

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee  
Monday, September 22, 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)  
Thula Sibanda (DYS)  
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)  
Heidi Gold (EOE)  
Daniel Wolski (MCPA)  
Latoya Nicholas (Parent Rep)

**OCA Staff:**

Kristi Polizzano  
Arianna Turner  
Kerin Miller  
Holly Swan  
Dana DeShiro

**Other Attendees:**

Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)  
Katherine Perry-Lorentz (DYS)  
Nicole Barnaby (DPH)  
Meredith Moody (Social Justice Coalition)  
Sofia Reardon (CfJJ)

**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 July Meeting:**

Ms. Polizzano held a formal vote on the approval of the previous Community Based Interventions meeting minutes. Alton Jones, Amy Ponte, Rebecca Brink, Jamie Bennett, Thula

Sibanda, Susan Gill-Hickey, Leon Smith, Brian Blakeslee, Rachel Wallack, and Daniel Wolski all voted to approve the minutes. Kimberly Lawrence and Heidi Gold abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for July 28, 2025 were approved.

Ms. Polizzano reviewed the meeting agenda, which features guest presentations from the Committee for Public Counsel Services (CPCS) and Massachusetts Probation Services (MPS) on the dually involved youth (DIY) project.

### **CPCS Presentation on Dually-Involved Youth**

Ms. Bennett and Mr. Blakeslee introduced themselves and began presenting.

Ms. Bennett began by presenting the agenda, which included:

- Representation at the Children and Family Law Division (CAFL) and the Youth Advocacy Division (YAD)
- Typical crossover cases
- Collaboration between divisions & relevant courtroom practices
- Relevant policies (Court, CPCS, Case Law)
- Relevant training
- Challenges & bright spots

### Child Client Representation – Delinquency and Youthful Offender cases

Ms. Bennett discussed child client representation for delinquency and youthful offender cases. CPCS' Youth Advocacy Division (YAD) handles these cases. She began by describing how counsel is assigned, sharing that since the pandemic, attorneys are assigned "duty days" when the court is in session for delinquency cases; attorneys receive the complaint, request the police report from the District Attorney, and run a conflict check (i.e., if they have any conflicts of interest taking the case or reasons why they should reassign the case). She noted that attorneys are better prepared for cases that come in via a summons versus those from an arrest because they have more time to familiarize themselves with the case details, and that attorneys attempt to make contact with the client before the arraignment date.

Ms. Bennett then explained that if there are clients who are arrested overnight, the Department of Youth Services (DYS) will send information to the courts about who has been arrested and in which county so that attorneys can be assigned. She also explained that there are special attorneys who are trained to take Youthful Offender and murder cases.

Ms. Bennett highlighted there are inconsistencies in the courts notifying attorneys when their clients pick up additional charges and that sometimes attorneys learn of this information from a parent, a Department of Children and Families (DCF) worker, or a prosecutor instead.

Child Client Representation – Care and Protections (C&Ps)

Mr. Blakeslee then presented information on child representation for care and protection cases. CPCS’ Child and Family Law (CAFL) Division handles these cases. This process is handled by the clerk’s office, except in Hampden County, where it is managed by CPCS. CPCS provides the court with a list of attorneys who are certified to take these cases. The clerk’s office maintains that list and reaches out to attorneys; all courts do this slightly differently. Clients then receive attorney appointments.

All parties are entitled to representation if they are deemed indigent; this includes children, all parents, and legal guardians. The court will appoint one attorney for all children if there is more than one child in the same case; the onus is then on the attorney to determine if there is a conflict in representing more than one child due, for example, to differing placement goals. Court investigators, Probation, and Guardians ad Litem are all also in the court room and involved in these cases.

