

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

Tuesday May 19, 2020  
1pm – 2.30pm

**Meeting held virtually due to COVID 19 emergency response**

**Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:**

Michael Glennon (Suffolk County DA's Office)  
Nicole Robbins (Suffolk County DA's Office)  
Kim Lawrence (Probation)  
Brian Jenney (DPH)  
Nokuthula Sibanda (DYS)  
Barbara Wilson (Children's League)  
Migdalia Nalls (CPCS)  
Leon Smith (CFJJ)  
Dawn Christie (Parent Representative)

**Other Attendees:**

Melissa Threadgill (OCA)  
Kristi Polizzano (OCA)  
Alix Riviere (OCA)  
Jasmine Jackson (CJI)  
Leila Khelfaoui (CJI)  
Naomi Bedsoe (Northwestern DA's office)  
Kathleen Bitetti (State Auditor's Office)  
Members of the public

**Meeting Commenced:** 1:07PM

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee meeting. The nature of this meeting is different due to COVID-19 emergency response shifting the meeting to a virtual WebEx platform. She explained some general guidelines for the virtual meeting and then introduced all the members of the CBI Subcommittee in the WebEx video conference. Individuals on the phone introduced themselves.

**Approval of Minutes from April Meeting:**

For lack of a quorum at the beginning of the meeting when this item was on the agenda, the meeting minutes for April were not approved and will be voted on at the next meeting.

**Review of Draft Case Management Guidelines**

Ms. Threadgill presented the draft Diversion Case Management Guidelines to the Committee and opened the conversation for edits. The group discussed the “Ongoing Challenges” section and youth’s mental health needs as well as substance use issues. The committee agreed that it is necessary to build in mental health partnerships within the program.

### **Determining Diversion Success**

Ms. Threadgill asked the Committee to think about the following questions: What does successful Diversion look like? Should youth be required to complete any programs/services before they are eligible to end diversion or, should youth be required to make meaningful progress in any individualized programs/services? How do we define “meaningful progress”?

Some members mentioned that participating in therapy is sometimes a life-long endeavor, and therefore “completing” therapy should not be a requirement to complete a Diversion program. One member discussed factors that made Diversion successful, such as the youth demonstrating no new harmful behaviors and an “apology of action,” (i.e. apologies that translate in schools, at home, and in the community).

When determining the success or failure of Diversion, the group agreed that it is difficult to establish factors that would automatically end Diversion. Of note, if the youth picks up a new charge, the nature of that charge is important when considering whether the Diversion program should continue or end. While a new charge may not in and of itself end diversion, if youth are detained on that new charge, Diversion cannot progress during that detention. Mr. Glennon advised that the Diversion Coordinator should work with other agencies and experts to determine when a youth is successful in services.

### **Diversion Case Wrap-Up**

Ms. Threadgill further asked the group to think of the following questions: Who needs to approve the end of Diversion (successful or not)? What should happen to any record(s) of the Diversion experience? Does the end of Diversion mean the end of services? Should there be any ceremony/ official conclusion?

Mr. Glennon cautioned against referral agencies deciding when Diversion ends. When it comes to Diversion records, Mr. Glennon highlighted the importance of a strong separation of records between the Diversion Coordinator and prosecutors. Members agreed that, if the youth is willing, services should be able to continue after the Diversion program has ended. Most members agreed there should be a somewhat ceremonial conclusion to Diversion programs, perhaps including a certificate of completion.

### **The Role of the Diversion Coordinator**

Ms. Polizzano transitioned to a discussion of the Coordinator’s required level of education and experience. She described the education and professional requirements of Diversion Coordinators in different states as well as in Massachusetts counties.

Committee members emphasized the importance of a Coordinator having lived experience to engage better youth in Diversion. In addition to education, experience working with diverse, at-risk populations of youth, as well as knowledge of community resources were deemed crucial to successful relationships with youth and successful completion of Diversion. The question of

background checks (CORI) was discussed, as someone with previous involvement with the judicial system might be well positioned to connect with youth. At the same time, background checks should be seriously taken into account.

The group emphasized the ability of Diversion Coordinators to adjust and adapt to evolving circumstances, be well-versed in restorative practices and be able to critically think and problem solve. One main characteristic described was the ability to connect and form trusting, professional relationships with youth.

**Closing Comments:**

Ms. Threadgill discussed the work this Committee will continue to do throughout the summer, including discussions on information sharing, CQI & outcome measurements, as well as reviewing all the documents produced thus far. The original work plan for this has been pushed back into Fall 2020 due to challenges from the State's Covid-19 emergency response.

Ms. Threadgill noted the next meeting will be held on June 15, 2020 from 1-3:00pm. This will be a virtual meeting. The meeting adjourned.

**Meeting adjourned: 2:25PM**