



## JJPOC Meeting Minutes

September 21, 2023

2:00-3:30

LOB- 300 Capitol Ave Hartford, Room 1E

Virtual Option Available

### Attendance NOT CORRECT:

Amy Marracino

Hector Glynn

Andrea Barton Reeves

Anthony Nolan

Betty Ann MacDonald

Brenetta Henry

Sean Cleary

Ceci Maher

Christina Quaranta

Dawne Westbrook

Elizabeth Bozzuto

Eric Berthel

Erica Bromley

Jillian Gilchrest

John A. Kissel

John Frassinelli

Joshua Bernegger

Toni Walker

Lisa P. Sementilli

Thea Montanez

Marc Pelka

Martha Stone

Natasha M. Pierre

Vannessa Dorantes

Robyn A. Porter

Sarah Eagan

Steven Abbagnaro

Talitha Coggins

Tammy Nuccio

Tasha Hunt

TaShun Bowden-Lewis

Tawnii Cooper-Smith

Sharmese Walcott

### TYJI Staff

Bill Carbone

Shelby Henderson

Erika Nowakowski

Brittany LaMarr

Danielle Cooper

Donna Pfrommer

Hunter Clark

Shauntaye Monroe

Joshua Levin

### Welcome and Introductions

Undersecretary Mark Pelka and Representative Toni Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### Overview of the Meeting

Erika Nowakowski, Tow Youth Justice Institute, introduced the overview of the meeting including: introduction of new staff; new appointments to the JJPOC in accordance with PA23-188; a brief overview of the JJPOC Orientation Manual; and the Department of Corrections spotlight presentation.

### Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Undersecretary Marc Pelka asked for a motion to accept the July 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed. Judge Dawne Westbrooke abstained from the vote.

### New Members and Designee Introductions:

*Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation:* The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation representative, Tawnii Cooper-Smith, introduced herself as a member and senior legal counsel for the tribal nation. Cooper-Smith proceeded to share that the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation’s approach to juvenile justice is an alternative to a formal court process while protecting the due process rights, with a focus on appropriate and beneficial services, as well as working collaboratively with the state and keeping the youth out of the system. All juvenile cases that come before the Criminal Court are reviewed by the probation office, and determination is made whether the case is handled non-judicially or judicially. Most cases involving



juveniles are handled non-judicially. If a juvenile is presented to the court for any unlawful behavior, there are a variety of factors considered, including their family history, background, mental health issues, substance abuse, school truancy, habits and hobbies, and generational boundaries.

The tribal nation has a variety of resources within the community including health services, such as; a health facility and a pharmacy on the reservation, behavioral health services, and substance use disorder treatment programs. There are also a variety of programs that are aimed at preventative measures for youth in their community. These programs and services include an educational program that has an early childhood education center, called the Turtle school, after school programs, summer youth programs, athletic programs, homework and study help, tuition assistance from Pre-K – advanced degrees, internship opportunities, and tribal youth civics classes. There's also a youth council that represents children between the ages of 14 and 26, where they organize social and educational opportunities to bring the youth together to support one another. Finally, they offer extensive cultural programs, such as talking circles, healing fire ceremonies, retreats, and cultural classes- all designed to impart the wisdom and traditions of the tribal ancestors, and the medicine and healing that can be found in those practices. These programs, processes, and services are important to the tribal nation as they aim to keep tribal youth out of the system and reduce recidivism.

*Mohegan Tribal Nation:* The Mohegan Tribal Nation representative, Betty Ann MacDonald, is the Health and Welfare Executive Officer for the tribal nation. Similarly, to the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, the Mohegan Tribal Nation offers a wide array of services and resources to their youth and their community- from birth into their elder years- with a focus on holistic *and* individual health, well-being, and wellness. There are a variety of educational, cultural and health programs, including programs that range from parental education to post-secondary education stipends/educational supports, and partnerships with Yale New Haven Health for medical care and mail-order prescriptions to benefit those who are a member of the tribal nation but may not live in the community. There are educational programs about Mohegan Tribal Nation culture, history, and language that benefit the overall well-being of the tribe. All the offered programs are designed to educate and prevent tribal members from slipping through the cracks or making mistakes; if mistakes are made, the tribal nation aims to pick them up in a positive, non-punitive, and supportive way.

