



JJPOC Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2021

2pm-3:30

Zoom Conference Call

Attendance:

Rep. Toni Walker
Marc Pelka
Rep. Anthony Nolan
Sen. Gary Winfield
Illianna Pujols
Rep. Craig Fishbein
Erica Bromley
Macklin Roman
Janeen Reid
Hector Glynn
Martha Stone
Sen. Catherine Osten
Judge Patrick Carroll
Judge Dawne Westbrook
Rep. Robyn Porter

Rep. Greg Howard
Gary Roberge
Tais Ericson
Christine Rapillo
Brian Casinghino
Vannessa Dorantes
Angel Quiros
Desi Nesmith
Amy Marracino
Lisa Sementilli
Stacy Schulman
Vernon Beaulieu
Derrick Gordon

Derrick Molden
Chief Joshua Bernegger
Sarah Eagan

TYJI Staff:

William Carbone
Erika Nowakowski
Kelly Orts
Danielle Cooper
Donna Pfrommer
Susan Cusano
Patrick Saley
Devon McCormick

Welcome and Introductions

Undersecretary Marc Pelka filled in for Secretary Melissa McCaw of OPM.

The JJPOC welcomed new and returning Community Expertise Workgroup members from the CT Justice Alliance, AFCAMP, Full Circle, and the Center for Children’s Advocacy.

The Tow Youth Justice Institute made two announcements; congratulating Kelly Orts for her promotion to Senior Manager of Youth Justice Initiatives and introducing the new JJPOC Project Coordinator, Patrick Saley.

Acceptance of Minutes for JJPOC

Rep. Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the meeting minutes from the September 16th, 2021 meeting. The motion to accept the minutes was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Presentation on PA 19-187

Public Act 19-187 required the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) to report on the use of prone holds and pepper spray at their



facilities. Judicial Branch Court Support Services presented on their facilities in Hartford and Bridgeport. It was made clear that prone holds are prohibited and they do not use pepper spray. A prone hold is when someone is face down and another person is kneeling or resting on his or her back. Prone holds and pepper spray have not been used since 2017. CSSD presented on the number of times the youth end up face down for any given reason. For these incidents, the footage is reviewed and used for training and learning purposes in order to minimize future occurrences. In terms of training, CSSD requires pre-service training for new staff and mandatory in-service training that is conducted every year.

DOC uses chemical agents and therapeutic restraints but continues toward their goal of using them at a minimal level. From 2018-2021 there was a decrease in the use of chemical agents. Graphs were presented on the total altercations that involved chemical agents, which was about 28%. From October 1st, 2020 to September 30th, 2021, there were 34 altercations and 8 of those resulted in the use of chemical agents. During an incident, a code is called and staff respond; if they find youth that are engaged in the altercation, verbal commands are given multiple times in attempt to get the youth to stop. If the staff deem it unsafe to engage the youth physically, a chemical agent is authorized to be used. The staff must be trained so they are able to make an informed decision on when they should utilize it. After the use of a chemical agent, there is a follow up procedure where every person that was exposed must be decontaminated. They are provided new clothing and a medical checkup.

In the beginning, immediate supervisors gather and review the paperwork and video footage regarding the incident; it is then sent to the administrative level and to the district office to review. Once determined if the use was necessary and utilized properly, there is a close-up process to identify what the deficiencies were and then handle it appropriately. The DOC has added extra steps internally to this process, such as bringing in the staff member involved in the incident to watch the video, look at the paperwork and discuss if there could have been alternatives to the use of the chemical agent. The DOC also has the staff member follow up with the youth from the incident. There has been a 600% increase in staff injuries and they are looking into better ways to give staff the tools to respond appropriately and safely. Therapeutic restraints involve the orders of a physician to assess the situation and decide if medication needs to be administered to the youth or not. The drop in usage of chemical agents is due to staff buy-in and the common goal to handle incidents with the least amount of force and chemical agents as possible. There was a question regarding DOC's prevention activities and programs. DOC has scheduled a meeting with the training corporal at Long Creek Correctional Institution in Maine to get an understanding of their low numbers and to learn from them. There was a question asking DOC how many times it



has been determined that an incident involving restraints was not appropriate to and it was concluded that it has always been deemed appropriate.