Child Client Representation – Child Requiring Assistance (CRAs)

Next, Mr. Blakeslee discussed child client representation for CRA cases. CPCS’ CAFL division handles these cases, although some YAD attorneys are also certified to take CRA cases. The “duty day” system is handled differently in different courts; for some it is run by the courts, for some it is run by the resource attorney, typically a private panel attorney, and for others it is run by CAFL

The child listed on the CRA petition is entitled to counsel; any parent or guardian is also entitled to counsel but only if the court is considering removing custody. There is only one child subject per petition, which means each case has just one attorney. School representatives, DCF workers, and probation officers are also in the court room and involved in these cases.

Child Client Representation

Then, Mr. Blakeslee discussed CPCS’ child representation more broadly, including:

- Child client representation is a unique model of representation because the child is the client, and attorneys must advocate for their client’s position, as they would with an adult client.
- Mass. Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 1.14 (Client with Diminished Capacity) and CPCS Performance Standards for Care & Protection Cases, Standard 1.6 (Determining & Advocating the Child Client’s Position) both apply to these cases.
- Mr. Blakeslee reported that this is deemed the preferred model for representation.

Dually-Involved Youth Case Management

Ms. Bennett then discussed dually-involved youth case management, including:

- “Common” crossover cases:

- A CRA case is pending, and a youth picks up criminal charges.
- Delinquent charges are pending and a parent/guardian files CRA (sometimes this is to get DCF placement for the child).
- A child is in the custody of DCF on a C&P case and is being charged with a delinquent offense.
- “Common” crossover case themes
  - Placement disruption and placement instability for crossover youth
  - Youth who cross over have histories of significant trauma or may be at risk for commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC)
  - Inconsistent services/waitlists for children pre- and post-crossover from the child welfare to juvenile justice system
  - Educational issues and challenges for youth who crossover from system to system
  - Parent/guardian fatigue and the need to support parents whose children are involved in multiple systems

#### Case Collaboration and Courtroom Practices

Ms. Bennett next discussed case collaboration and courtroom practices. She shared that in order for CPCS to identify youth who are dually involved they run a conflict check in their case management system, noting that attorneys cannot access the specific notes from a past case due to data privacy policies.

Ms. Bennett also discussed how YAD and CAFL attorneys coordinate, sharing that attorneys may learn about another open matter the day of a hearing or court appearance. If attorneys identify another open case, they reach out to their CPCS counterpart, which is easiest when both attorneys are in the same office and/or county. She also highlighted that there are limits on sharing confidential information about clients, and attorneys must get a release from the client.

#### Effective Advocacy – Crossover Cases

Mr. Blakeslee then discussed effective advocacy for dually-involved youth cases, including:

- The need for strong communication between counsel for each case
- The need to craft a coordinated litigation strategy and share information between attorneys when possible (ex. coordinating court hearings for each case type on the same day to minimize the number of times youth/families need to return to court)
- The need to understand the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DCF and DYS
- The importance of pre-arraignment representation to represent clients as early as possible, advocating for diversion when appropriate, and understanding how the youth’s other court cases might be impacted by a delinquency charge.
- The importance of using social work experts to support CAFL and YAD attorneys. Bar advocates can petition the court for funds (through Indigent Court Cost Act funds) to hire

social worker and staff attorneys can use the CPCS social worker experts to support cases.

Ms. Bennett then discussed the benefits and drawbacks of having the same judge for different types of cases involving the same child. The benefit includes a good understanding of the child's needs and history, however, sometimes that makes judges less likely to try lighter interventions if they believe the child has had other opportunities.

#### CPCS/Court Policies, Practices & Trainings

Ms. Bennett then discussed CPCS/court policies, practices and training. She presented relevant CPCS practices that impact how attorneys work with crossover youth, including:

- Collaboration between YAD and CAFL offices is encouraged
- There has been success with CAFL attorneys looping in YAD attorneys early on in criminal case proceedings (ex. If an attorney finds out a client has a clerk magistrate hearing, the attorney can attend that hearing and provide mitigating information).
- CPCS encourages cross-training, offering training on delinquent cases for CAFL attorneys and training on care and protection cases for delinquent attorneys.
- There are Edlaw training courses available for all attorneys which provide education for attorneys on education law and a students' rights.
- CPCS training focuses on the benefits to clients and counsel of using social services experts.

