



**JJPOC Meeting Minutes**

January 18, 2024

2:00-3:30 PM

LOB – 300 Capitol Avenue Hartford, Room 2C

Virtual Option Available

**Attendance**

Amy Marracino

Joshua Bernegger

Sharmese Walcott

**TYJI Staff**

Bill Carbone

Betty Ann MacDonald

Kim Binette

Tais Ericson

Brittany LaMarr

Ceci Maher

Lisa Sementilli

Talitha Coggins

Danielle Cooper

Charles Hewes

Martha Stone

Tammy Nguyen-O’Dowd

Erika Nowakowski

Christina Quaranta

Maurice Reaves

Tawnii Cooper-Smith

Eva Ott Hill

Derrick Gordon

Melanie Dykas

Thea Montanez

Hunter Clark

Elizabeth Bozzuto

Michael Pierce

Vanessa Dorantes

Jehziel Miralles

Gary Roberge

Miriam Miller

Véron Beaulieu

Joshua Levin

Gary Winfield

Vin Duva

Shelby Henderson

Hector Glynn

Ray Dancy

**Welcome and Introductions**

Representative Toni Walker welcomed everyone in attendance to the meeting and introduced Maurice Reaves as the new Co-Chair for the interim until a new Undersecretary at the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) is determined.

Maurice Reaves acknowledged former Undersecretary Marc Pelka as a talented and dedicated employee and thanked him for his time at OPM. Representative Walker continued on by thanking Marc Pelka for his time, work, and continued learning as a member of the JJPOC and issued a citation on behalf of the JJPOC. The caption reads “your departure from the JJPOC which marks the end of an extraordinary journey as co-chair of an unwavering commitment to doing well for the youth of our state. It’s illuminating and your path has been dedicated. We express profound gratitude for your leadership that has steadfast and enriched this committee. Your service leaves an unfillable legacy that will always resound for us in the generations to come. May all your passions and desires come to fruition and your service stay in the future for the endeavors that you will continue on making the world a better place.”



## **Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes**

Representative Toni Walker sought a motion for the approval of the December 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded and approved.

## **Overview of Meeting and Announcements**

Erika Nowakowski welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated a few housekeeping items which included reminding those who were attending virtually to mute their microphones and to either raise their hand or enter any questions or comments in the chat for Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) staff to address, and reminding all members of the JJPOC to scan the QR code on the meeting agenda for attendance keeping purposes.

Erika Nowakowski continued by providing a brief overview of the meeting agenda which included (a) the Medicaid Waiver Announcement from William Halsey, the Deputy Director of Medicaid and Division Health Services from the Department of Social Services (DSS); (b) a presentation from the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JBCSSD) on the Transferred Juveniles Custody Plan and Implementation Plan by Catherine Foley Geib, the Director of Juvenile Residential, Clinical, & Educational Services and Kelly Orts, the Program Manager for Special Projects; and (c) the continuation of voting on the 2024 JJPOC Recommendations from the Education Workgroup and Incarceration Workgroup, Reentry Subgroup.

Stella Rose-Dugue, the Speak Up Coordinator for the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) was welcomed and invited to introduce the youth advocates that were in attendance. She expressed appreciation for the efforts to integrate youth's voices into the JJPOC's deliberations and informed the committee that they will be presenting their findings, thoughts, and reactions to the Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW) in the coming weeks.

## **Department of Social Services; Medicaid Waiver Announcement**

William Halsey, the Deputy Director of Medicaid and Division Health Services, and Alexis Mohammed, both from DSS, provided an announcement to ensure that the JJPOC is aware of the Medicaid demonstration waiver public notice that has been issued. The announcement is that Medicaid eligibility has been expanded for youth and adults 90 days prior to release from incarceration to improve transition-based services and ensure that they transition to community-based services successfully.

The link for further information on the Medicaid demonstration waiver public notice and where to submit formal public comment was to be made available by TYJI following this meeting to allow for ample time to submit public comment prior to February 8th, which is the last day to submit public comment.



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Organizations that DSS was collaborating with on expanding Medicaid eligibility for youth and adults currently incarcerated included, but was not limited to: The Judicial branch, the Department of Corrections (DOC), the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS), OPM, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

The only other states that have accepted this waiver are California and Washington. While they have not implemented this plan, they have the authority to do so and are currently working on the implementation plan.

