



Making connections. Informing solutions.

October JJPOC Meeting Minutes

October 17th, 2024

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Legislative Office Building 1E

Zoom Option Available

Attendance

Amy Marracino

Amy Vatner

Betty Ann MacDonald

Charles Hewes

Christina Quaranta

Colleen Violette

Daniel Karpowitz

Elizabeth Bozzuto

Erica Bromley

Gary Roberge

Gary Winfield

Hector Glynn

Heriberto Cajigas

Jillian Gilchrest

Jodi Hill-Lilly

Joshua Bernegger

Lisa Simone

Melanie Dykas

Michael Pierce

Paul Cicarella

Ray Dancy

Renee Cimino

Sharmese Walcott

Tammy Nguyen-O'Dowd

Thea Montanez

Toni Walker

Veron Beaulieu

Martha Stone

TYJI Staff

Brittany LaMarr

Erika Nowakowski

Michaelangelo Palmieri

Paul Klee

Welcome and Introductions

Representative Toni Walker and Daniel Karpowitz welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Overview of the Meeting

The October monthly meeting reviewed the Conditions of Confinement Recommendations presented by the Office of the Child Advocate, reviewed the updated Youth Diversion Report by the Diversion Workgroup, and reviewed the goals of each JJPOC workgroup regarding the strategic plan.

Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the September 19th, 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Overview of Meeting and Announcements

There were no formal announcements made at the beginning of this meeting. An overview of the agenda for the meeting was given.

Conditions of Confinement Recommendations

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) representatives continued their presentation from the previous meeting, specifically on the recommendations based on their findings.

The mental health recommendations include eliminating the current mental health scoring system used and replacing it with frequent individual and group counseling to all youth, adding mental health support staff, and that the JJPOC should regularly review data regarding mental health assessments and service delivery for incarcerated youth.

The group programming recommendations are to embed programming in a trauma informed milieu focused rehabilitation and clinical support, offer daily programming, minimize isolation in cells, provide structured and unstructured regular outdoor recreation and that the JJPOC should regularly review the provision, including engagement and completion, of programming for youth, with a focus on documented improvement in youth's clinical symptomatology and functional skills.

The restraint and isolation recommendations are to implement strategies to reduce restraint and seclusion, such as the Six Core Strategies that are endorsed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services SAMHSA, that the JJPOC should regularly review the use of cell confinement for minor youth (both routine daily hours of cell confinement and disciplinary confinement), and the JJPOC should oversee the implementation of evidence-based strategies to reduce cell confinement and develop youth's social learning and conflict resolution skills.

The family and visiting resources recommendations are to include in intake protocols the identification of a visiting/connection resource for each and develop an individual plan for engagement with the resource, that treatment plans should include assistance with understanding the value of connection and addressing barriers to engagement, to make family counseling available to support engagement and prepare the youth and adult(s) for discharge and re-entry into the community, and that the JJPOC should regularly review the percentage of youth with adult support and help address barriers to youth-adult connections.

The education services recommendations are ensuring educational staff are well supported, that sufficient substitute teachers must be readily available to ensure consistent delivery of educational services, adding specialized teaching staff, such as specialists in reading, math, and transition services, supporting the planning for credit recovery programs, implementing a quality assurance framework to track attendance, grade level performance, academic and functional gains, and receipt of special education and related services, and that the State Department of Education

should develop a remedial action plan and a monitoring and enforcement plan to ensure students receive required special education services.

The final recommendations presented by the OCA are that the state should continue to develop a plan for the removal of youth from adult correctional facilities and relocate these youth from MYI to a smaller, more rehabilitative, secure environment that supports developmentally appropriate work with minors, and to relocate girls to juvenile settings.

Youth representatives were then given the opportunity to address the concerns that were brought to the attention of the JJPOC, in which they welcomed the ideas of the committee to address teacher absenteeism and special education requirements of the youth.

A question was then asked regarding which institutions, schools, and/or organizations are excelling in the educational field with similar youth to those at MYI. Another question was then posed of how to bring these resources to the youth at MYI. An OCA representative addressed this question stating that at this point those educational entities are unfamiliar to them but provided alternatives to the DOC and MYI environments to better support development which include smaller settings with appropriate levels of therapeutic support.

An overview was also provided regarding how educational services are either provided in-house or are contracted to other organizations. Through these services, students have access to special education, dialectical behavioral therapy (DBT), religious services and clinical services and each of these services are integrated together to form a complete experience for students. Therefore, work is continuously being done to provide better foundations and support systems for students.

An agreement was come to among a few members regarding that the future of the youth and their needed support is the responsibility of all members and organizations.

A question was asked regarding the budget of MYI specifically for teachers. The data was not available at the time of the meeting. Another question on the same issue was asked regarding the salary of teachers at MYI, in which it was mentioned that although the exact amount was not available at the time, it is likely that the amount is smaller than that of a traditional schoolteacher. Given the difficulty of the occupation, providing an incentive was discussed among the JJPOC regarding increasing the salary of MYI school teachers. A concern was then brought to the

attention of the JJPOC regarding ensuring that the teachers hired at MYI are specialized in their respective subjects that they are teaching.