### **Announcements:**

There is still an ongoing effort, and priority, to finalize the members who have yet to be appointed to the JJPOC. This consists of a credible messenger or family member of a young person with juvenile justice involvement, and two young people under the age of 26. The appointments are made by the JJPOC chairs, Rep. Stafstrom, and Rep. Fishbein respectively.

For many years, beginning in 2018, Connecticut was not a participating state in the OJJDP Title II Formula Grant. TYJI has worked to sustain the program over the years and maintain OJJDP's presence in Connecticut and, after ongoing planning and consultation, Connecticut has applied for the Formula Grant Program. The application was submitted with OPM as the desired administrator for the grant program. OPM has a juvenile justice specialist, as required by participation in the Federal Grant program, to assist in getting CT in compliance. Participation in this grant program will bring Connecticut back into the community of states that participate in this OJJDP program. There are a variety of requirements and conditions associated with participation that are essentially federal priorities for what states should demonstrate in juvenile justice. One of the requirements for this grant is a State Advisory Group, or SAG;



the goal is to have the JJPOC satisfy this position and OPM is working to come up with an efficient way to comply with federal guideline requirements regarding the composition of the SAG and work thereof. Many aspects of JJPOC are aligned with SAG and Federal Grant requirements, such as the work of the RED committee. If approved for this grant, Connecticut would receive funding, technical assistance, and support as it moves through the upcoming years to become a participating state again. There has not been final word on approval, but it is expected that this word will come in the next few months.

The Diversion Workgroup co-chairs have been announced to be Dr. Lisa Simone and Ms. Thea Montanez. Dr. Lisa Simone has vast experience with education in Connecticut- in roles as a school social worker, principal, superintendent, and overseeing a variety of educational programs with Community Partners in Action, as well as having served on a JRB. Ms. Montanez is the city of Hartford's Chief Operating Officer. Both have contributed immensely to JJPOC in the past and we are excited to see the work they will continue to do as co-chairs. With Attorney Hamilton transitioning into a new role. There is a vacancy in the incarceration work group co-chair role. This person will have the ability to work alongside Judge Westbrook, as co-chair of the Incarceration work group. Anyone interested in stepping up and serving in that role, please send a resume and a cover letter to Brittany LaMarr at TYJI, who will forward it to Representative Walker and Marc Pelka- where they will proceed through the co-chair review process. There is hope to come back to the full committee next month (October) with an announcement regarding the co-chair role of the incarceration work group.

The JJPOC Orientation Manual was revised over the course of 3 months by a subgroup consisting of JJPOC appointed members and members of the Community Expertise Workgroup, facilitated by Technical Assistance Facilitator, Laura Furr. The JJPOC Orientation Manual includes the following: JJPOC Strategic Plan, JJPOC Membership, JJPOC Member Roles and Responsibilities, Structure of the JJPOC and Work Group, JJPOC and Legislative Process Workflow, JBCSSD Juvenile Case Flowchart, History of Reforms to Connecticut's Youth Legal System, and a Glossary of Acronyms and Common Terms. The JJPOC Orientation Manual can be found on the TYJI and CGA websites. JJPOC Work Groups are open to the public and we are always looking for members to join us. If you want to be a member of the work group or subgroup, please contact Brittany LaMarr or Erika Nowakowski.

A new work group of JJPOC has been introduced; the Gender Responsiveness Workgroup is aimed at looking at how Connecticut providers are addressing the individual needs of youth respective to their gender. The Gender Responsiveness Workgroup is a cross-collaboration between JJPOC, TIP (Trafficking In Persons Council), and ROCA. They are attempting to bring stakeholders from across the state to participate in this workgroup. Young girls and women are entering the criminal justice system through a variety of access points and they're accessing services in new ways, so ensuring that our services are responsive to those that identify as female is important. They are reviewing best practices and consulting with content experts to address gender responsiveness for the girls in Connecticut juvenile facilities. Alongside ROCA, the workgroup is conducting a landscape analysis of gender responsive services that currently exist in the state, as well as hearing from youth, families, and communities directly impacted, reviewing and analyzing gaps in programs, services, delivery method, and best practices, and compiling a set of legislative and policy recommendations. TYJI and TIP are collaborating to develop an operational plan for a framework of reporting, collecting, and distributing police data on human trafficking.