DSS intends to formally submit their plan to the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) by April 2024. There is uncertainty surrounding how long it will take CMS to review the Medicaid demonstration waiver but the hope is for approval by December 2024.

### **Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JBCSSD); Implementation Plan**

The Transferred Juveniles Custody Plan and Implementation Report was presented by Catherine Foley Geib, Director of Juvenile Residential, Clinical, & Educational Services as well as Kelly Orts, Program Manager of Special Projects, both from JBCSSD. The Judicial Branch was tasked with developing an implementation plan to securely house youths under the age of eighteen who are in pretrial status. By July 1, 2023, the Judicial Branch needed to begin reviewing and updating the implementation plan and include provisions for the comprehensive transition of all children under the care of the DOC into the care of the Judicial Branch. By December 15, 2023, the Judicial Branch must have submitted the plan and recommendations to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly and the JJPOC.

The Workgroup membership included (a) the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA), (b) the Connecticut Justice Alliance (CTJA), (c) the Department of Children and Families (DCF), (d) the Department of Correction (DOC), (e) the JJPOC Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW), (f) the Judicial Branch Administrative Services Division (JBASD), (g) the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JBCSSD), (h) Judicial Branch, Juvenile Matters, (i) the Judicial Branch Office of External Affairs, (j) the Office of Chief Public Defender, (k) the Office of Chief State's Attorney, (l) the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA), and (m) the Office of Policy and Management (OPM).

The Workgroup met seven times between August, 2023 and November, 2023 with additional Subgroup meetings that focused on language, risk, the needs of the transferred juvenile population, and the current facility operating costs. The Judicial Branch toured the Manson Youth Institution (MYI) and the York Correctional Institution (YCI) to meet with DOC staff to better understand housing, operations, and programming. Additionally, the Judicial Branch toured 1225 Silver Street, Middletown CT and explored other state property options as well. A meeting with the new State Police Commissioner of the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP) took place to review the bond out process, and a survey



was conducted to solicit feedback from adult court judges, public defenders, social workers, and prosecutors involved in transferred juvenile cases about the current challenges and service needs.

After reviewing the DOC data, it was estimated that housing capacity for 50 pretrial transferred male youths will be needed and due to the small number of transferred female youths, consideration for phasing this group into the care of the Judicial Branch prior to the transferred male youths is warranted. This is due to the Judicial Branch's current capacity to potentially absorb transferred female youths into its already existing facilities.

As of July 1, 2023, the population of transferred youths under the age of eighteen in MYI and YCI respectively were 45 and 2. The population of pretrial status youths in MYI were 37 and 2 in YCI. The population of post-conviction status youths were 8 in MYI and 0 in YCI.

For transferred youths under the age of eighteen in 2022 at MYI, there were 3 youths with an average length of stay of less than one months, all of which were unsentenced. There were 47 youths that had an average length of stay of 1-3 months. 2 were sentenced, 45 were unsentenced. 51 youths had an average length of stay of 4-6 months. 6 were sentenced, 45 were unsentenced. 45 youths had an average length of stay of 7-9 months. 7 were sentenced, 38 were unsentenced. 49 youths had an average length of stay of 10-12 months. 6 were sentenced, 43 were unsentenced.

As of October 13, 2023, the most common charges for unsentenced youth under the age of eighteen at MYI were first degree robbery, first degree assault, and attempted or conspiracy to commit murder. The most common charges for sentenced youth under the age of eighteen were first degree robbery, larceny, and criminal possession of a firearm.

### *Recommendations*

While there was concern surrounding returning to 1225 Silver Street, Middletown CT, because it was formerly the location of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS), the main recommendation from the Workgroup was to conduct feasibility and design studies of this location to understand the design, utilization, costs, and timelines for renovations to serve the transferred juvenile population. The estimated cost of the study was \$1,000,000 and the estimated timeframe to complete the studies was 18-24 months.

There was significant discussion about building a new facility to house the transferred youth population but the main impediment to this proposal was there being no state property available, the cost of building a new facility, and the cost to operate this facility. All of the stakeholders, except for one, that took part in this Workgroup supported the recommendation to conduct feasibility and design studies of 1225 Silver Street. The one opposing organization was noted in the full report.