DOC participated in a survey across the United States, asking two questions: Does your state incarcerate juveniles in the adult prison system? If you are, are you able to utilize chemical agents managing the population? 34 states participated, 18 states indicated that they do incarcerate juveniles in adult prison and are allowed to use chemical agents when deemed necessary. 4 states responded that they do not incarcerate juveniles in adult prison but, are allowed to use chemical agents in detention centers. 10 states responded that they do not incarcerate juveniles in adult prison and did not indicate if they use chemical agents. Kansas responded that they do not put juveniles in adult prison, nor do they use chemical agents on them but instead use verbal judo. In terms of training, DOC requires pre-service training for new staff and yearly training for all staff.

Overview of Updated JJPOC Strategic Plan

Three years ago, there was an update to the strategic plan of the JJPOC. In March 2021, the Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) reengaged the JJPOC and its co-chairs to review the progress that has been made, identify areas that should continue to be worked on, and revise areas that can be worked on in the future. TYJI facilitated many discussions with workgroup members, co-chairs, the executive team in order to update the JJPOC Strategic Plan. There have been updates on the objectives, strategies, and milestone indicators, meanwhile the goals remained the same.

For the goal of diversion, the landscape analysis for YSBs and JRBs that will start next year was added into the strategic plan. This analysis will capture structure, funding, staffing, programming, capacity, strengths, and areas for improvement. There is also a bigger role for restorative practices and reviewing appropriate referrals for diversion in this section. These restorative practice trainings started pre-pandemic and since then have trained over 700 people. There is also hope to continue to evaluate the changes to decriminalization of status offenses. For the goal of incarceration, the plan and all the goals relate to efforts to examine services to see if they meet the needs of the youth and help accomplish a reduction in incarceration and recidivism. The goal to reduce racial and ethnic disparities is now focused on strengthening partnerships with communities of color and enhancing and supporting opportunities for localized review of schools and police practices. They are also working with CSSD to look at a small cohort of high-risk youth and identify what has and has not worked with them. The last goal is focused on right sizing the juvenile justice system. The update to the strategic plan includes the progress of raising the minimum age from 7 to 10 this year and learning more about how this change may impact YSBs. The JJPOC is also committed to raising awareness for this change and reviewing national and international best practices on the lower age of the juvenile justice system.



One of the major components of this update is the workgroup collaboration. There are many objectives and strategies that relate to education services and feedback from the education committee has helped review areas and revise where needed. The cross-agency data sharing workgroup co-chairs also reviewed all the indicators of each goal to ensure the committee can realistically track and measure our progress moving forward.

Discussion

A question was asked on quicker arraignments for youth and the delay in placing youth in diversionary programs. The diversion workgroup clarified that their role is to look at youth before they enter in the system. It was also clarified that a youth should be referred to a JRB in their town, if their town has one. DCF commented on the diversion goal would like to engage in a conversation about reverse crossover youth that are going directly from the juvenile justice system to foster care. It was suggested to pause the approval of the plan and have TYJI work with DCF and others to add this suggestion and finalize the plan in November.

There was a discussion regarding other juvenile justice policies and issues, such as car thefts and data collection. A recommendation was made to look into the use and cost of GPS equipment and monitoring. Additionally, there was an added statement to continue to involve the communities impacted by these policies to identify commonalities and solutions. It was also suggested that speeding up arraignments to 2-5 days to make sure the child is arraigned immediately and can choose access to services. It would be helpful to get the data on the repeat offender and the number of kids that are out there. Next day arraignments for domestics have been going on for a long time because it's a quick intervention. Pre-trial diversion programs for juvenile offenders have high success rates and with getting certain youth into the system quickly could be positive.

Next Meeting: November 18, 2021, 2:00-4:00pm