

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee
Thursday, March 24, 2022
1:00PM-2:30PM
Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

Maria Mossaides (OCA)
Amy Ponte (CAFL)
Leon Smith (CfJJ)
Brian Jenney (DPH)
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
Karin Orr (DMH)
Susan Gil-Hickey (DMH)
Migdalia Nalls (CPCS)
Brian Blakeslee (CPSC)
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)

OCA Staff:

Melissa Threadgill
Kristi Polizzano
Alix Rivière
Morgan Byrnes

Other Attendees:

Araya Landry (Family Continuity)
Daniele Rose (DYS)
Jamanae White (NFI)
Ali Ireland (DMA Health Strategies)
Michelle Martinez (FSMV)
Jinna Halperin (DMA Health Strategies)
Katherine Hughes
Marcela Familiar-Bolanos
Julia Thomas
Krystyna Boisjolie (RFK Community Alliance)
Jennifer Hallisey (CBHI)
Other Members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 1:06 PM

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee virtual meeting. She then presented the agenda, explaining the group would discuss the 2022 work plan, hear a presentation on the Diversion Learning Lab and review the

results of the Youth and Caregiver Focus Group after reviewing and voting on February's meeting minutes.

Review and Approval of Minutes from the February Meeting:

Ms. Polizzano held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes. Amy Ponte, Leon Smith, Brian Blakeslee and Susan Gill-Hickey voted to approve the minutes. Kimberly Lawrence and Migdalia Nalls abstained. No one was opposed.

The meeting minutes for February 17, 2022, were approved.

Review & Discussion of 2022 Work Plan

Before beginning the meeting, Ms. Polizzano asked the group if next month's meeting could be moved from April 21, 2022, to April 28, 2022, between 2:00pm-3:30pm to accommodate guest speakers. There were no issues discussed and the meeting date was changed.

Ms. Polizzano began to present the JJPAD Board 2022 work plan. She presented members with the following goals:

1. Reduce crossover from child welfare to juvenile justice system
2. Increase ability to use data to drive systems improvements
3. Track implementation of juvenile justice system-related statutory changes & JJPAD recommendations
4. Promote earlier identification and intervention practices for youth who have experience trauma

She reviewed previous steps taken in 2021 to achieve those goals and presented what work will be done in 2022. After a general overview, Ms. Polizzano focused the group on goal number 1, explaining that the CBI Subcommittee will do the following:

- Develop recommendations for improvements to the CRA system and publish a final report
- Develop next steps in addressing crossover youth in Massachusetts
- Provide an ongoing advisory role to the state Diversion Learning Labs

Ms. Polizzano welcomed any questions or discussion from the group. Members discussed, mentioning that the newly published SRO-MOU be added to goal number three and tracked by the group.

Diversion Learning Lab Presentation:

Ms. Threadgill then introduced the first presentation. She gave a brief history of the Diversion Learning Lab, reminding members that it is a state-level youth diversion initiative working to keep more youth out of the Juvenile Justice System, and match those youth with services in their community, based on the recommendations of the group in its 2019 report. Ms. Threadgill continued, summarizing the development of the Learning Labs and introducing Daniele Rose, the DYS Diversion Manager, who serves as a central coordinator of the Learning Labs. Ms. Rose began the presentation by welcoming the learning lab Diversion Coordinators: Jamanae White, Araya Landy and Michelle Martinez. All three introduced themselves, their positions, the organization they work for and their previous professional background.

After introductions, the Diversion Lab Team updated the group on the first few months of implementation. They announced since they first received referrals in January 2022, they have accepted 19 youth into the program. In addition, they presented on:

- Referrals by county and who they were being referred by (police, district attorney or judge)
- Demographics of youth being served
- Outcomes of the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument – 2nd Version (MAYSI-2). A screening tool used to assess the mental health needs of the youth
- Outcomes of the Youth Level of Service (YLS). A screening tool used to match the level/nature of services to the needs of the youth
- Materials developed during implementation
- Trainings/Presentations

Ms. Rose welcomed questions from the group. Members discussed the presentation, asking for an explanation on the “Somatic Complaints,” data pulled from the MAYSI-2 screenings. It was explained that those data were pulled from a series of questions meant to measure the youth’s

physical response to anxiety or depression. Members also discussed lessons learned, asking what takeaways, if any, explain the variation in referrals by county and the variations in who referred youth by county. It was explained that it was dependent on how the messaging around the program was communicated, and what connections the three partner organizations had prior to the start of the program. All three Learning Lab sites and DYS are continuing to meet with stakeholders and possible referrers to the program.

Youth and Caregiver Focus Group Findings:

Ms. Threadgill introduced Jinna Halperin and Ali Ireland of DMA Health strategies. The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) contracted DMA Health Strategies (DMA) in June 2021 to evaluate the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) process from the perspective of youth and caregivers and provide recommendations for future improvements. DMA organized four focus groups, capturing the experience of 10 caregivers. Ms. Halperin and Ms. Ireland presented on their findings, which included demographic information on the participants, information on the CRA services utilized, the quality of those services, the overall experience and the CRA's lasting impact on the child. The presenters noted that all caregivers interviewed reported having a negative experience, and that none felt the process lead to any improvements in their child's mental health. In fact, most caregivers reported their child's mental health worsening, as a result of the CRA process.

Ms. Ireland and Ms. Halperin also presented on recommendations, many of which were targeted at reforming school based CRAs. Members discussed the findings and recommendations, with many members noting that the findings affirmed the research done by the group around school based CRAs.

One member noted that one of DMA's findings noted that many of the caregivers had trouble working with their attorneys. Members asked if the caregivers were referencing their attorney or the child's attorney. Ms. Ireland clarified that the caregivers' response was referencing both their attorney and the adversarial nature of having their child also have an appointed attorney.

After some discussion, Ms. Threadgill thanked the presenters, noting that the information provided was valuable in informing the groups ongoing work. Ms. Halperin and Ms. Ireland thanked the group for their time and involving DMA Health Strategies in the process.

Closing Comments:

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members for their participation and informed the group that the next meeting will take place on April 28, 2022, from 2:00PM to 3:30PM.

Meeting adjourned: 2:34 pm