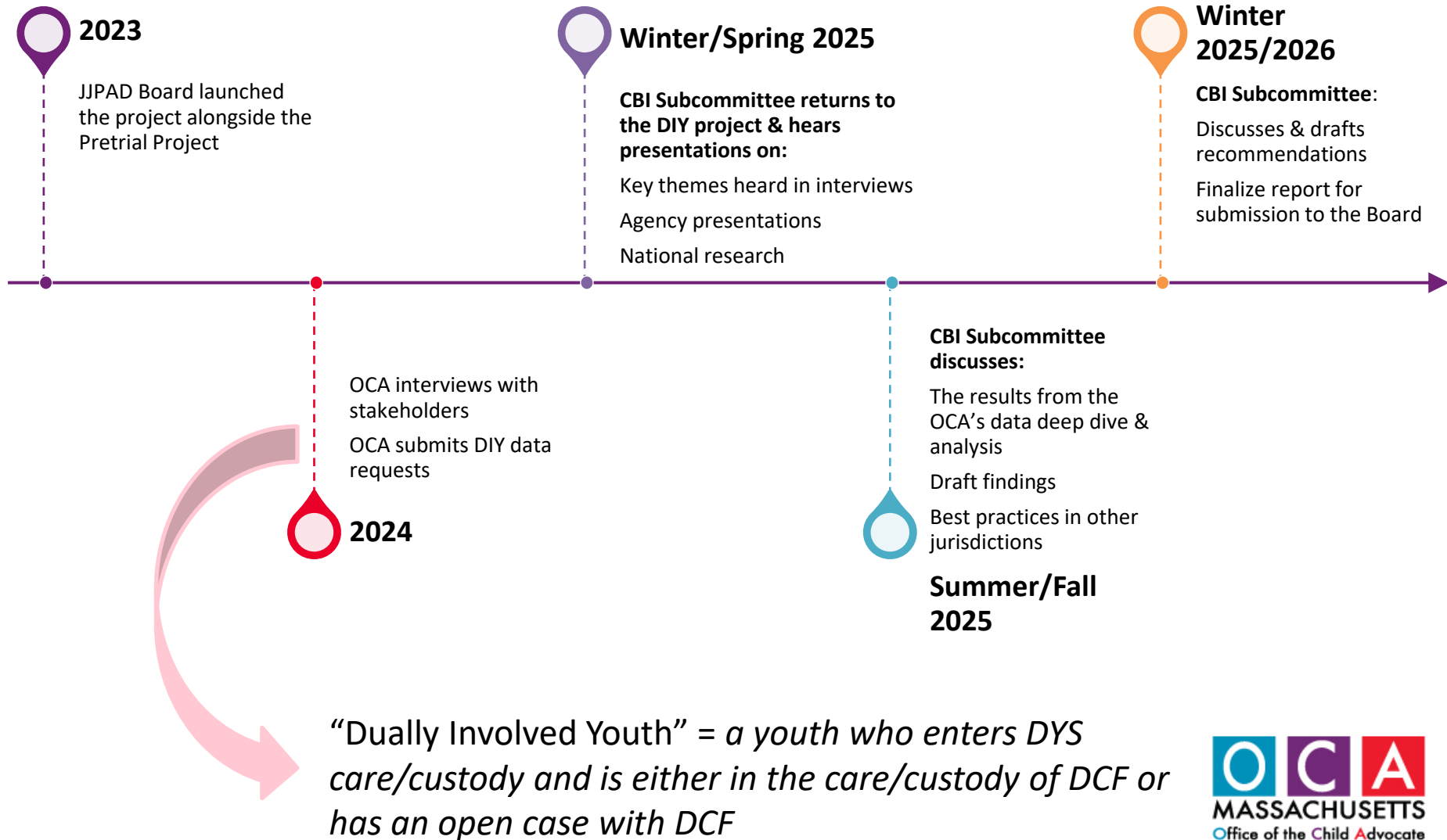
DYS Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program:

- Expanded to two more counties: Suffolk (RFK Community Alliance) and Norfolk (Bay State Community Services)