Mr. Blakeslee further described the benefits of involving social services experts/social workers in crossover cases, including the fact that complex cases, in particular, benefit from the expertise of social workers. Involving social workers in these cases also helps YAD/CAFL attorneys support their clients in a more holistic way. Social workers retained by an attorney have a different perspective than DCF social workers because the private social worker is focused solely on the child, not the whole family.

#### Challenges – DIY Cases

Mr. Blakeslee discussed challenges with handling DIY cases. He described challenges for the attorneys on these cases, including:

- Challenges understanding roles of different players (attorneys, DCF, judges, social workers, etc.) and how they differ between cases
- The impact of a child welfare case on a delinquency case when it comes to placement instability, parental involvement, and practices like being released on personal recognizance or bail
- Sharing information between all parties while monitoring confidentiality laws and protection.

He also described for the child clients, including:

- understanding roles of different players (attorneys, DCF, judges, social workers, etc.) on each of their cases and being overwhelmed with the number of adults in their cases
- understanding the court process of two different case types with two different legal standards
- trusting attorneys

Mr. Blakeslee also discussed one of the main challenges for the court system for these cases. He described that the same judge often presides over both a CRA case and delinquency case involving the same youth. Judges sometimes hear a CRA case first, then hear a delinquency case. Judges will try not to conflate information learned in each case. However, in practice, it may be difficult for a judge who is familiar with a client struggling on a CRA contract to remain impartial when that client comes in with delinquency charges.

#### Bright Spots- DIY Cases

Ms. Bennett then discussed bright spots in representing dually-involved youth by starting with what works in terms of effective representation for dually-involved youth:

- She highlighted that collaboration is key. She mentioned that case outcomes are the best when all parties are talking and trying to be creative.
- She re-iterated utilizing Social Service Advocates/social workers or Court Clinic Case Management is key to serving clients holistically. This includes looping in EDLaw staff and using their expertise.

Ms. Bennet highlighted innovative models that she has seen to be effective. These include:

- Wrap around services that provide 24/7 care to families on CRAs to keep children at home (Ms. Lawrence highlighted this program, Intercept, more in her presentation to follow).
- Not utilizing delinquent charges to enforce issues (through probation conditions, for example) more appropriate for CRA
- Pre-arraignment and pre-filing diversion for youth who are better served outside the Juvenile Court system
- Utilization of Family Resource Centers

Ms. Polizzano thanked Ms. Bennett and Mr. Blakeslee for their presentation and asked members to hold their questions for the end of the meeting.

#### **MPS Presentation on Dually-Involved Youth**

Ms. Lawrence introduced herself and began presenting on the role/responsibilities of Probation in dually involved cases. Ms. Lawrence began presenting on MPS case management, first outlining the three case types that Probation oversee: delinquency, CRAs, and C&Ps. She explained that there are promulgated standards for supervision based on Probation's role in the

specific case. She also noted that one family could have all three case types open at the same time.

Ms. Lawrence then outlined what type of supervision Probation provides for each case type:

