



JJPOC Meeting Minutes

March 16th, 2023
2:00pm-4:00pm
Legislative Office Bldg., Rm 2E
Zoom Option Available

Attendance:

Toni Walker
Marc Pelka
Maurice Reaves
Anthony Nolan
Gary Winfield
Christina Quaranta
Erica Bromley
Thea Montanez
Sean Cleary
Robyn Porter
Hector Glynn
Macklin Roman
Martha Stone
Dawne Westbrook
Elizabeth Bozzuto
Gary Roberge
Tais Ericson

Susan Hamilton
Sharmese Walcott
Vanessa Dorantes
Angel Quiros
Michael Pierce
Amy Marracino
Stacy Schulman
Talitha Coggins
Joshua Bernegger
Derrick Gordon
Veron Beaulieu
Gwendolyn Samuel
Sarah Eagan
Brian Hill
Eulalia Garcia
Iliana Pujols
Steven Hernandez
Tammy Exum

Liz Ryan
Tasha Hunt
Janeen Reed
Cathy Foley Geib
Andrew Clark
Per Sigurd Våge

TYJI Staff

Bill Carbone
Sue Cusano
Erika Nowakowski
Brittany LaMarr
Shauntaye Monroe
Donna Pfrommer
Hunter Clark
Sydney de Lannoy
Paul Klee

Welcome and Introductions:

Representative Toni Walker and Undersecretary Marc Pelka welcomed everyone to the committee meeting, especially those visiting for the presentations. Members were asked to introduce themselves to the guests.

Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes:

Representative Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the February 16, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Overview of Meeting

Erika Nowakowski thanked everyone for attending. The group will be reviewing the 2023 Workgroup Workplan that will be introduced by the chairs of each workgroup. She also introduced Liz Ryan, the Administrative Director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at the U.S. Department of Justice, who will be presenting first.



Discussion with OJJDP

Liz Ryan introduced herself and mentioned that she is the first administrator to have visited Connecticut in forty years and noted that she felt very honored to be here and is excited to learn what is happening in Connecticut. She came with her team, TaNeane Bradford, who runs the State Tribal Relations Assistance Division and her staff, Kara Blair, and Marissa Harris, and Marsha Good, a senior advisor of OJJDP. The purpose of the visit was to discuss reengaging Connecticut in participating in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The trip consisted of two days of looking at how to partner with Connecticut, increase participation, and assess how the OJJDP can support and provide services so that Connecticut can meet the needs of young people in the justice system. She shared the main priorities of the OJJDP that include treating children as children, serving children at home with their families and communities, and opening up opportunities for youth involved in the justice system. Overarching these priorities is a commitment to racial equity and fairness and centering directly impacted youth and their families. OJJDP has recently started conducting listening sessions, and what they have heard are ways that the OJJDP can utilize its authority and current resources to help the field with these priorities.

Across the country, OJJDP is seeing a lot of changes in the last two decades. Incarceration continues to decrease, there is a greater use of diversion and research that is being adapted into practice, but challenges remain. OJJDP wants to be a resource to both the JJPOC and the state for these challenges. One of the things they offer through Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act is a formula grant program, that can be used to implement the priorities of the JJPOC. They also offer training and technical assistance. OJJDP is a convener of juvenile justice on a national level. Connecticut is one of the leaders in juvenile justice, and OJJDP is excited to learn more about how the JJPOC operates and take lessons back to other states. They want to bring states together to talk about challenges, both virtually and on the phone. OJJDP also does competitive grants and there are resources available through a number of programs like the Second Chance Act, Youth Mentoring, Community Violence Interruption, and others.

Co-chair, Pelka, of the JJPOC, expressed the JJPOC's gratitude for Liz Ryan and the OJJDP staff's visit. He added that both the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, among other agencies, had met with the OJJDP team yesterday to hear about their work, best practices and what is working in other states. Connecticut is exploring becoming a participating state in the OJJDP Title II Formula Grant and OPM is focusing on what sort of staffing and resources are needed to implement this grant effectively. The TYJI was also recognized for the work that they have provided in the intermittent years to sustain the grant, and ensure the funds reached the proper investments, including training, technical assistance, and filling gaps. Exploring this grant program will help sustain this work and expand it, not just through the fund but through the expertise that OJJDP provides.