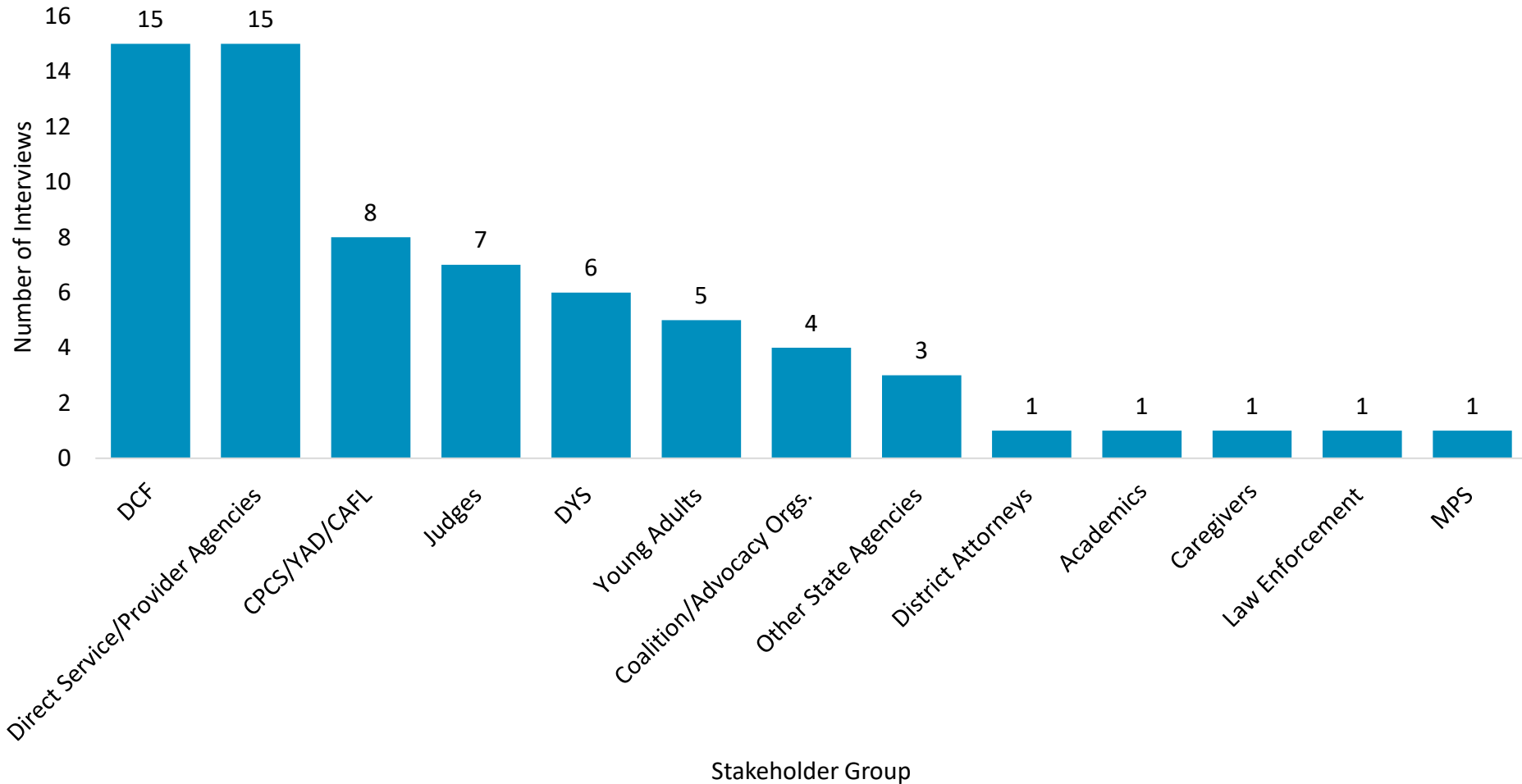
DIY: Project Update & Discussion

Where We've Been & Where We're Going



Interviews Conducted

Informational Interviews by Stakeholder Group



Between August 2023- February 2025 the OCA conducted 68 interviews, representing 97 stakeholders.

Guiding Research Questions

1. Why do youth with DCF involvement become involved in the MA juvenile justice system?
2. What, if any, gaps in process/system/services exist in MA to adequately support youth pre- and post- dual involvement?
3. How can the state better support youth/stakeholders/the system to prevent cross-over or, in cases where prevention is not possible, better support youth with concurrent DCF & DYS involvement?

1. Why do youth with DCF involvement become involved in the MA juvenile justice system?

Lack of
services/resources
for youth and their
families

Low supply of out
of home DCF
placement options

System response
to youth with DCF
involvement's risk-
taking behavior

Lack of services/resources for youth and their families

Many interviewees cited that there is a **lack of services/resources for youth and their families to:**

- Prevent DCF involvement
- Prevent “cross-over” to the juvenile justice system either by committing an alleged delinquent offense, or through the filing of a CRA petition



Lack of Supports Cited	Examples/ Addt'l details
Substance use services	In and outpatient programs for youth, programs for parents/caregivers
Therapy	Individual for youth & parents/caregivers and sessions including the entire family
Community delinquency prevention and intervention programming	Mentoring, out of school time recreational programming
Educational supports	Truancy prevention, special education services
Specialized programs with services targeted towards certain cohorts with specific needs	CSEC, youth missing from care, girls

Low Supply of out of home DCF placement options

Many interviewees cited low supply of out of home DCF placements as a reason why:

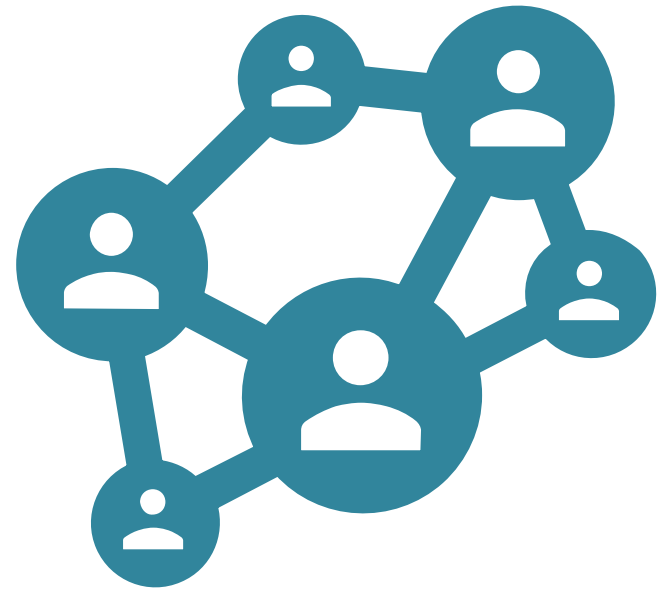
- Youth become dually-involved
- It is difficult to divert youth from detention in a portion of these cases



Lack of Supports/Resources Cited	Examples/ Addt'l details
Low supply of DCF placement options compared to the current need	Congregate care, kin, or non-kin foster placements
Lack of access to DCF placement options for DIY	Placement's ability to refuse referral for placement, DCF & providers' practice to not place youth with alleged delinquency charges in foster homes with other youth
Short-term respite options from all placement types but interviewees specifically cited congregate care placements	Both general programs and more specialized programs and for certain cohorts (e.g., CSEC, youth missing from care)
Staff shortages	Providers' difficulty hiring and retaining direct service staff

Some risk taking in adolescence is developmentally appropriate

- Many interviewees also noted that risk taking in adolescence is developmentally appropriate, and that youth with DCF involvement are no different.
- In all interviews, interviewees stressed that **the way in which the system responds to these youth is, ultimately, what produces different outcomes.**



How the System Responds Differently...

Interviewees cited various instances/scenarios/decisions that lead youth to “cross-over,” noting that the current system response does not have diversion mechanisms to prevent a detention admission for youth with DCF involvement.