- **Delinquency cases** that have been adjudicated, probation officers are trained to use an assessment tool (the OYAS) and evidence-based practices to promote positive change and reduce recidivism to inform their case management. Additionally, probation officers implement graduated sanctions to address youth needs and behaviors. If there is a new offense, the youth must be brought back to court, and probation officers generate an informed recommendation for the court.
- **CRA cases**, Probation leads informal assistance meetings to encourage and work with young people and connect them with services in the community. If the youth's behavior worsens, the probation officer brings the case back into court and the judge may reconsider the terms or placement for the youth.
- **C&Ps** are Probation's largest caseload. Probation's role is to monitor and enforce court orders to ensure safety of children and ensure timely permanency. The identified person on C&Ps is the parent(s), and the case level indicates Probation's involvement in the case.
  - **Level 1** supervised cases are the highest level of supervision for MPS. In these cases, the child has been placed in the custody of a third party (not DCF) on a temporary, conditional custody order. DCF could have an open case with the youth and their family, but DCF is not the legal guardian. The child may be placed with kin or another trusted adult/community member. Probation supervision allows children to reside in a placement that may not have been approved by DCF (e.g., a grandmother who does not have a house deemed large enough to have her grandson live with her). Probation monitors the Court's placement order and visits each child every 30 days at their placement for up to 12 months. Probation officers may conduct a home study and assess a placement using a safety checklist, which includes running the records of any adult caregivers in the home, checking that there is food in the fridge and a carbon monoxide detector, determining whether children are sharing a bed or whether adults are sharing a room with children.
  - **Level 2** supervision is for any child in DCF custody placed in a DCF-approved setting. Probation visits the child once in each placement. Probation uses the safety checklist and may uncover concerns (ex. there is someone new in the home and DCF wasn't aware). Probation coordinates visits with the DCF social worker to minimize the number of duplicative visits.
  - **Level 3** supervision is for any child with a stated goal of adoption in long term care. MPS does not conduct visits for these cases.

- **Level 4** supervision is for youth placed out of state, youth ages 18-22, or a youth in permanent custody. MPS has minimal involvement in cases at this level.

### MPS and Dually Involved Youth (DIY)

Ms. Lawrence then presented information on how MPS handles DIY cases, including policies and practices. She highlighted:

- There is no system in probation’s case management system that “flags” the DIY population, and there is no internal definition of DIY. However, Probation creates “identities” for each party for the court and maintains Court Activity Record Information (CARI) records. Through probation’s case management system, Officers can see when a youth is a party in another case, and clerical staff are trained to identify youth with potential dual involvement.
- While probation officer case assignment processes vary county to county and chief to chief, assignments are often made based on geography, staffing, and expertise. There is an expectation that probation officers are adept at all three case types and may receive all three case type assignments. However, Ms. Lawrence detailed that most courts have a C&P unit, and those probation officers only handle C&P cases.
- Probation’s role in all case types is to be an expert in the intersecting systems, such as immigration, poverty, and mental health. Probation considers possible case outcomes and how to creatively address issues across systems.
- Ms. Lawrence then shared information about case collaboration, sharing that Probation has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with DCF for sharing routine and urgent information about cases. She added that there have been challenges regarding timely information sharing, which she suspected is due to high turnover at DCF.
- Ms. Lawrence mentioned that there have been shifts in case management for dually involved youth due to the Supreme Judicial Court’s (SJC) ruling in *Commonwealth v. Quigley*. This ruling states that it is an illegal condition of probation to delegate rules to an executive agency. Prior to the ruling, youth who picked up charges in an out-of-home placement would have their conditions set by the agency they were placed with (ex. “cooperate with DCF”). As a result of Quigley, the probation conditions must be more defined (ex. “abide by a 6 o’clock curfew”). Ms. Lawrence reported that as this ruling has been implemented, there have been fewer scenarios of youth coming in for a minor technical violations.
- Ms. Lawrence also reported that Probation/the Courts created new conditions of release form with language that is easier for youth to understand. The forms can also be translated into other languages and includes fewer lines for conditions to be set by a judge.
- Probation has an internal training academy which covers topics such as CSEC, trauma, child abuse, and substance use disorders, topics that come up frequently in DIY cases.

Common Case Themes, Challenges, and Bright Spots

Ms. Lawrence next shared case reflections and themes, including:

- Probation often works with dually involved youth with a history of a C&P.
- Due to the growth in diversion services and referrals in recent years, Probation intervenes in fewer lower-level cases. She described that by the time the youth is arraigned, the case is more serious and/or more complex. This applies to juvenile cases with child welfare system involvement too.
- Many youth who are dually involved have challenges accessing services. She stated that access to services may depend on which agency the youth has contact with first. For example, she stated that many people believe that youth receive more services through DCF than through DYS, which Probation observes as well.