The floor was opened for any questions by Co-Chair Rep. Walker. The meeting with the Community Expertise Workgroup and OJJDP that had occurred the day prior was brought up and the fact that Ryan had described the OJJDP's effort of bringing in the voice of community. It was asked if Ryan could elaborate more on this aspect of OJJDP's work. Ryan provided the history of her work at OJJDP, and her push to center the voices of youth and families directly impacted by the justice system in an authentic and meaningful way. The first thing that they looked at was the grants that they put out. There are over \$420 million of federal funds that cover things from diversion to re-entry, including the formula



grant and other competitive grants. Every solicitation and program from OJJDP have two critically important aspects. One being that prospective grantees need to demonstrate how they are increasing racial equity and fairness and the second is how they are working with directly impacted young people and their families. This is across all grant programs, but there are other ways that they are trying to maximize engagement and participation of directly impacted people. One of those methods is through the grant peer review process. They need directly impacted people looking at and reviewing the grants applications too and this is something that they are piloting this year. Peer reviewers would be compensated for their time and receive training and support to be a part of that. Ryan firmly believes that the OJJDP needs to ‘walk the walk’ about what they are talking about. If they are asking people in the field to incorporate these measures, OJJDP has to be doing it themselves. Another aspect was, in listening sessions with those that had been directly impacted, someone asked, what they were going to do with the information they were collecting. The OJJDP plans to report that back out to those that were impacted and ask them if the OJJDP is meeting their expectations and they are going to try to do this every year. OJJDP will be releasing an action plan very soon with steps to be responsive and they are inviting young people to talk with them this Fall and other agencies like the Human Service Agency, Education Agency, Labor Department, so that young people can share their perspectives with other federal agencies. They are using these recommendations as a guide for how work will continue through both a policy subcommittee and an innovation collaboration group. It is critical for young people to be at the table with the adults in a meaningful way and it is important to compensate the youth that are brought to the table for their work and expertise.

It was asked if OJJDP could talk about the tribal youth program. OJJDP has a \$25 million-dollar Tribal Youth Justice Program that convenes in December. Ryan met with young people participating in these programs to share with her their recommendations. It is important that we are respecting what the youth are saying so that they can put guidance on best practices for different situations. One participant asked if OJJDP has engaged with the work happening in the Children’s Bureau around foster care for older children as they transition out of it. Ryan mentioned that she had been working with the Director of the Children’s Bureau and looking into how they can partner together on this issue. In fact, the President’s budget which recently came out this week, provided \$30 million recommendation for juvenile justice-child welfare collaboration. If Congress decides to implement this recommendation, OJJDP will have access to it. But in the meantime, they are still collaborating with the Bureau and the young people are guiding their work, especially those that are involved in both systems.

Another question was asked that provided pushback from the community lens. The member mentioned that they hear all the time that agencies want impacted youth and families in the room, but mentioned that there is a lack of incorporation of work force development that is being done in this area and at some point, kids will age out of these supportive systems and be in competitive society. Agencies need to intentionally partner with workforce development groups not just children’s agencies because employers are going to need people with developed skills and youth need to be supported in building their future. Another member responded that in a recent conference on juvenile justice they attended, youth were building skillsets, impacted youth were the people running the conference and presenting not adults and those are workforce placements. Liz Ryan also added that the member raised an important point and that this is a benefit of partnering with other agencies. She mentioned that OJJDP is partnering



with the Department of Labor to learn about potential opportunities, and they will be releasing joint recommendations in collaboration with the Department of Labor. But OJJDP is aware that more work needs to be done on that front.

2023 Workgroup Workplan

Erika Nowakowski gave a brief history of the JJPOC, the legislation that established it in 2014, the organization of the entity, and goals. There is also legislation in session to add two voting seats to the committee, including one for an impacted youth or young adult and another for a family member of an impacted youth or community member. Another major update for the group is that in the upcoming year, the deadline to submit recommendations will be shortened to October 2023, meaning the group will vote on the recommendations put forward at the November and December meetings. This is part of the third iteration of the strategic plan that will expire in 2024, and work on the new plan will begin this winter. The floor was then given to the chairs of each work group to introduce their workplan for 2023.