Police Response

- Police response to provider agencies (e.g., police frustration w/ providers who call when behaviors don’t rise to a delinquency and providers frustrated that calls to police do not result in arrests/removals from the placement)

Judicial Response

- Youth being detained on a delinquency due to prior “failures” at abiding by CRA terms

Community Response

- Educators, community members’ biases (e.g., more likely to call the police on youth that they know have DCF involvement; educators more likely to file a CRA petition on a youth)

Provider Response

- Providers calling the police due to youth committing an alleged offense that places the youth or those around the youth in immediate danger at a provider placement

BH Health Response

- Youth getting arrested due to committing an alleged offense during a police transfer to the emergency room

Family Response

- Youth arrested in the community and parents/caregivers refusing to have the youth released to them

System Stakeholder Decision Making

Once DCF involved youth enter the juvenile justice system, the **lack of available resources make it difficult to divert youth away from detention or the system entirely.** Decision makers are then left to use what is available to them under the current system constraints. Many interviewees cited that the lack of services/resources forced decision makers to use pretrial detention as:

- **A placement option:** Detaining youth, even when the alleged offense was a misdemeanor/low-level, while appropriate non-DYS placement was secured
- **A safety response:** Using pretrial detention as a short-term placement option (e.g., as a respite option, as a means to remove youth from perceived safety threats)

