

Office of the Child Advocate
Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board
Data Subcommittee Meeting Minutes
Thursday March 11, 2021
10:30am-12:00pm
Meeting held virtually due to COVID 19 emergency response

Subcommittees Members or Designees Present:

- Nicholas Campolettano (DCF)
- Cristina Tedstone (DCF)
- David Chandler (DYS)
- Lydia Todd (CLM)
- Matthew Broderick (DMH)
- Leon Smith (CfJJ)
- Rachel Wallack (Juvenile Court)
- Barbara Kaben (CPCS)
- Kristina Sladek (Probation)

Other Attendees:

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

Meeting Commenced: 2:05pm

Welcome and Introductions

Ms. Threadgill welcomed the attendees to the Data subcommittee virtual meeting. Subcommittee members and guests introduced themselves.

Review and Approval of the November Meeting Minutes

Ms. Threadgill asked if anyone had any questions or feedback regarding the November 10, 2020 meeting minutes. The group did not have any additions or corrections. The minutes were approved.

Updates from the OCA

Ms. Threadgill discussed the following two bills filed this session related to juvenile justice data:

- An Act clarifying the child advocate's authority to access juvenile records (Rep. Dykema & Sen. Boncore)
- An Act improving juvenile justice data collection (Rep. Miranda & Sen. Creem)

Members asked whether, if the latter act passed, the OCA would have access to sealed juvenile records. Ms. Threadgill explained that this bill would give OCA access to records held by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Services (DCJIS). Other members inquired if these bills meant that there would be data integrated systems—Ms. Threadgill explained there was no language requiring interagency data sharing in the bills.

Next, Ms. Threadgill discussed updates regarding the Juvenile Justice Data Website and told the group that the OCA will soon begin working on a 2.0 version with EOTSS, adding data sets and visualizations to the website. The group will be discussing these updates on a regular basis.

2021 Objectives and Work Plan

Ms. Threadgill explained that the JJPAD Board met last week and has approved the overall objectives and work plan of the JJPAD and its subcommittees.

She presented the new initiatives JJPAD will be tackling in 2021:

1. **Crossover Youth** to deepen our understanding of factors driving crossover from maltreatment to delinquency and identify more effective ways to intervene
2. **Data & RED (racial and ethnic disparities)** to increase our ability to use data to drive system improvements, with a focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities
3. **Trauma Screening & Referral** to study and develop recommendations to increase early identification of youth who have experienced trauma and referrals to appropriate services

Next, she discussed JJPAD's continuation of previous work:

1. **COVID-19** to track the on-going impact of COVID-19 on the juvenile justice system and children's behavioral health
2. **Impact of Statutory Changes** to track implementation of juvenile justice system statutory changes
3. **Continuation of Ongoing Work:**
 - FY21 Data Report
 - Continued support of previous JJPAD/CTTF initiatives
 - Update 2019 data availability report

Next, Ms. Threadgill dived into the Data Subcommittee's role within each initiative mentioned above.

- Regarding **Data and RED**, the subcommittee would conduct a deeper examination of RED data at key decision points and produce research brief(s) to inform policy conversations.
- Regarding **Crossover Youth**, the group would identify what data is available as well as existing gaps and produce the data section of a larger JJPAD report. Ms. Threadgill sees this project as an opportunity to figure out what we can do as a system to reduce the number of crossover children in the juvenile justice system. She gave a high-level overview of each subcommittee's role in this larger JJPAD project. Members discussed if the data group will be able to also examine trends in school interventions, including expulsions and suspensions. Members mentioned that DESE has successfully cross-tabulated data by race, socioeconomic status, and disability and has done in-depth analyses that the group should

emulate.

- Regarding the **COVID-19 report**, the group would identify the impacts of the pandemic on system utilization in data and contribute to a larger report. She explained that the data subcommittee will start working on this topic in the spring in order to bring a summary of discussions to the JJPAD Board in the summer before bringing it back to the subcommittee in August.
- Finally, regarding the **continuation of ongoing work**, the group would do its FY21 Juvenile Justice System Data Report (following the same process as the past two years), focusing on the impact of statutory change (2018 Criminal Justice Reform Bill as well as the 2020 policing bill). Additionally, the group would **update the 2019 Data Availability Report** and continue to consult on **expanding the Juvenile Justice Data Website**.