Ms. Lawrence then presented challenges with DIY case management, including:

- Probation does not track statistics on DIY.
- Information sharing is an issue and poses a challenge for data collection. Information is siloed and further complicated by confidentiality considerations.
- It is challenging for families to have so many points of contact for their family and their child's cases.
- There are conflicting ideologies among the various departments. Ms. Lawrence reported that each agency has its own set of guidelines and best interest principles. For example, there could be a situation in which the District Attorney wants bail, DCF social workers want the youth to be held, and DYS may encourage parents to file a CRA for alternative placement options.

Next, Ms. Lawrence presented some bright spots in DIY case management, including:

- She has noticed attorney cross training (to understand the delinquency and child welfare cases) is helpful in some jurisdictions.
- Co-location of agency representatives can be an intervention to support case management. She described that in Worcester County; there are two in-house DYS detention specialists and two DCF social workers in the courthouse. This promotes an environment of collaboration where multiple stakeholders are proactive in their involvement.
- The Intercept pilot program, operated by Youth Villages, that Ms. Bennett also highlighted in her presentation. Ms. Lawrence described the program is funded by DCF and is available to DCF and DYS youth. It is also available to youth in a CRA case who are not in DCF custody. The youth and their family receive intensive home-based service with the stated goal of keeping the youth in their home. The program offers a meaningful intervention at a point of crisis, and MPS would like to expand the program. Ms. Lawrence added that one of her “magic wand” solutions to preventing youth from

crossing over from DCF to DYS would be implementing more Intercept-like programs in lieu of bail.

- Ms. Lawrence highlighted prior initiatives that also supported dually involved youth. She reported that a few years ago there was a program created in Essex County (similar to the program in Hampden that still exists) that included a multidisciplinary team which met with DIY after arraignment; this process was youth centered. As part of this initiative, a national organization contracted with the Essex courts to train on DIY-specific strategies. Post-training, a DMH court clinic ran the multidisciplinary team tasked with post-arraignment case management. The program was youth-centered and encouraged collaboration.

Ms. Polizzano thanked Ms. Lawrence for her presentation and welcomed questions on both presentations.

### **Subcommittee Discussion on Presentations**

Members discussed the importance of communication between private bar attorneys and DCF, sharing that there is new legislation mandating this collaboration. One member identified how important it is for the many legal representatives on a youth or family's case to coordinate the litigation strategy. One member asked if communication coordination is required of private bar attorneys and/or mentioned in private counsel contracts. Mr. Blakeslee explained that CAFL attorneys do not have contracts, however the importance of communication is emphasized during CAFL's certification training. CPCS is working towards a system in which each division will have contracts for private/bar attorneys.

One member asked about the connection between school districts or DESE and attorneys who are working on DIY cases. A member shared that involvement depends greatly on the district and that DESE is involved in larger conversations about how to collaborate on cases in the courts. Ms. Lawrence added that Probation's work with schools is mostly related to CRAs. Ms. Bennett shared that when schools come into the court, they are frustrated from having worked with a family for an extended period of time; she added that if the client is older it is harder to get interventions in place and that school referrals to Family Resource Centers (FRCs) could be a better way to secure services than the court process.

Members then discussed how social workers become involved in cases with CAFL. They explained that in certain counties, the CAFL and social work offices are in frequent contact and in court together and that most of the attorneys are cross trained in child welfare and delinquency so youth can have the same attorney for multiple case types.

Ms. Polizzano asked the presenters what their “magic wand” solution to improving DIY case management would be.

Ms. Lawrence shared that it would be helpful to have a full case history of each child. Mr. Blakeslee shared that more high-level interventions like the Intercept are needed to ensure there are no youth who crossover. Ms. Bennett shared that every person in the courtroom taking a clinical approach to a child’s situation and past trauma would be advantageous to youth outcomes.

**Next Steps**

Ms. Polizzano shared that the next meeting of the CBI subcommittee will take place virtually on Monday, October 27 at 11:00AM and feature a presentation from DYS and the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP).

**Closing Comments**

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

**Meeting adjourned:** 12:30 PM