

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Data Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Thursday June 23, 2022
10:30am-12:00pm
Meeting held virtually

Subcommittee Members or Designees Present:

- Rachel Gwaltney (CLM)
- Barbara Kaban (CPCS)
- Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
- Dana Bernson (DPH)
- Jonah Schennum (DCF)

OCA Staff:

- Melissa Threadgill
- Kristine Polizzano
- Janice Neiman
- Alix Rivière
- Jessica Seabrook
- Morgan Byrnes

Other Attendees:

- Kristina Sladek (Probation)
- Kathleen Bitetti (SAO)
- Meg Danisewich (DYS)
- Katie Perry-Lorentz (DYS)
- Other members of the public

Meeting Commenced: 10:32 AM

Welcome and Introductions:

Ms. Polizzano welcomed the attendees to the Data subcommittee meeting and welcomed all to introduce themselves. Members and attendees introduced themselves. Ms. Polizzano explained that the group would hear a status update on the forthcoming Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) in the juvenile justice system brief and then would be discussing the group's initial research into administrative data centers.

Status update: RED in MA Juvenile Justice System Data Brief

Ms. Polizzano updated the group on the forthcoming Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) brief, including the following key takeaways:

- Latino youth and Black youth enter the juvenile justice system at disproportionate rates compared to white youth
- Rates of Disproportionality are worse for custodial arrests than summons

She went on to explain that differences in county level use of custodial arrest (vs. summons) and differences in offense types and severity only partially explain the disparities. She explained that the brief would include the data available to date, as well as national research on the subject and will be reviewed by the Subcommittee at the July meeting where they will provide edits to be incorporated before being shared with the Board.

Review and Discuss Administrative Data Centers

Ms. Polizzano introduced the next topic of discussion, administrative data centers, reminding members that this research is the result of the JJPAD Board's findings and subsequent recommendations in the 2022 data availability report, which recommended that the JJPAD Board should study the feasibility of creating an administrative data center to serve as Massachusetts' central coordinator of record-level state data for child serving entities. She continued to give background information, including, the definition of an administrative data center, the research project plan, how an administrative data center provides greater insights for policy makers, how administrative data centers clean, match, and use their data, data privacy best practices and data sharing best practices.

Members brainstormed other data privacy best practices, including revoking employee access to sensitive data once they leave their agency or position. Members also discussed if data privacy measures differ when dealing with data connected to children, in comparison to adults. It was noted that in Massachusetts, the Department of Public Health (DPH)'s Data Warehouse, treats both child observations and adult observations with the same privacy standards.

Members discussed the logistics of creating an administrative data center. One member noted that the state could leverage DPH's Data Warehouse as they already have the capacity to match data sets and follow best practices regarding privacy. Members discussed the sharing of data, with a member asking if, generally, administrative data centers have the ability to share data, or if permission from the data's original source would be required. It was explained that data sharing parameters are established in a Model Memoranda of Understanding (MOU), and therefore, it varies. A member added that in the context of DPH's Data Warehouse, each sending agency has the authority to negotiate the way in which their data is shared and in what capacity it is used in any research projects.

Ms. Polizzano then began presenting on other states administrative data center models and how they used the data to answer important policy questions, including:

- The Wisconsin Administrative Data Core, which in a 2016 study used data to understand intergenerational and intragenerational overlap of the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.
- The Minnesota-Linking Information for Kids, which in a 2016 study used data to understand the connection between school discipline and recidivism for crossover youth.
- California's Children's Data Network, which in a 2018 study used data to understand the prevalence and pathways of dual systems youth.

Members discussed the technical process of linking data sets to create one unique observation, with one member asking if a school identification number could be used as a universal identifier to link data, or more generally, if state agencies use other agencies identification numbers. It was explained that the adult criminal justice system is attempting to move towards a model where one unique ID appears cross agency, however, it is difficult to implement in practice.

Members also discussed how data are linked when different agencies report certain identifiers differently (e.g., gender vs. sex). It was explained that in those cases, gender would be weighted as a “less important” factor in producing a true match. Members continued to discuss data matching best practices. One member noted that at DPH, it is standard practice to sequester data that does not match and remove those observations from the sample. Additionally, they have two tiers of data, level one, which contains the greatest number of true positive matches and level two, in which the rate of true positives is less confident. It was explained that researchers could then choose the data set that best fit the needs of their individual projects.

The group also discussed the process in which administrative data centers update their data, including if it was an automated process or a manual one. One member noted that in terms of DPH’s Data Warehouse, it was currently a manual process, as different agencies are able to provide their data on different timelines.

Ms. Polizzano presented proposed next steps, including continued research into the technical aspects of administrative data centers, the costs associated with them, an analysis of any statutory changes that may be needed and presentations from some of the examples covered in the presentation. Ms. Threadgill welcomed the group to connect the OCA with anyone from their network working with data in this capacity.

Concluding remarks:

Ms. Polizzano thanked the group for their participation and reminded everyone the next meeting was scheduled for July 14, 2022, at 10:30am. She wished everyone well and adjourned the meeting.

Adjournment: 11:59 AM