Representative Porter introduced the 2023 workplan for the Education Workgroup. The identified tasks for this year include the reviewal of DCF Educational Oversight and they will continue to work with Dr. Worthy on updates on this new unit. Suspension and expulsion will continue to stay a priority and the workgroup will provide oversight to the 2023 recommendations. The group is also looking into the 2018 JJPOC recommendation that resulted in the Public Act 18-31, in section 5, which was implemented upon passage. The group will also review workforce development as a part of the proposed Reentry Success Plan and discussions around higher education and if youth should have to disclose their school discipline record when applying to college. Steven Hernandez gave a quick update on the suspension and expulsion subgroup's work. In the upcoming year, they will continue their work in adding and redefining definitions that are still being used to suspend and expel children and, they will be working on an alternative to education opportunities and looking deeper into the work that needs to be done in this area.

Susan Hamilton and Judge Westbrook, the co-chairs, presented the workplan for the Incarceration Workgroup. They have two very active subgroups under their supervision which are the reentry and commissary subgroups. The priorities of the workgroup are a continuation of the goals of the overall JJPOC. They will be looking at the conditions of youth confinement and how they can improve conditions across the board. They will be also looking into the report that the Child Advocate will be releasing in June. The Department of Correction has also been very active in their work in helping the workgroup understand where they are in terms of the use of chemical agents and restraints. The workgroup is looking to eliminate the use of chemical agents on youth and the last reports have looked very promising. The other priority is looking at the system array that is available through the Department of Correction and Court Support Services Division. There has been a lot of discussion at looking at the kids that are in the deeper end of the system. The state has been doing a great job in diverting kids from entering the system but is still struggling on how to meet the needs of the kids that cannot be diverted and have more complex involvement with the system. The group will be looking more into the services that this subsection of the population require. The reentry subgroup has a Reentry Success Plan report due November 1st and there is a lot of overlap with the work happening in other workgroups. Martha Stone and Eulalia Garcia are the co-chairs of that group. The Commissary



Subgroup has an equity plan they are developing due by July 1. Much of this work will be affected based on the pending legislation and is subject to change, but the public hearing was yesterday, and it seemed that there was a great deal of support for the work.

Erica Bromley, the chair of the Diversion Workgroup presented the tasks of the group for the upcoming year. The identified tasks include updating on the Juvenile Review Board pilot, which is currently in progress, they are just about done with the draft of updated protocols and procedures. They will also be looking into an update on the Juvenile Court's use of risk-based case handling which was implemented in January of 2023, and which they have been keeping tabs on throughout the first few months that it went into effect. The truancy subgroup will be looking to fully evaluate the changes that happened in the 2017 and 2018 session, including the removal of truancy from juvenile court jurisdiction and what the outcomes of that work have been. The group will also be looking at information from the Connecticut State Department of Education report and look for an update on the Hartford Pilot on the use of permission forums to release information. They will continue to look at what truancy models are being used across the nation, especially community-based models.

The workplan for the Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW) was presented by the co-chairs Janeen Reid and Iliana Pujols. The plan for the upcoming year is to continue to build the foundation out for the work plan. New to this year is a more intentional focus on youth and family engagement process, essentially requiring organization to submit a request for proposal to be part of the CEW. Member organizations will continue to work with their consultant, Laura Furr, to build and strengthen the work they are doing. There was a question about how if the new plan for the JJPOC is to vote on recommendations in September and October, and funding may not be available until November, how the CEW and young people will be able to review the workgroup recommendations if the young people have not started yet. The response was that through the judicial funding that the TYJI gets to fund the JJPOC, a certain amount is allocated to community expertise work. That funding needs to go out to bid through an RFQ process, and that should be done in April so that they can begin the process to obtain new or prior providers. The problem is that for the new fiscal year, so long as everything goes as planned, they will be able to continue supporting the work of the CEW. Delays sometimes happen, but for the meantime, the focus needs to be working in partnership with judicial to make sure that they get these funds on time before resorting to other options.

