

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Data Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Thursday April 8, 2021
10:30am-12:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Subcommittees Members or Designees Present:

- Cristina Tedstone (DCF)
- Kim Occhuiti (DCF)
- David Chandler (DYS)
- Lydia Todd (CLM)
- Matthew Broderick (DMH)
- Sana Fadel (CfJJ)
- Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
- Kristina Sladek (Probation)
- Patricia Bergin (EOPSS)

Other Attendees:

- Melissa Threadgill (OCA)
- Kristine Polizzano (OCA)
- Alix Rivière (OCA)
- Kathleen Bitetti (State Auditor's Office)
- Noor Toraif (graduate intern with DYS)
- Other members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 10:31am

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Data subcommittee meeting. Members introduced themselves in the WebEx video conference. She explained that after the review of the March meeting minutes the group will discuss a brief on racial and ethnic disparities, after which the OCA will present on the topic of crossover youth and data availability on the topic.

Review and Approval of the March Meeting Minutes

Ms. Threadgill asked if anyone had any questions or feedback regarding the March 11, 2020 meeting minutes. The group did not have any additions or corrections. The minutes were approved.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities Brief

Ms. Polizzano presented major takeaways on racial and ethnic disparities in custodial arrests. She explained that custodial arrest data indicates Black and Hispanic youth experience disparities in almost every single county in Massachusetts. Additionally, she mentioned that this is true no matter the measure used to analyze the data and when adjusting for differences in county populations.

Next, Ms. Polizzano delved into a more detailed overview of the disparities using different measures:

- Risk rates by county and race for youth 12-17 years old show that, apart from Middlesex county, Black youth have a higher risk of being arrested than Hispanic and White youth.
- Disproportionality rates by county and race highlight the overrepresentation of Black and Hispanic youth in custodial arrests in every county for which data was available—except for Suffolk County where only Black youth were overrepresented. Members noted that in Barnstable there was a particularly high overrepresentation of Black youth in terms of custodial arrests.
- The relative rate index (RRI), which compares the rate of White youth to that of Hispanic and Black youth, showed that youth of color were much more likely than White youth to be arrested. For example, in Barnstable County, Black youth are thirteen times more likely than White youth to be arrested.
- The relative rate of reduction, which is a dynamic risk factor showed that the risk of Black youth being arrested has generally decreased over time (except in Plymouth, where it has increased), but that for Hispanic youth it has increased in four counties (Berkshire, Essex, Franklin, and Suffolk).

Next, Ms. Threadgill explained that she would like for the group to select a few counties for deeper analysis. Members noted the need to better understand sample sizes, as some counties have very few youth admitted to DYS (e.g. Franklin County), so the relative rate might be skewed. Members also discussed updating the data with FY20 data, which the OCA just received this week. They noted that Barnstable is an interesting location for DYS, as the population is very transient, making detention numbers higher throughout the summer.

Next, Ms. Threadgill explained that the OCA will be examining data on racial and ethnic disparities on overnight arrests, but that this has been made more difficult due to small numbers. She asked members the following questions for the subcommittee to keep in mind: What geographical variations of police department policies could account for disparities? What is driving greater racial and ethnic disparities in custodial arrests in the selected counties? What other data do we need to look at in conjunction with race and ethnicity? She explained the OCA will also be doing qualitative interviews and law/policy reviews. Members added it would be useful to know where there is heavy policing. Members discussed what data from local districts is available through NIBRS and how it could be used. Some also mentioned the need to ask police department about their perception of gang activity. Others mentioned enquiring about skateboarders and destruction of property as a local issue.

Crossover Youth

Ms. Threadgill described the different terms used to define “crossover youth” and how to get data on different definitions of this cohort of youth. She highlighted key findings from research conducted in other jurisdictions, notably, that crossover youth face harsher juvenile justice outcomes than their peers, even when controlling for offense type/level. They have higher recidivism rates and enter the juvenile justice system at a younger age. She then explained that focusing on crossover youth is an opportunity to address several of the JJPAD and its

subcommittees' priorities and mandates and showed how each subcommittee will be tackling this topic. Members said that the group should also look at LGBTQ youth; Ms. Threadgill agreed but noted that it may be a challenge to do this using quantitative methods given the small numbers.

Next, she delved into data availabilities, opportunities, and gaps. First, the group heard about the work of other jurisdictions on this topic, notably: King County in Washington, Arizona, Los Angeles in California, and Missouri. The main findings from these studies are that jurisdictions all found important child welfare involvement for youth with juvenile justice system involvement, as well as higher rates of recidivism. Studies also found high rates of disproportionality for girls and youth of color (including Black, Latinx, and Native American) and a correlation between a high number of out-of-home placements and crossover. Members asked questions about the methodology used in the King County study. Some mentioned that DCF has been looking at this topic as well, and were inspired by the Missouri study's use of risk assessment factors, such as placement change or re-offending. The group discussed the availability of data on risk assessment, which DCF and DYS have their own tools to measure.

Ms. Threadgill then presented research questions regarding crossover youth and discussed the type of data available to answer them. She noted that answers to these questions would be highly dependent on how "crossover youth" is defined, that is, if they include youth with a CRA and/or C&P as well youth on probation or in DYS detention. The questions included:

- How many crossover youths are there in Massachusetts? Ms. Threadgill informed members that it will not be possible to get data on arrests of youth with a C&P or CRA. Similarly, it may be difficult to get data on C&P/CRA and delinquency or open probation delinquency. On the other hand, the subcommittee could obtain data on open DCF cases and DYS detention or commitment cases.
- What are their demographics? Ms. Threadgill explained the group could get data on race/ethnicity, gender/gender identity, sexual orientation, age at first DCF contact, and recent DYS involvement. Members added that it might be possible to get age at first court contact from DCJIS as well as language spoken at home.
- How do the needs of these youth differ from other youth in the justice system? The group was informed that it could gather data on education, hospitalization, mental health concerns, substance use disorder, domestic violence, CSEC status, teen parenting, and gang involvement from both DCF and, to a certain extent, DYS. Regarding data on assaults on staff, Ms. Threadgill noted it would not be possible to access such data for youth in foster care, though it may be possible for youth in DCF congregate care and DYS facilities. Additionally, both DYS and DCF would be able to provide the group with data on assessment scores, with the caveat that for DCF, risk assessments are conducted at the family level, not at the individual child level, except for mental health concerns.
- How does the intensity/type of child welfare involvement differ for these youth compared to other youth in the child welfare system? Ms. Threadgill informed the group that the OCA can get information on DCF case type, custody status, case history, number of DCF placements, and number of home removal episodes.
- How do the juvenile justice system outcomes for crossover youth differ from other youth in justice system? Members were informed that they subcommittee could get data on

recidivism potentially as well as youth in detention who become committed to DYS, factors related to detention stay (e.g. bail status, amount and stipulations, placement type) as well as factors related to commitments (e.g. placement type, MSO charge, severity) and youth participation in YES programming.

Finally, Ms. Threadgill discussed long-term solutions to data gaps and mentioned that the OCA recently spoke to Dr. Joseph Ryan at the University of Michigan's Child and Adolescent Data Lab who might help solve some of the data issues mentioned earlier. She explained that the Lab has solved some of these issues by developing data sharing agreements, receiving row-level data from state agencies, and then matching individuals across data sets using probabilistic techniques and creating a combined dataset for analysis (removing identifiable information and re-assigning youth with unique identifiers to ensure anonymity). The process is in accordance with federal information sharing laws. She explained that if the group wished, Dr. Ryan and his team could partner with Massachusetts agencies to conduct similar work.

Concluding remarks

Ms. Threadgill explained that the OCA will work with DCF and DYS on data requests for currently available data on dually-involved youth. Additionally, next meetings will continue to investigate crossover youth data availability, gaps, and suggestions for longer-term solutions to be developed for 2021 Data Availability Report. She reminded the group that the next meeting will be held via WebEx on May 13, 2021, from 10:30 to noon.

Adjournment: 12:00pm