## **Connecticut Department of Corrections: Programs and Services:**



## *Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Commissary Update:*

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) system is set to fully begin in DOC facilities on November 1, 2023, and is managed by a multidisciplinary team- involving wardens, deputy wardens, unit management, school, mental health, and medical. In May 2023, the STARCARD and Point Cards were developed, which rewards youth for 'Safe behavior, Take responsibility, Active participant, and Respect'. This STAR bucks' program was rolled out June 1<sup>st</sup>, after receiving feedback from surveys filled out by youth on what incentives and snacks they would like to see. DOC staff was able to visit a facility in Chicago that has had success in utilizing PBIS; this opportunity to view the implementation in a different facility helped highlight some differences, including differences in staff ratio. DOC staff has contracted with the State Education Resource Center for training and program support, and has completed multiple training sessions related to PBIS.

DOC staff noticed that the juvenile population in the Chicago facility had a huge voice in the process and can provide input on what gets implemented. DOC took this approach and included youth voice through the creation of a Youth Community Council, with the purpose of informing and supporting self-advocacy. During the feedback process, it was found that not all youth are thrilled about the change in the commissary process. Many of the youth in DOC custody have the means to provide commissary for themselves, through family sending money in or for attending school. At the point of this meeting, there were no indigent youth at MYI or YCI- meaning no youth has less than \$5 on account at admission or have a balance in their trust account that has a balance that has not equaled or exceeded \$5 at any time during the preceding \$90 days. Similarly, parents have mentioned wanting their children to be able to buy things in commissary with the money they send. With the shift to PBIS, the playing field is level for those who may not have these means. There will also be a limit to the amount a youth spends because of budgetary constraints. Although the youth and parents have expressed concerns about the PBIS system, MYI is hopeful that there will still be a positive impact. They acknowledge that it will not be an overnight change, but they will continue to receive feedback and acclimate to change to ensure they are providing what is best for the youth.

## *Programming Update:*

At the time of this meeting, the MYI count was 317-- 264 of these are age 18-21, while the remaining 53 are age 15-17; 200 of these youth are accused, with 117 sentenced and 24 sentenced and have pending cases. Mental health scores range from 1-5 generally, with the current population being in the 1-4 range. All youth in facilities receive some level of clinical services and can request more frequent services if needed; youth that are given higher scores automatically receive more frequent services than those with lower scores. At the time of this meeting, there were no level 5 mental health youth- level 5 typically indicates an in-patient level of need.

Since COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, MYI has started a variety of new programs with the support of staff and community partners. These programs have been introduced to help the youth feel supported in their time at MYI, but also as they transition out of facilities. Family initiatives at MYI include Embracing Fatherhood, Collaboration with Connecting Through Literacy Incarcerated Parents, Their Children, and Their Caregivers (CLICC), 24/7 Dads AFCAMP Advocacy for Children, Justice Dance Performance Project, Inc. and Collaboration with the Office of Early Childhood Fatherhood/Family Engagement. There are approximately 40 individuals in the MYI facility that are parents, so these programs are aimed at helping them understand the role of being a father and helping them learn how to model



parenting skills. MYI is having events and improving the visiting area through donations and renovations to create the opportunity for these young men to build and improve their relationships with their families and their children. Family engagement meetings have also been resumed, where the youth are able to invite their family members, community supports, or anyone they may call on for support, and they gather with a multidisciplinary team at the facility to have a meeting and discuss what services will best support the youth while they are in the facility and as they plan to reenter their communities. DOC is also working to do virtual visits for youth in facilities with incarcerated parents, who often have not gotten to see one another in years. MYI has also added programming with the intention of connecting youth with credible messengers- including Next Level Empowerment, Transitions Mentoring, Reflections Mentoring Group, All Black Men Need Therapy Podcasters and New Haven Violence Intervention Program. These credible messengers help the youth navigate life and create safe spaces for them to talk about life's obstacles, mental health, and other topics that may benefit the youth. There are a variety of other programs available that may fall into the following categories: treatment focused, skill building/goal setting, or leadership based.

**Next Meeting:**

Hybrid Model Option (In-person and available over zoom)

October 19, 2023

2:00-4:00pm