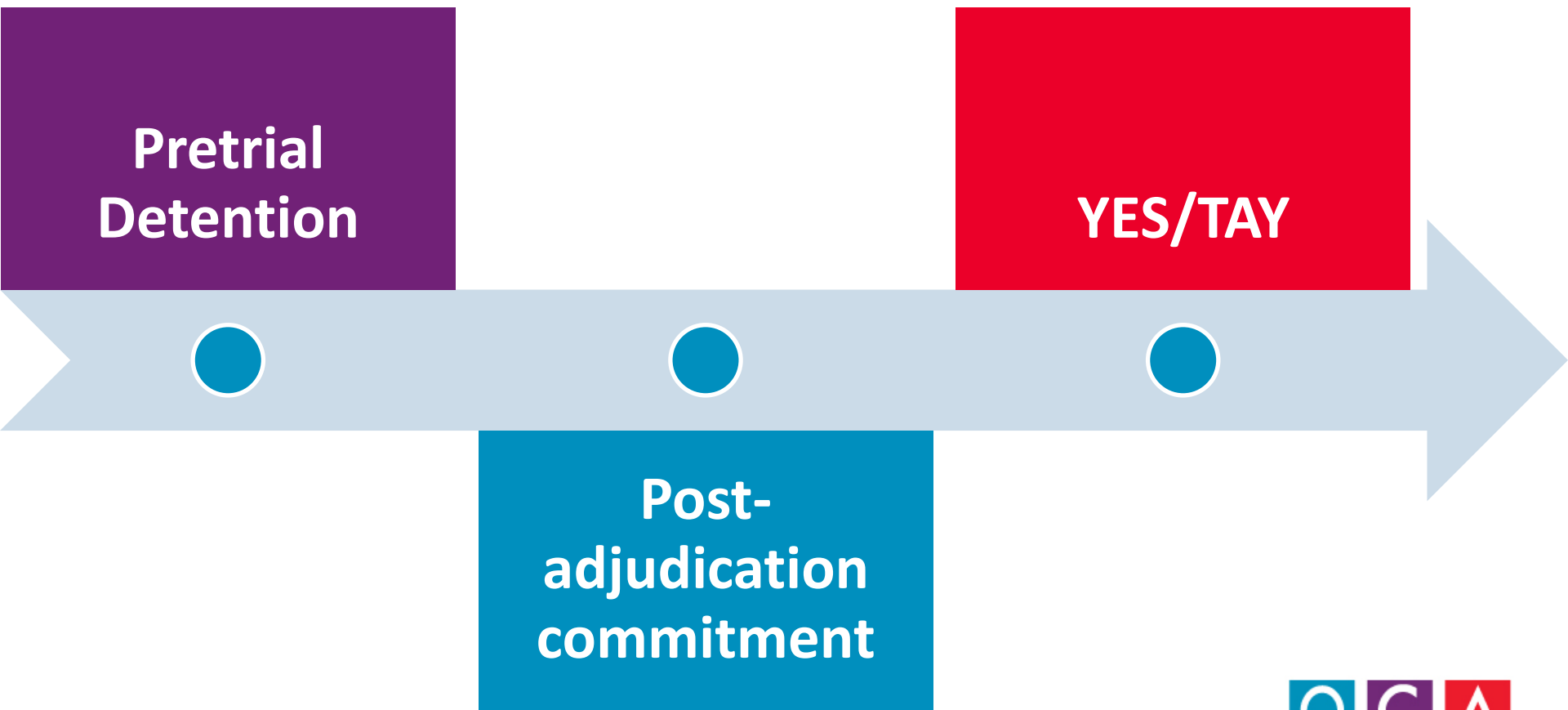


Questions & Discussion



- Did any of the reasons for dual-involvement surprise you?
- Does one reason resonate the most for you?
- Do you disagree with any of the responses we heard?

2. What, if any, gaps in process/system/services exist in MA to adequately support youth pre- and post- dual involvement?



Once youth are dually involved, there are gaps in that process/system:

Pretrial Detention



Interviewees cited:

- Lack of clear communication practices/pathways between DCF & DYS (e.g., not having a DYS/DCF point person, no centralized/streamlined system to share information)
- Confusion on what DYS' role is and a lack of understanding of their limitations (e.g., DYS cannot provide long-term treatment to youth in detention)
- Confusion on what DCF's role is and lack of understanding of their limitations (e.g., a delinquency matter alone cannot be the basis for DCF taking custody of a youth)
- Lack of continuity re: youth's education (e.g., due to the transient nature of detention, youth could be detained and then released back into the community before any educational supports are put in place)
- Frustration re: pretrial detention being used in lieu of DCF placement

Once youth have dual-involvement, there are gaps in that process/system:

Post-adjudication commitment



Interviewees cited:

- Delayed information sharing between DCF and DYS at the beginning of commitment (e.g., clinical information, administrative information)
- DCF placement challenges (e.g., transitioning youth from residential to community commitment before DCF is able to find an appropriate long-term placement, lack of specialized placement options for girls)
- Low supply of DCF placement options and DCF placement's right to refuse referrals, leading to youth "bouncing around" while committed in the community
- Lack of collaboration between DCF and DYS around the development of DYS' grants of conditional liberty (GCL) (e.g., adhere to DCF rules, meet with DCF caseworker)
- Frustration when DCF closes cases or caseworker becomes less engaged with youth while in residential commitment

Once youth have dual-involvement, there are gaps in that process/system:

YES/TAY

Interviewees cited:

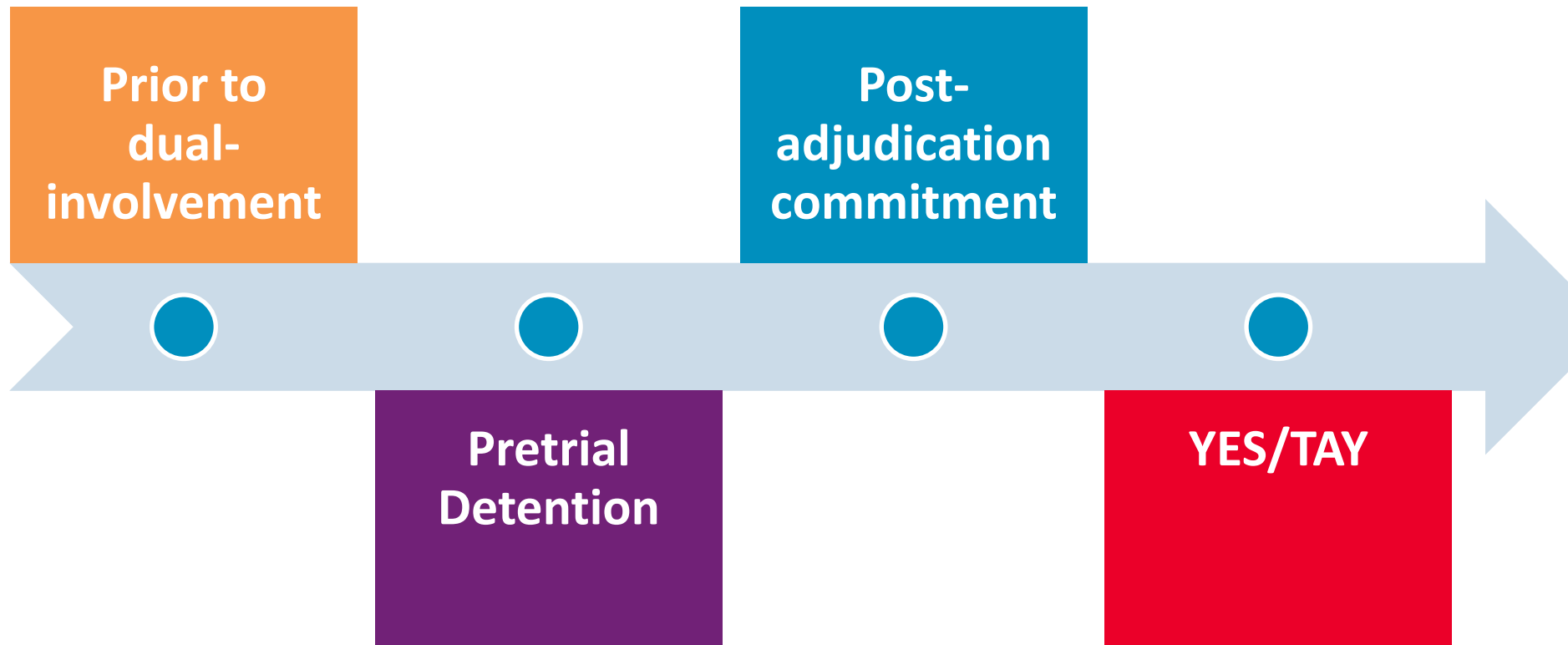
- Frustration that there is not more alignment with DYS' YES program and DCF's TAY sign-on services (e.g., co-enrollment for wraparound supports)

