

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee  
Monday, July 28, 2025  
11:00 AM – 12:30 PM  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:**

Leon Smith (CfJJ)  
Alton Jones (CLM)  
Rebecca Brink (DCF)  
Juin Liu (DESE)  
Jamie Bennett (CPCS/YAD)  
Brian Blakeslee (CPCS/CAFL)  
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)  
Susan Gill-Hickey (DMH)  
Amy Ponte (CPCS/CAFL)  
Stacey Lynch (DPH)  
Thula Sibanda (DYS)

**OCA Staff:**

Melissa Threadgill  
Kristi Polizzano  
Arianna Turner  
Kerin Miller  
Chrisotpher Baidoo

**Other Attendees:**

Daijah Scott (CfJJ)  
Emma Breen (OSA)  
Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)  
Josh Quirk (NAMI)  
Divina Cordeiro

**Meeting Commenced:** 11:02 AM

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) Subcommittee virtual meeting. She welcomed members to introduce themselves.

**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. Rebecca Brink, Leon Smith, Jamie Bennett, Brian Blakeslee, Amy Ponte, Stacey Lynch, and Alton Jones all voted to approve the minutes. Rachel Wallack abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for June 23, 2025 were approved.

Ms. Polizzano reviewed the meeting agenda, which features a national literature review on the dually involved youth project.

### **Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) Announcements**

Ms. Polizzano welcomed Ms. Threadgill to discuss OCA announcements. Ms. Threadgill shared that the OCA recently released a new report, *Improving Massachusetts' Child Require Assistance System: A 2025 Update and Path Forward for Change*. She reviewed key findings from the report as well as a recommendation for the legislature to pass *An Act regarding families and children in need of assistance*.

Ms. Polizzano welcomed questions regarding the OCA announcements. None were raised.

### **Dually Involved Youth Project: National Literature Review**

Ms. Polizzano began presenting introductory information about the dually involved youth project national literature review, including some research and presentation notes and the complexities regarding researching dual system youth.

Ms. Polizzano shared the questions that guided the national research scan. She also shared the next steps for the project, including a presentation from Probation and the Youth Advocacy Division (YAD) during the next meeting and continued data analysis by the OCA. She asked the group to keep those next steps in mind as they listen to the presentation.

Ms. Polizzano then welcomed Ms. Miller to begin presenting on national research.

Ms. Miller introduced herself and began reviewing information related to the question: “**What is the definition of crossover youth, and what is the prevalence of dual system involvement, nationally?**”. She shared that there are multiple ways to define and measure crossover, depending on the level of system involvement and timing of the contact, and reviewed some of the definitions that emerged from the research.

Ms. Polizzano discussed the JJPAD working definition of dually involved youth, sharing that the OCA is continuing to discuss the definition that will be used for the project.

Ms. Miller then continued presenting, sharing that research suggests more than half of the juvenile justice population has or will have child welfare involvement; most crossover youth do not have concurrent system involvement.

Ms. Miller next addressed the question of: “**What are the common risk factors and life experiences that contribute to dual involvement? Who is dually involved?**”. She shared

research indicating that dual system youth report high rates of trauma and low rates of protective factors, which can lead to serious unmet needs that may contribute to delinquent behavior.

Ms. Miller then shared research demonstrating that crossover youth's serious unmet needs may contribute to educational challenges and delinquent behavior.

Ms. Miller discussed the distinct characteristics and identities of crossover youth, with girls, youth of color, and LGBTQ+ and GNC youth disproportionately represented. She reviewed information on age, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, and race as they relate to the crossover population.

Ms. Polizzano then reviewed discussion questions and asked members to share their thoughts on the information presented thus far. She also asked members who had shared questions in the chat to elaborate on their thoughts.

One member stated the importance of discussing the complex nature of the trauma that youth who are system-involved experience, as well as the sometime inadequate approach that professionals take in addressing behaviors stemming from that trauma.

Members then discussed having a history of sexual abuse and domestic violence as risk factors for dual-involvement, especially given that survivors need specific treatment for their trauma.

One member shared that in certain counties, there are many families that are undocumented, do not speak English, or both, which complicates system involvement. Members discussed the lack of immigration status data and the challenges that presents in ensuring those populations are well-served.

