

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Community Based Interventions Subcommittee  
Wednesday, September 27, 2023,  
12:00PM-1:30PM  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:**

Amy Ponte (CAFL)  
Jamie Bennett (CPCS)  
Rebecca Brink (DCF)  
Brian Blakeslee (CPCS)  
Kimberly Lawrence (Probation)  
Stacey Lynch (DPH)  
Lydia Todd (CLM)  
Thula Sibanda (DYS)  
Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)

**OCA Staff:**

Melissa Threadgill  
Kristi Polizzano  
Morgan Byrnes  
Arianna Turner

**Other Attendees:**

Omar Irizarry (DMH)  
Duci Goncalves (YAD)  
Sofia Ozaeta (CfJJ)  
Michael Kilkelly (Attorney)  
Kathleen Bitetti (OSA)

Other Members of the public

**Meeting Commenced:** 12:03 PM

**Welcome and Introductions:**

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Community Based Interventions (CBI) Subcommittee virtual meeting. She welcomed members to introduce themselves. She then presented the agenda, explaining the group would hear a CPCS/YAD presentation on the juvenile court pretrial process, after hearing updates from the OCA and reviewing and voting on the July meeting minutes. With the remaining time, the group will discuss key themes heard in stakeholder interviews to date.

**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. Brian Blakeslee, Kim Lawrence, Stacey Lynch, Rebecca Brink and Thula Sibanda all voted to approve the minutes. Rachel Wallack and Lydia Todd abstained. No one opposed.

The meeting minutes for July 20, 2023, were approved.

### **OCA Announcements**

Ms. Polizzano welcomed Ms. Threadgill to begin presenting. Ms. Threadgill provided updates on:

- Legislative hearings on relevant juvenile justice system-related bills this session, including two bills the OCA testified in support of.
- The Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program (MYDP), giving an update on the anticipated release of the impact report, and the program's expansion to two more counties.

Ms. Threadgill also presented on the OCA's forthcoming review of Family Resources Centers (FRCs). Members discussed the Department of Children and Families (DCF)'s procurement of the FRCs.

Before moving on, Deputy Commissioner Brink announced to the group that a new acting commissioner of DCF is Staverne Miller.

Ms. Threadgill welcomed any questions. Hearing none, she welcomed Ms. Polizzano to introduce the next topic.

### **CPCS/YAD Presentation: The Juvenile Court Pretrial Process**

Ms. Polizzano introduced the presentation and welcomed YAD Director & JJPAD Board member Duci Goncalves to co- present on the juvenile court pretrial process. Ms. Polizzano and Director Goncalves presented on the following:

- Arraignment
- 58A hearings
- Determining bail
- Determining flight risk
- Determining pretrial conditions of release
- Pretrial proceedings

Director Goncalves also presented factors that inform practice at each point. For example. she highlighted relevant case law, judicial discretion, and if clients have any involvement with DCF. She welcomed any questions from members.

Members discussed the use of the JPAAST tool. Members asked if it was widely used by judges to determine if the youth was at risk for not appearing at their court date. It was explained that the use of the tool varies county to county.

Members discussed the various factors that could impact the average length of time a youth could be detained during the pretrial phase. Members also discussed how difficult it can be for stakeholders in the system to track all the potential legal reasons that could contribute to a longer detention period.

Members then discussed the percentage of youth held in pretrial detention whose cases resolve in a plea. It was explained that the data is currently unavailable. It was explained anecdotally that some youth do end up resolving their case in a plea.

Ms. Polizzano thanked Director Goncalves for her presentation and moved on to the next topic.

**OCA presentation on the key themes heard in juvenile justice pretrial phase interviews to date**

With the time remaining, Ms. Polizzano summarized the Board's juvenile pretrial phase research initiative, including the Board's initial questions, the goal and the proposed methodologies. She then recapped the informational interviews that have been conducted:

- the interview topics,
- the number of interviews,
- the sectors and counties represented thus far.

Ms. Polizzano welcomed any questions from the group. There were none. Ms. Polizzano then reviewed the next steps regarding the research process with the group.

**Closing Comments:**

Ms. Polizzano thanked the members for their participation and noted that the next meeting would be held Thursday November 30, 2023 from 1-2:30pm. She adjourned the meeting.

**Meeting adjourned: 1:25 PM**