Questions & Discussion



- Did any of the system gaps surprise you?
- Do any resonate with you?
- Do you disagree with any?

3. How can the state better support youth/stakeholders/the system to prevent cross-over or, in cases where prevention is not possible, better support youth with concurrent DCF & DYS involvement?



Youth would have better outcomes if:

Prior to dual-involvement

Interviewees cited:

- More DCF placement options, specifically for kin and non-kin foster homes
- The CRA system is eliminated
- A network of acute short-term treatment/respite options existed
- More upstream services (e.g., delinquency prevention programming, mentoring, individual therapy, substance use)
- Removing time limits from Family Stabilization Services (FSS)
- Increase funding for congregate care to increase the number of staff and increase staff salaries
- Increase training for DCF caseworkers re: working with adolescents and emerging adults

Youth would have better outcomes if:

Pretrial Detention

Interviewees cited:

- Providers no longer had the right to refuse a placement referral
- DYS Community Based Options (e.g., foster homes) were expanded
- DCF had the ability to bail youth out of detention
- Limit the use of cash bail for youth/ eliminate cash bail for DCF youth
- Each DYS office had a staff person who acted as a full-time DCF liaison for detained youth (and vice versa)
- Increase opportunities for cross-agency case management (e.g., system for sharing information more frequently/easily)
- DCF revised its practice to not place youth with juvenile justice system involvement with other youth in DCF custody in foster care
- Each court county had a staff person who acted as a liaison between DCF & DYS for the juvenile court
- Introduce cost-sharing mechanisms for DCF & DYS (e.g., to expand placement options, for community-based treatment/services)

Youth would have better outcomes if:

Post-adjudication commitment



Interviewees cited:

- DYS “step-down” process was utilized more frequently/consistently for youth who required a more structured environment, but who- DYS has deemed- no longer require residential commitment
- DYS had more specialty programs for girls
- DCF had more independent living programs
- There was an increase in independent living placement options more generally

Youth would have better outcomes if:

YES/TAY

Interviewees cited:

- More transitional housing (e.g., support in finding independent living)
- Youth had the option to dual-enroll in DYS' YES program and DCF's TAY sign-on services



Questions & Discussion



- Do any of these responses surprise you?
- Do any resonate?
- Do you disagree with any?
- What policies/practices did you hear in these responses that you want to learn more about in the upcoming agency presentations?
- What questions do you still have?

Next Meeting:

Monday March 24th 11-12:30pm

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



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