Another question was asked regarding whether the recent DOJ report recommendations have been implemented at MYI in which a representative from the OCA discussed the settlement agreement reached between the DOJ and MYI. It was stated that the components of the settlement agreement were not found to be implemented. Though, a small decrease in teacher absenteeism was found. A follow-up question was asked about whether location(s) have been identified for the relocation of the girls at YCI. A representative from the OCA stated that specific locations have not been explored but explained that the reasoning behind moving the girls to juvenile centers is due to such a small number of youth girls being held at YCI.

Representatives from the State Department of Education spoke briefly regarding the processes and trainings that are being implemented for the students that move in and/or out of facilities. Reentry coordinators are required to be identified for districts with at least 6,000 students in enrollment. A related training was held along with the JJEU. These liaisons are responsible for helping students reenter the district and to ensure that their credits transfer. Two other trainings were held for districts that wished to learn more about the juvenile justice system.

Youth Diversion Report

Members of the Diversion Workgroup presented the Youth Diversion Report. At the time of the meeting, there was no current action needed by the JJPOC. In December, the JJPOC will take a vote that will be related to the recommendations put forth by the Diversion Workgroup. The recommendations do need to be finalized based on the most recent feedback from the committee members and a budget needs to be created.

The current state of the Juvenile Review Boards (JRBs) in Connecticut was presented and defined. A JRB was defined as “a community-based diversion process for youth that may otherwise be referred to the Juvenile Court for minor violations of the law” and they have been a function within Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs). Currently, there are 90 different JRBs serving 135 towns. 34 municipalities in Connecticut do not have quick access to JRBs.

The previously presented Pre-Arrest Diversion Plan Recommendations were briefly reviewed which includes (1) the plan for the standardization of JRBs will be developed by November 1st, 2024, (2) the Diversion Workgroup would partner with

DESPP, the Community Expertise Workgroup, and POSTC to develop a Statewide Pre-Arrest Diversion Policy, and (3) the Diversion Workgroup would partner with members of the CEW to “Identify Youth and Police Engagement Training Programs.” The presented Diversion First Recommendations consist of two tiers. The first tier being high need communities where there are high numbers of youth partaking in delinquent acts, totaling roughly 16, and consisting of both urban and suburban areas. The point was made that lower need communities should still have access to diversion resources as well, including DCF resources and supports. The Plan additionally involves standardizing JRB practices through the referral process, the needs-based assessment, the community-based accountability via a restorative justice approach, and an outcome evaluation and quality assurance framework.

A request was made to the representatives of the Diversion Workgroup regarding the role of JRBs and truancy. The representatives responded that they are partaking in conversations regarding truancy and given the requirements for those able to take part in the Statewide Pre-Arrest Diversion Policy, truancy issues are not currently subjected to it. Therefore, future conversations are going to be had between the Diversion and Education Workgroups of the JJPOC.

Regarding truancy, JJPOC members began sharing the issue of whether truancy should be a JRB issue or not. It was also discussed how truancy is different today than it used to be and that it is not accurate to claim that all youth that are truant are involved in the juvenile justice system.

A discussion began regarding how to define truancy and whether there are different “levels” of truancy/whether truancy and chronic absenteeism are the same. JJPOC members then began discussing whether truancy can be considered a causality of youth ending up in the juvenile justice system.

JJPOC Strategic Plan

The updates regarding the JJPOC Strategic Plan were presented. The Education Workgroup presented their goals which are to reduce absenteeism, reduce the use of discipline and exclusionary discipline in schools, and ensure that youth in juvenile justice facilities are gaining an appropriate education.

The Diversion Workgroup then presented their goals to standardize the diversion system by ensuring all the youth in the state have equitable access to effective diversion programs and to develop diversion training, including training for youth, law enforcement, and school districts.



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The Incarceration Workgroup goals are improving the conditions of confinement, continuing to implement the Reentry Success Plan, and focusing on gender responsiveness work. The hope for the workgroup is that the JJPOC will provide oversight to these goals and implementation.

The goals of the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Workgroup are to view the policies that are being presented by the other workgroups to ensure they align with the racial and ethnic disparities that are being observed within the juvenile justice system, and to address the disproportionate contact by youth of color in the justice system.

The goals of the Cross-Agency Data Sharing Workgroup are to continue to support the data requests of the workgroups and the committee, continue working on the equity dashboard, and support the committee each year with the annual state of the system presentation.

The goals of the Community Expertise Workgroup are to move towards authentic partnership through active collaboration and allowing for lived experience to guide the policy recommendations, and to build bridges between policy makers and the communities they serve.

The goals of each workgroup were presented in brief due to time constraints and the meeting ended after the Community Expertise Workgroup presented their goals.

Next Meeting:

Hybrid Model Option (In person and available over zoom)

November 21st, 2024

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM