

Office of the Child Advocate  
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board  
Data Subcommittee Meeting Minutes  
Friday, February 20, 2026  
2:00PM – 3:30PM  
**Meeting held virtually**

**Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:**

David Chandler (DYS)  
David Whitham (EOHHS)  
Eric Klingaman (CLM)  
Heidi Gold (EOE)  
Joe Mulhern (CPCS)  
Kim Occhiuti (DCF)  
Latoya Nicholas (Parent)  
Laura Miller (MDAA)  
Laura Lempicki (Probation)  
Nancy Brody (DCF)  
Sana Fadel (CfJJ)

**OCA Staff:**

Kristi Polizzano  
Morgan Byrnes  
Arianna Turner  
Bessie Pierre

**Other Attendees:**

Ari Alter  
Baqar Husain (DPH)  
Dan Rosenthal (DYS)  
Julia Bickford (BC School of Social Work)  
Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)  
Lindsey Sagasta (DPH)  
Lisa Lundquist (OGR)

**Meeting Commenced:** 2:03pm

**Welcome and Introductions**

Ms. Polizzano welcomed attendees. Next, she invited Subcommittee members to introduce themselves and invited non-members to introduce themselves in the chat.

**Approval of December Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Polizzano invited questions or feedback regarding the December 12, 2025, meeting minutes. None were raised.

Eric Klingaman, Kim Occhiuti, Heidi Gold, and Laura Miller all voted in the affirmative. Joe Mulhern, Laura Lempicki, David Whitham, Nancy Brody, Latoya Nicholas, and Sana Fadel abstained. No one voted against the meeting minutes.

The December meeting minutes were approved.

**OCA Presentation: JJPAD Board 2025 Annual Report Data**

First, Ms. Polizzano reviewed the meeting agenda. She then shared some data notes.

Ms. Polizzano began by reviewing the data trends at the “front door” of the juvenile justice system including data indicating:

- Trends at the “front door” mimicked other process points.
- The use of summons declined 6% between FY24-FY25, while the use of arrests declined just 3% during the same timeframe.
- The decrease in summons was driven by a decrease in use of summons for alleged felony offenses. Yet, compared to FY18, there has been an increase in the use of summons for alleged misdemeanor offenses. Ms. Polizzano noted that the decrease in misdemeanors initiated by an arrest started in FY19, one year into implementation of the Criminal Justice Reform Act (CJRA).
- Arrests were used in about half of all alleged alcohol-based offenses and two-thirds of all alleged drug-based offenses. Ms. Polizzano noted that the large increase should be considered alongside the fact that there is a small number of alcohol offenses overall. Ms. Brynes clarified that a DUI is counted as a motor vehicle offense, rather than an alcohol offense.

Ms. Polizzano then continued by presenting additional arrest and summons data, including that arrests were used in:

- 62% of all alleged property-related offenses,
- 35% of all alleged motor vehicle-related offenses,
- 71% of all alleged weapons-related offenses,
- and 50% of all persons-related offenses

Ms. Polizzano invited questions, thoughts, and takeaways from the arrest and summons sections.

Members discussed the increase in use of arrests for drug and alcohol offenses including:

- The role of policing policy and individual officer discretion in making arrests rather than issuing a summons.
- The impact of the pandemic during FY20-22 that made a concerted effort to use custodial settings less often.
- The severity (misdemeanor vs. felony) of the drug offenses youth are alleged of committing.
- Whether alleged severity of offenses is increasing for adults
- The prevalence of youth arrested for alleged drug charges who may also have substance abuse disorder.

Ms. Polizzano said that the Board can look further into the court’s lead charge data for drug and alcohol charges, as well as the offense severity levels by offense types for the different ways cases are initiated.

Next, Ms. Polizzano presented the data discrepancies between police department level data submitted to the federal tracking system and what is reported via the Juvenile Court regarding cases initiated by arrest or summons, including the following information:

- There is significant underreporting by police departments compared to Juvenile Court data.
- Many school districts are still not reporting or are underreporting arrests and law enforcement referrals.

She added that the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS) is further investigating the stark reporting differences. In response to a question asking whether the reporting gap could possibly be due to the juvenile court double counting cases, Ms. Polizzano clarified that this explanation is not possible because the double count would then be reflected through all following process points, which does not appear to be the case.

Next, Ms. Polizzano summarized high-level takeaways from the data presented thus far. She invited questions, takeaways, and feedback. No questions or comments were raised.

Ms. Polizzano then reviewed the “Diversion and case dismissals” section, including:

- There were more referrals to the Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program in CY24 compared to previous years.
- In FY25, 59% of summons-initiated complaints did not result in a filing at clerk hearings. Ms. Polizzano clarified that there is no information available as to why or why not a clerk would file a case.
- The percentage of cases diverted by district attorneys went down in CY25 compared to CY24.
- In FY25, 67% of cases were dismissed. She added that the courts also hope to improve data collection on use of diversion in the near future.
- Consistent with prior years, most applications and filings did not reach a disposition. About half of all arraignments reached a disposition.

Then, Ms. Polizzano invited takeaways and questions on the diversion and case dismissals section.

One attendee asked if there was information available on reasons for case dismissals. This information is not publicly reported. Another attendee commented that county-level diversion data could be helpful to put this data into context.

Ms. Polizzano reviewed the “Demographic and geographic data trends” section, including the following data:

- In FY25, 45% of detention admissions included youth with Department of Children and Families (DCF) involvement at the time of their detention admission. Ms. Polizzano clarified that youth with DCF involvement are defined as youth with a pending response,

open case with DCF, or is in the care/custody of DCF. These youth are detained because of cash bail at higher rates than youth without DCF involvement.

- Similarly, 42% of first-time commitments included youth with DCF involvement at the time of their commitment.
- Black and Latino youth continue to be overrepresented at each phase of the system, though disparities are largest at the arrest or summons point. Ms. Polizzano noted the exclusion of youth who identify as “unknown” or “another” race in the visualization titled “Race/ethnicity breakdowns by process points (FY25).”
- Boys make up most of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. The increase in system use for girls in FY24 was reversed in FY25. Further, the rate of decline for system use for girls is greater than that for boys.
- Detention admissions for youth who identify as LGBTQ+ has remained between 6-7% since FY21. Youth who identify as LGBTQ+ are detained because of cash bail at higher rates than youth who do not identify as LGBTQ+.

Last, Ms. Polizzano presented differences in applications for complaint, arrests, summons, and arraignment rates across Massachusetts counties, including the following information:

- Rates of application for complaint adjusting for population levels (per 1,000 youth) vary significantly statewide. For example, Barnstable County’s application for complaint rate per 1,000 youth (n=45) is more than three times higher than Norfolk County (n=13).
- Berkshire, Bristol, Norfolk, and Plymouth counties rely more heavily on summons than other counties in Massachusetts.
- Arraignment and pretrial detention rates also vary significantly between counties. Between Berkshire and Suffolk counties, for example, pretrial detention rates range from 10 per 100 applications to 41 per 100 applications, respectively.

Ms. Polizzano invited questions and takeaways. Members discussed data collection practices for DCF youth with multiple Department of Youth Services (DYS) commitments, as DYS currently records only the first commitment.

One attendee asked if there is data available on LGBTQ crossover youth. Ms. Polizzano responded that this data is currently not reported.

One attendee suggested using the word “overrepresented” instead of “disproportionately” in the first takeaway. Ms. Polizzano said that the report can provide a comparison to the baseline population in order to use “disproportionately.”

### **Next Steps**

Ms. Polizzano shared that the OCA team will draft and distribute the data section of the Annual Report for feedback and review prior to the March 17<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Ms. Polizzano asked attendees if there were any questions or concerns regarding next steps. None were raised.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Ms. Polizzano thanked members again for their attendance. She welcomed attendees to reach out in the meantime.

**Adjournment:** 3:19pm