

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee
Thursday, July 20, 2023,
3:00PM-4:00PM
Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Amy Ponte (CAFL)
Jamie Bennett (CPCS)
Rebecca Brink (DCF)
Brian Blakeslee (CPCS)
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)
Stacey Lynch (DPH)
Susan Gill-Hickey (DMH)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Thula Sibanda (DYS)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Dawn Christie (Parent)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Kristi Polizzano
Morgan Byrnes
Ari Fertig

Other Attendees:

Katie Perry-Lorentz (DYS)
Christopher Marques (Family Continuity)
Daniele Rose (DYS)
Jeanne Longobardi, (NFI)
Tess and Jon, (Northwestern District Attorney's Office)
Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)
Araya Landry (Family Continuity)
Jamaal Tartt, (Gandara)
Michelle Martinez (Family Services of the Merrimack Valley)
Josenny Tavaréz (Family Continuity)
Other Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 3:03 PM

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) Subcommittee virtual meeting. She welcomed members to introduce themselves. She then presented the agenda, explaining the group would hear a presentation on the OCA's forthcoming

report on the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP) after reviewing and voting on the June meeting minutes.

Review and Approval of Minutes from the June Meeting:

Ms. Polizzano held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes. Brian Blakeslee, Leon Smith, Susan Gill-Hickey, Amy Ponte, Stacey Lynch, Rebecca Brink and Thula Sibanda all voted to approve the minutes. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for June 23, 2023, were approved.

Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP) Learning Lab Impact Report

Ms. Polizzano welcomed Ms. Threadgill to begin presenting. The OCA in early fall will be putting out a report on the Learning Labs. Ms. Threadgill gave background information on the creation of the MYDP, the structure and funding of the program and the diversion program process. She then welcomed Ms. Byrnes to present year one programmatic data.

After giving background information on what data is included in the report, Ms. Byrnes presented on:

- The number of total and by county referrals the program received.
- The demographic profile of learning lab participants (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender identity, etc.)
- Information on the risk/need screener tool, used to assist diversion coordinators in matching youth to appropriate services and setting the length of the diversion program.
- Information on the services/interventions assigned to youth as part of their diversion program.
- Information on case closures, including how many cases were closed successfully.
- The average length of a diversion program
- Data on youth experiences and how they rate the diversion program.

Members asked a question about more geography data. They wondered if all diversion cases were coming from big cities or smaller towns. Ms. Byrnes and Ms. Threadgill said they will review that data. Members asked if this had an impact on the race/ethnicity data as well. Daniele Rose, the DYS Diversion Manager mentioned that certain counties referrals came largely from more suburban and rural areas which, she explained, likely impacted the race/ethnicity data. Members mentioned there was a slow ramp up to get buy-in from all referral sources in each county.

Members mentioned that the presence of established district attorney programs may be impacting referrals in some counties.

Ms. Threadgill then presented on:

- Program strengths, highlighting the commitment of the diversion coordinators and the long-term relationships the program has forged with referrers.
- Challenges experienced in the first year of implementation including staff turnover, establishing buy-in from referrers in each county and noting that diversion coordinators at times had challenges connecting with youth and families.
- The program's plan for expansion
- An overview of current data on referrals and case closures

Ms. Threadgill then welcomed Daniele Rose, DYS' diversion manager to introduce the diversion coordinators. All five diversion coordinators introduced themselves. Michelle Martinez, FSMV covering Essex County shared two recent successfully closed cases and the positive experience for youth. Araya Landry, Family Continuity covering Worcester County shared two recent successfully closed cases and the positive experience for youth.

Members discussed how it was nice to hear that some diversion requirements focused on other aspects of programming beyond service referrals and connections to prosocial activities.

Ms. Threadgill thanked the diversion team for presenting. She noted that the information shared here would be included in the OCA's forthcoming report on the program, that will be shared with members.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Polizzano thanked the members for their participation and noted that the next meeting would be sometime in early fall. She adjourned the meeting.

Meeting adjourned: 4:00 PM