

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee  
Thursday, May 19, 2022  
1:00PM-2:30PM  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:**

Amy Ponte (CAFL)  
Leon Smith (CfJJ)  
Brian Jenney (DPH)  
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)  
Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)  
Brian Blakeslee (CPSC)  
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)  
Barbra Wilson (CLM)

**OCA Staff:**

Melissa Threadgill  
Kristi Polizzano  
Alix Rivière  
Jess Seabrook  
Morgan Byrnes

**Other Attendees:**

Jenyka Spitz-Gassnola (DYS)  
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)  
Daniele Rose (DYS)  
Araya Landry (Family Continuity)  
Jennifer Hallisey  
Krystyna Boisjolie (RFK Community Alliance)  
Other Members of the public

**Meeting Commenced:** 1:01 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 hear a presentation on the CAFL case file review and discuss CRA services after reviewing and voting on April's meeting minutes.

**Review and Approval of Minutes from the April Meeting:**

Ms. Polizzano held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based

Interventions meeting minutes. Amy Ponte, Brian Jenney, Brian Blakeslee, and Leon Smith voted to approve the minutes. Rachel Wallack abstained. No one was opposed.

The meeting minutes for April 28, 2022, were approved.

### **OCA/CAFL CRA Case File Review Presentation**

Ms. Polizzano began presenting the background on the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) case file review, explaining that in order to understand CRA cases, the needs of youth with CRA cases and the services provided to them, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) partnered with Children and Family Law Division (CAFL) of the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) to survey social workers. They web-based survey included a list of 48 possible interventions across five categories, including:

- Mental health, physical health, and disability related services
- Family supports and basic needs
- Mentoring and enrichment programs
- Education and employment
- Out of home placements

The survey asked CAFL social workers across 10 area offices to randomly select 10 CRA cases that closed in 2020 or 2021 and input the following:

- Demographics of youth and general case information
- The recommended service/intervention based on the needs of the youth
- The received service/intervention of the youth
- If applicable, the reason for the discrepancy between the recommended service and the provided service

Ultimately, data representing 69 cases was collected between January 21, 2022, and March 18, 2022.

Ms. Polizzano presented on the results, including the demographics of the youth, the CRA petition type and the average lengths of the CRA petitions. She then presented on the services/interventions recommended and noted if there was a discrepancy in services recommended vs. services received, noting that:

- 93% of total cases needed mental health, physical health and disability services, 24% of those cases did not receive them
- 83% of total cases needed family support and basic needs, 42% of those cases did not receive them
- 77% of total cases needed mentoring and enrichment programs, 62% of those cases did not receive them
- 68% of total cases needed education and employment services, 26% of those cases did not receive them
- 54% of total cases needed out of home placements, 19% of those cases did not receive them

The frequency of discrepancies by petition types (community based vs. school based), and the reason for discrepancy by support area was also reviewed in the presentation.

Members discussed the findings, with some members noting that community-based filings were overrepresented in the sample, when compared to total CRA petitions. It was explained that school closures due to the COVID-19 pandemic could explain this overrepresentation.

Additionally, members noted that COVID-19 could also explain the discrepancies in out of home placements.

Members discussed the school-based filings, including the use of truancy plans as a preventative to filing a CRA on a student. Ms. Threadgill commented that the OCA is currently interviewing educators to get a better understanding of how schools use CRAs. A member noted that many school districts have exhaustive truancy plans in place. Members agreed, but also mentioned that there is variability in truancy services across districts. Members also discussed the high rates of cases recommended for an IEP or an alternative school placement, noting that more community-based services should be available to youth earlier in the process to avoid a CRA petition.

Child and family refusal of services was also discussed, with one member asking the reason behind why youth do not report a service they may need. It was explained that youth are hesitant to engage in mental health or special education services due to stigma and that CAFL does a lot of education and outreach work around the benefits of therapy. Additionally, many youth state they need a therapeutic mentor, but refuse the therapy service that is required for them to receive one.

Members discussed the discrepancy in mentoring services, including how difficult it is to match youth to the right program/mentor. It was noted that court could be an inappropriate vehicle for getting a young person to unwillingly complete a program. Members continued barriers to services that could result in family or child refusal, including language barriers and availability of services.

Ms. Polizzano thanked the group for their participation. She also extended a thank you to the team at CAFL.

#### **Discussion re: CRA Services**

Ms. Polizzano introduced the next topic of discussion, expanding services and workforce to meet the needs of youth in the CRA system. She reminded the group, that the proposed solutions being

discussed were pulled from the interviews the OCA conducted with various stakeholders across the CRA system. Interviewees were asked “If you had a magic wand and could change anything about the CRA system, what would you do?” The OCA then categorized the responses, the majority of which the group discussed during February’s meeting. Ms. Polizzano sent the link to the Ideaflip board to the group, explaining that they would have a week to review the answers, “like” those they agreed with, “dislike” those they did not, and add any of their own ideas.

**Closing Comments:**

Ms. Threadgill thanked the members for their participation and informed the group that the next meeting will take place on June 16, 2022.

**Meeting adjourned: 2:31 PM**