Ms. Threadgill then gave an overview of the group's work on a month-to-month basis, with the caveat that it will be hard to predict all deadlines accurately, given unforeseen changes related to the pandemic. The group discussed the possibility of pulling in academic researchers to help with the afore-mentioned goals. Some members argued that state agencies would be more likely to share data with a third party, such as a university. Some wondered if partnering with academics would align with the JJPAD Board and subcommittees' deadlines, as studies sometimes take years to finalize. It was agreed that if the group identified specific topics that should be investigated but that the group would find too time consuming to engage in, JJPAD should consider contracting the work to an outside organization. Members mentioned that some universities, such as Boston University or UMass Lowell's Criminal Justice Department are already working on some of these issues.

Members then discussed the data collected by DCF and how the agency was involved in studying crossover youth. Members wondered if the bills discussed earlier included anything on DCF examining crossover youth data. Ms. Threadgill explained that while she can't comment on pending legislation, the OCA co-chairs the DCF Data Working Group and believes the JJPAD Data Subcommittee is an excellent place to study this issue, because it does not solely pertain to DCF, but in fact is a cross-agency issue. Others cautioned that this group should also examine this topic outside of a typical juvenile justice lens, as increasingly child-serving professionals are noticing a lot of children coming to STARR programs right from the courts—a trend that should be monitored.

Ms. Threadgill asked members if they had any objections to adopting this work plan for 2021. There were no objections.

Initial Discussion re: RED Research Brief

Next, Ms. Threadgill laid out three goals for today's discussion of research briefs pertaining to racial and ethnic disparities in the Commonwealth's juvenile justice system:

- Discuss various methods of measuring RED in our system
- Narrow down area of focus for first research brief
- Brainstorm research questions and methodology

Ms. Threadgill explained that there are many factors driving racial disparities in our juvenile justice system. She presented data by process point and presented ways to measure racial and ethnic

disparities within a given year, including risk rates, rates of disproportionality, and relative rate indexes. When looking at data across years, she explained the group could analyze the data by rates of change and relative rates of reduction.

Members noted the importance of presenting this data in a straightforward way to the public. Others mentioned the need to show the cumulative impact, as racial and ethnic disproportionalities increase as youth get deeper into the system. Ms. Threadgill mentioned a conversation she had with a data specialist who argued that when using rates of change, if the populations presented are small, the rates can appear larger. As such, the expert had argued for the use of a relative rate of reduction. When using a relative rate of reduction to present the data, the expert had found that the racial and ethnic disparities were not as bleak as discussed in the 2020 JJPAD report. Overall, the group agreed that the data still demonstrates important disparities.

Ms. Threadgill asked members how they would like to deepen the quantitative and qualitative analyses for a research brief. For quantitative data analysis, the group could examine data by counties/region, offense type/severity, gender/SOGIE, or other factors such as DCF involvement. For qualitative data, the group could review legislation and agencies policies, as well as conduct case practice reviews and mapping. Some members argued for the need to examine how geographical disparities can reveal important racial and ethnic disparities, especially in the context of gentrification in cities. Other members discussed the need to examine how gang involvement can trigger harsher juvenile justice outcomes. The group also discussed racial and ethnic data analyzed by DYS in the past years. Members were informed that the data workgroup within DYS had stopped meeting, but that DYS had integrated many of its recommendations in its data gathering and analyses efforts.

Ms. Threadgill asked what the group's priorities would be for a first brief. Members did not express any preferences. She then asked if a focus on custodial arrests and ONA by county would be a good first step. Some members agreed that, given the increasing attention to police departments and the ways they are interacting with communities and in the context of the current policing bill discussed by the Legislature, this first line of inquiry made sense.

Concluding remarks:

Ms. Threadgill thanked members for their input. She reminded the group that the next meeting will be held via WebEx on April 8, 2021, from 10:30am to noon. The group will examine data aspects of the crossover youth project and discuss county-by-county arrests and ONA.

Adjournment: 11:38am