A more accurate estimate of cost and time to renovate 1225 Silver Street would not be able to be developed until the feasibility and design studies are completed. Additionally, it is



unknown whether the mandated timeframes for procurement procedures would be waived by the legislature.

If the redesign of the property at 1225 Silver Street were to be approved, the focus would be on four buildings; 2, 4, 8, and 3. Buildings 2 and 4 would be utilized as housing units, building 8 a school, and building 3 a large multipurpose facility that includes 10-14 different vocational workshops, a food service and dining area, gymnasium, and multiple conference spaces.

The Schematic Design Study would assess the design of the space which includes the interior, foot traffic, building connections, and overall therapeutic environment of the interior spaces. The Feasibility/Due Diligence Study would assess the four buildings and surrounding campus' structural integrity. This study considers the mechanical, electrical, plumbing capacities as well as the accessibility of the site for clients, visitors, employees and others.

Overall, the property has multiple benefits including providing enough space to meet the developmental needs of the youths, large recreation areas, adequate office space for programming, treatment, and staff, a safe and secure environment, and is centrally located with adequate parking. The estimated implementation timeframe is also shorter and cost less than the estimations for a new build.

The reported limitations for redesigning 1225 Silver Street include it currently not being a state surplus property with multiple other agencies currently utilizing its space. It is larger than needed for a small population of 50-65 youths, it requires a large staff to run the facility, and the redesign and renovations may potentially be constrained by the budget which could result in the setting feeling less therapeutic and educational than originally proposed.

The cost estimate for utilizing the 1225 Silver Street property are based on current JBCSSD operating costs. This includes: \$24,200,000 in renovation costs and \$33,678,180 in annual operating costs. The proposed timeline to complete the renovation is 10 to 16 years. An additional 5% of annual operating costs is added per year to reflect the 3% COLA for salaries and 2% inflation for other operating expenses. The cost for the first few years is significantly higher due to purchasing equipment, furniture, and to fund other start-up costs.

The estimated phased-in timeline is as follows:

- Phase 1: 2.5-3.5 years
  - Capitol Bond Authorization approved by legislature and Governor for design and construction.
  - Complete Feasibility/Due Diligence Study and Schematic Design Study.
  - Conduct a population assessment to confirm capacity need.
- Phase 2: 3.5-4.5 years
  - Fund allocation and project approval.
  - MOU and transfer of property.
- Phase 3: 2-3.5 years



- Complete DAS contracting and bid process with all approvals, including SPRB approval for CA services during construction.
- Renovations.
- Phase 4: 1-1.5 years
  - Develop Policy, Operations, and Programming.
  - Contract for services.
  - Hire and train new staff or train transferred staff from DOC.
- Phase 5: 0.5-1 year
  - Transfer 15 and 16-year-olds.
- Phase 6: 0.5-1 year
  - Hire and train more new staff or additional transferred staff from DOC.
- Phase 7: 0.5-1 year
  - Transfer 17-year-olds.

Significant discussion was held regarding the proposed location and whether or not the property at 1225 Silver Street is the best option. Concerns were raised about utilizing a space that has history of housing youth as compared to building a new space with no prior history. This portion of the discussion concluded with a shared consensus that the youth and services are what truly matter the most, not the location. There were concerns surrounding the length of the proposed timeline and how this can and should be shortened, as well as the overall cost. It was noted that further discussion surrounding the plan for the youth currently housed at MYI needs to be held. Additionally, there was discussion pertaining to the logistics of building/renovating one large facility to house all of the youth when community integration is benefitted much more from multiple, smaller facilities.

## **JJPOC 2024 Recommendations Vote**

### *Education Workgroup*

The vote for the Education Workgroup recommendations were 18 yay's, 4 nay's, and 7 abstentions.

### *Incarceration Workgroup, Reentry Subgroup*

A friendly amendment was created for recommendation three to include a recommendation date of December 1, 2024. There were no objections to the proposed friendly amendment.

The vote for the Education Workgroup recommendations were 21 yay's, 0 nay's, and 6 abstentions.

### **Next Meeting:**

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



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February 15, 2024  
2:00-3:30PM