Another member shared data from a study that was shared in the pre-meeting materials which showed that 78% of crossover youth receive public assistance and discussed the role that family stressors and a lack of resources play in driving youth system involvement.

Members then discussed the practice of girls being held in detention in the name of their safety, which could be contributing to a disproportionate number of girls becoming dually-involved.

Members discussed the lack of data surrounding the LGBTQ+ dually involved youth data, and Citizens for Juvenile Justice offered to look further into available data for any key trends.

One member shared that many kids in the child welfare system experience placement instability before entering the juvenile justice system, which results in inconsistent treatment (e.g. therapy waitlists, IEPs, etc.). Members discussed tracking placement instability for dually involved youth.

Ms. Threadgill expressed her surprise around the age data, and members discussed Massachusetts trends relating to kids with dual-involvement entering the child welfare system at an older age.

Members then discussed educational deficits in dually involved youth and highlighted a school district that achieved success in implementing the bryt program, which was specifically effective for children with child welfare contact.

Members discussed research surrounding youth with significant child welfare system involvement who then enter the juvenile justice system. Ms. Miller shared research on the pathway from out-of-home placement to juvenile justice involvement, which is well documented. Ms. Polizzano added that the OCA does not currently have data on this trend in Massachusetts, but they hope to receive that data soon.

One member shared that the mental health and behavioral acuity of kids has increased, which can lead to kids picking up charges from out-of-home placements. Members discussed the challenge of finding the appropriate placements for kids and their specific needs.

Ms. Miller then continued presenting information from the national literature review, answering the question of: “**What systemic factors contribute to dual involvement?**”. She shared research indicating that placement instability can increase the likelihood of delinquency.

Ms. Miller also shared that there are disparities in decision making for youth crossing over from the child welfare system into the juvenile justice system, including placement decisions and viable sanction options.

Next, Ms. Miller presented information on the question of: “**What are the outcomes related to dual system youth?**”. She shared research on the finding that having two systems involved in a youth’s life can lead to negative short- and long-term impacts on a youth.

One member asked if there was data available regarding programs charging youth for bad behavior while in placement. Ms. Miller shared that conducting training for foster care families proved helpful in managing behavior, according to one study. She also shared that research indicated the number of assaults coming out of congregate care settings are high.

Members then discussed Massachusetts’ trends in placement stability as well as trends in charges coming from out-of-home placements. Ms. Threadgill shared that DCF publishes data on the number of placements a child has and that the OCA is hoping to explore the data more during their data deep dive and case file review on dually involved youth.

Ms. Polizzano then welcomed questions and discussion on the material presented.

One member asked how kids running away from placements contributes to dual involvement, given that they are sometimes committing survival crimes while they are missing from care. Ms. Polizzano shared the OCA is going to try to examine that through unstructured data.

One member asked if there are studies on bullying or harassment and whether youth responding to bullying behaviors contributes to system involvement. Ms. Miller stated that research showed educational and disciplinary factors led to dual involvement, especially for LGBTQ+ youth.

Members discussed supporting kids who are aging out of state systems and ensuring that they have help applying for the appropriate adult services. Members discussed the impacts of staff turnover on ensuring that kids are properly supported throughout and after their state system involvement. Ms. Polizzano shared that the OCA could look into what jurisdictions are providing high fidelity wrap around and mentorship services.

Ms. Polizzano then reviewed key takeaways from the national literature and welcomed members to share reactions and their own key takeaways.

Members discussed the interconnectedness of many of the factors contributing to dual involvement. Ms. Threadgill shared that the OCA is focusing on determining targeted interventions and specific cohorts of youth that JJPAD could focus on for crafting policy solutions.

Ms. Polizzano welcomed members to reach out with any further questions or comments on the literature.

Ms. Polizzano then presented a status update on the dually involved youth project, including work completed to date and next steps for the project.

### **Next Steps**

Ms. Polizzano shared that the next meeting of the CBI subcommittee will take place virtually on Monday, September 22 at 11:00AM.

### **Closing Comments**

Ms. Polizzano thanked the members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned: 12:23 PM**