The Cross Agency Data Sharing Workgroup plan was presented by co-chairs Brian Hill and Maurice Reeves. The workgroup, annually, does a data report around October or November, and last year it was expanded after JJPOC-wide discussion about the data needs. New measures have been added to that report and the workgroup will continue to monitor any new data need that must be added to that report. In addition, the group will continue to support agency spotlights in the upcoming months. They are also continuing to work on the Equity Dashboard. OPM has applied for funding through the Bureau of Justice Statistics for the last two years and have been approved both years. They have been using this funding to improve cross branch data exchange between Judicial and OPM and to improve dashboard development and will continue to administer that money throughout 2023. The launch of the Equity Dashboard will hopefully occur in Spring 2023 with the help of the Racial and Ethnic Disparities



Workgroup. The Workgroup will also continue to support the JJPOC in related research to the work they are doing and workgroup data requests.

The final presentation was done by the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Workgroup, the co-chairs are Hector Glynn and Derrick Gordon. The last year and a half, this group has been working with OPM and the Cross-Agency Data Sharing Workgroup to determine what data should be in the Equity Dashboard and how the presentation would be used in the community. The Equity Dashboard is an attempt to help the 168 towns in Connecticut understand their juvenile justice population in a different way. The RED Workgroup has also been working with the Racial Profiling Advisory Board. The data that they are collecting is important and they have worked with them to refresh the bill that they are working on and hopefully it will pass this upcoming year. The RED Workgroup has also been working with CSSD on creating a pilot with Hartford for high-risk youth, which is the one population that Connecticut has struggled with to affect recidivism rates. It has become clear that as the population of juvenile offenders becomes smaller this subset is known entities among multiple systems. The City of Hartford has worked with them to create a communication mechanism to enhance cross-agency communication and provide wrap around services. In fact, Hartford is using an OJJDP grant that they got to provide these services and staff the agencies involved. Derrick Gordon spoke to the work that the group has been doing with Martha Stone and the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA). CCA has helped the workgroup think about the disparities within jurisdictions and what that means across the State of Connecticut. They recently put together a refined model of juvenile justice that they think could have a positive impact. They want to think about how this model can be leveraged as a tool going forward.

Introduction to the International Justice Exchange

Brittany LaMarr introduced the visitors from the International Justice Exchange Project, Per Sigurd Våge and Andrew Clark. A group of members from Connecticut went to Norway to look into their approaches to criminal justice last year. Andrew Clark is the Director of the Institute for Regional and Municipal Policy (IRMP) at UCONN and Våge is the Director of Correctional Services in the International Unit in Norway. Connecticut has been a leader in the United States in the area of justice reform, which has led the group to look internationally. Clark provided a quick overview of the history of this project including an eye-opening trip that Connecticut officials had taken to the Netherlands and Germany years prior. This trip inspired many of the Connecticut reforms around criminal justice, including the creation of the True and Worth Units. During COVID, IRMP learned a lot about how Norway was dealing with COVID, the challenges that they were facing, and how they were addressing these issues and felt it was important to bring this information back to Connecticut. IRMP partnered with TYJI to host webinars and was able to visit Norway in the Fall which hopefully will open similar experiences in the future. Våge's visit is part of this exchange, and he will be visiting York Correctional Institute and Manson Youth Institute over the next few weeks, to see what Norway can learn from Connecticut. Internationally, the U.S.'s high incarceration rates are questioned and the methods to juvenile justice. It is important to hear from an international perspective, to learn their thoughts on what the United States and Connecticut is doing.



