

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

Thursday March 18, 2021

1:00pm – 2:30pm

Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Karin Orr (DMH)
Mike Glennon and Nicole Robbins (Suffolk DA's Office)
Migdalia Nalls (CPCS)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)
Barbara Wilson (CLM)
Rose Alloca (DPH)
Nokuthula Sibanda (DYS)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Rebecca Brink (DCF)

Other Attendees:

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)
Kristi Polizzano (OCA)
Alix Rivière (OCA)
Katherine Hughes (Parent)
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)
Shayna Simmonds (Probation)
Matt Pecoraro (Judge Baker Center)
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. All the individuals on the WebEx video conference and on the phone introduced themselves. She then presented the agenda.

Review and Approval of Minutes from February 2021 Meeting

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

The meeting minutes for February 18, 2021 were approved.

OCA Updates

Regarding the Diversion Learning Lab, Ms. Threadgill informed the group that the JJPAD Board has determined that the Model Program Guide would be a product of the CBI Subcommittee, with the understanding that it may evolve over time with lessons learned. It is now posted on the JJPAD website.

2021 Work Plan Presentation and Discussion

Ms. Threadgill presented the work plan voted on by the JJPAD Board.

New JJPAD initiatives this year:

1. Crossover Youth: Ms. Threadgill mentioned that the OCA sees this work as a natural extension of all three subcommittees' previous two years of work. She stated how years of reform have decreased the overall population of our juvenile justice system. The next step is analyzing the processes and systems impacting youth that remain justice involved. Ms. Threadgill explained this is a multiyear project that provides opportunities for cross-committee work and collaboration. The CBI would be studying early intervention points including the CRA process, diversion, arrest, and detention
2. Data analysis and Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED): Ms. Threadgill explained that over the past two years the Data group has solidified the data basics for the annual report and website, and that this year the Board has the opportunity to deepen that analysis. CBI would identify impacts on system policies/practices and contribute to a larger JJPAD report. In particular, CBI would review data from Data Subcommittee and advise on context/potential qualitative research methods to supplement data on RED at key decision points.
3. Trauma screening and referral: Ms. Threadgill explained this is part of the Childhood Trauma Task Force's (CTTF) statute and the CTTF identified this work as a goal too. This year the group will study and make recommendations regarding trauma screening and referrals.

Oversight and continuation of previous JJPAD work:

1. COVID-19: Last year the CTTF put out a report on children's behavioral health and the JJPAD Annual Report highlighted agency policies and practices that shifted during the pandemic. Ms. Threadgill explained that the goal of this year's report would be to highlight positive changes in the system, and also concerns for the future of children's mental health. CBI would essentially answer the question "What impact did COVID have on policies and practices in the juvenile justice sector?" Ms. Threadgill discussed the potential timeline with the end goal of a September report.
2. Impact statutory changes: Ms. Threadgill reminded the group that the new policing bill had a few juvenile justice elements surrounding school resource officers training,

developed a memorandum of understanding commission, and expanded juvenile expungement. She said the previous SRO Working Group will reconvene to analyze implementation if necessary.

3. Continuation of ongoing work: In 2021, the JJPAD Board and its subcommittees will continue to work on the following:
 - FY21 data report
 - Continued support of previous JJPAD/CTTF initiatives, which could include for CBI the continued consultation on the Diversion Learning Labs as DYS launches each site and starts to collect data.
 - Update the 2019 data availability report

Crossover Youth Discussion

Next, Ms. Threadgill explained that there was a lot of interest from members of JJPAD and CBI subcommittee regarding the topic of crossover youth. As such, the OCA did some foundation setting research, which she presented. She focused her presentation around four questions:

1. Who are crossover youth?
2. Why focus on crossover youth?

Ms. Threadgill explained that examining crossover youth as part of the JJPAD and subcommittee work plans is an opportunity to address several different priorities and mandates of the different groups:

- Reduce racial/ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice systems
 - Prevent traumatized youth's involvement in the juvenile justice system
 - Identify ways to intervene earlier and more effectively to reduce juvenile justice involvement
3. What do we already know about crossover youth in MA?