Våge talked about his experiences and noted that he was happy to be here. Våge has experience on all sides of the court room, he graduated with his law degree, served as a prosecutor in the Police Department, served as a Prison Governor for eight years at Bergen Prison, a year as a judge, and more. Våge discussed the history of youth imprisonment in Norway. When he was a prosecutor, he had to send kids to prison, but in 1992 he became Prison Governor. Bergen Prison, at that time, was one of the most modern prisons in Europe. They had many children between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, and they were not kept separated from older inmates. They tried to find older incarcerated people that could serve as role models to the younger prisoners, but this was difficult. They also tried to establish schools for these children, with specialized schools. Bergen was doing the best they could to serve these children with the resources they had. In 2006, the Minister of Justice said they no longer wanted children in prison, despite pushback that some needed to be in prison. In response, the Minister said if that was the case, then prison should look like a home, so new units were built for them, and they worked to reduce the amount of people being held. The capacity for holding children in Norway are eight placements, four in Bergen and four in the Oslo area. Norway has a population size of five million, Connecticut has a population of 3.5 million, but in Norway there are only eight spaces for youth to be incarcerated, and all are between the ages of 15-18.

At the same time, the space for juveniles was being reduced, there was work being done on the legislative side to change the penal code and the procedures of prosecutors. There were political signals to court that would not allow young criminals in prison, and prosecutors have stuck to these guidelines. An example Våge gave was a recent story of a youth that got in trouble, after everything he had to be put in prison, but he was only there for two weeks. These units also have the architecture that is catered to the needs of young people. They looked at methods being used in other countries like the United Kingdom, Sweden, and Canada to see the best way to approach youth with criminal records, and taught police, teaching staff and those that worked with children on how to work with delinquent youth. To this day, Norway continues to follow up on research, that was not part of their initial plan. This project started in 2008, and just now they are seeing the changes. Incarceration has stabilized for youth, despite occasional spikes in cities from gang involvement. The level of serious crime is somewhat comparable to that of Connecticut, but Norway is willing to partner and share information the best that they can to help the state.

Many members of the JJPOC noted their appreciation of Våge's visit and their astonishment at the Norwegian model. It was commented that Connecticut's renowned TRUE and WORTH Units structures are a result of international change, and perhaps looking again internationally to Norway would pose as useful guidance. One member mentioned that one of the recommendations of the 2023 Legislative Session is the creation of a reentry success plan, and it was asked if there are any lessons from Norway that Våge had to share. Våge responded that it is very important to think about how the trauma of incarceration impacts youth development. Incarceration is a risk factor for youth, using science and identifying what resources are needed to prevent recidivism for each individual is important; they use the R&R Method. Clark mentioned that something that stuck out to him, is that the services provided to youth are from the surrounding community, in that DOC brings in providers from outside the prison. By doing this, youth are able to build connections and see what the community will be like, because they are not isolated from the outside. Another thing Clark noted was Norway's reliance on the UN's



Declaration on the Rights of a Child. This document supersedes their own law and functions as a guide for best practice.

One JJPOC member shared a personal story of a family member that was impacted, and how the TRUE and WORTH groups had changed their family member's life and how they found purpose from it. International guidance can provide great resources. Another member who had had the opportunity to go on the trip mentioned that the things that Våge was speaking about, addressing the root causes, recognizing children as children, adolescent development—these are the same things that the JJPOC has discussed. The only difference between Connecticut and Norway is how people are viewed. In the United States, twelve-year-olds are feared and arrested whereas kids under the age of fifteen cannot even be arrested in Norway, and there are only eight placements in prison for fifteen- to eighteen-year-olds. The member asked the group to consider that the changes that Norway has made are not foreign to this group and that the group just needs to make the investment in children, and it may be expensive, but it will be worth it because they only have eight placements for children. Another member who had visited Norway mentioned that the main difference she noticed was that in Norway is that they center humanity in their work. Norway had the same issues as Connecticut in the eighties and nineties, but they made the change, and they centered it in humanity. And the big difference in the United States, is the racial component. The disproportionality that exists in prisons are deeply rooted in slavery and racism and until this is addresses, this member believes it is unclear how the group can make the same changes as in Norway. Connecticut and the United States needs to look beyond the color of one's skin and see the individual as human and that they are deserving of rights and love regardless of what they have done. The work is being done, but the JJPOC needs to figure out how to get from where things are now to get to where Norway is.

The guests that were visiting were thanked again for coming and sharing their experiences and knowledge. It was expressed that hopefully this partnership can continue moving forward.

Next Meeting:

Hybrid Model Option (In person and available over zoom)

April 20, 2023

2:00-3:30 pm