Members discussed whether the relationship between DCF involvement and involvement with juvenile justice has more to do with causation or correlation. Members wondered what the drivers of disproportionate representation of maltreated children in the juvenile justice system are. Ms. Threadgill discussed a recent conversation with Dr. Joseph Ryan, a leading researcher on the topic, whose studies have effectively demonstrated that placement instability is a driving factor of children's involvement in delinquent acts. Some members highlighted that removal and placement instability should be a priority in this subcommittee's work. Members also pointed out that highlighting problems with home

removals is easier than finding solutions and that it would be beneficial for this group to focus on implementation solutions. Some members brought attention to the fact that strong supports for parents are key to addressing issues related to crossover youth. Others mentioned the need to examine LGBTQ youth and youth of color (and their intersection) and the lack of supports for these specific populations. Members also discussed the role of school-based substance use infractions and how the penalties can be highly racialized. School-based supports were thought to be of interest as the group moves forward in this project.

Next, Ms. Threadgill highlighted efforts in the state to address needs of this population including the CHINS to CRA reform in 2012, a Hampden County Pilot Program, and Crossover Youth Practice Model (DYS/DCF/Partners). She explained there has been some successes from these initiatives, but challenges and gaps remain.

4. Proposed JJPAD Crossover Youth Project: Ms. Threadgill presented key questions JJPAD and this subcommittee could incorporate in its work for this project.
 - Data: What do we have? What could we get? What do we need?
 - Qualitative Research: System mapping, interviews and focus groups, review of current policies/practices, all with goal of refining understanding of problem and cultivating list of potential solutions
 - Promising Practice Identification: What are other states/counties/cities doing that we could adapt? What is the research/evidence base for various practices?

Ms. Threadgill then discussed how this group could focus its effort. She mentioned that one of the first ways to focus is by looking at this problem through the prism of age, as research indicates a sharp shift in behavior in early adolescence.

She then explained how each subcommittee of JJPAD will tackle this project and presented a potential timeline for research and eventually the development of recommendations in a report in 2022. Finally, she presented a proposed CBI subcommittee work plan from April to November 2021.

Members discussed whether research on the status offense reform in other states, such as Connecticut, could inform this group's work in terms of interventions offered to children and families. Ms. Threadgill asked members if they could think of people the OCA should interview, in particular about the CRA system.

Feedback from the COVID Survey Sent to Members

Next, Ms. Threadgill highlighted some key findings from the survey regarding changes during the pandemic that benefitted youth:

- Remote technology interventions improved communication and reduced some of the barriers/challenges of in-person court attendance.
- System stakeholders have been more open to creative intervention strategies
- There was a decrease in the number of youth in custody (e.g. reduced number of detentions).

She also explained that survey respondents noted many changes in this pandemic that negatively impacted youth, including:

- Disparity in access to technology
- Isolation causing trauma and/or negative outcomes disproportionately felt among youth of color and under-resourced communities
- Lack of resources to address ongoing trauma & delays in programming
- Delays in court proceedings & the disconnect from the reality of having an open criminal case
- Overuse of home confinement and GPS restrictions

Survey respondents were asked about long-term impacts of the pandemic on youth and mentioned the following:

- Long-term impact on educational connections/attainment
- Important mental and behavioral health challenges
- Longer term impacts of financial insecurity during COVID
- Longer term impacts on relationships and behaviors

For the next meeting, she asked members to think about what measures are needed as we

transition out of this pandemic, how we can triage the latter given limited resource, and what is needed to prepare for longer-terms impacts on the juvenile justice system.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members for their participation and informed them that the next meeting will take place on Thursday April 15, from 1:00pm to 2:30pm.

Meeting adjourned: 1:28pm