



Making connections. Informing solutions.

## September JJPOC Meeting Minutes

September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

2:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Legislative Office Building 1E

Zoom Option Available

### Attendance

Anthony Nolan

Amy Marracino

Betty Ann MacDonald

Christina Quaranta

Colleen Violette

Daniel Karpowitz

Derrick Gordon

Erica Bromley

Hector Glynn

Heriberto Cajigas

Joshua Bernegger

Lisa Simone

Martha Stone

Michael Pierce

Natasha Pierre

Ray Dancy

Renee Cimino

Sarah Eagan

Tais Ericson

Tammy Nguyen O'Dowd

Tammy Nuccio

Toni Walker

Veron Beaulieu

### TYJI Staff

Brittany LaMarr

Danielle Cooper

Erika Nowakowski

Paul Klee

Ryan Connick

Shelby Henderson

### Welcome and Introductions

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

### Overview of the Meeting

The September monthly meeting began with an overview of the agenda and the acceptance of the July 2024 meeting minutes. The meeting also consisted of a presentation from Thea Montanez and Lisa Simone on the Pre-Arrest Diversion Plan Update, a presentation on the conditions of confinement from Sarah Eagan and Christina Ghio from the Office of the Child Advocate, and the annual DOC PA 19-187 presentation from Michael Pierce, Tammy Perreault, Jilena Cichon, Michael Moravecek, and Veron Beaulieu of Connecticut Department of Corrections.

### Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Representative Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the July 18th's meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

### Administrative Updates from TYJI

University of New Haven

The JJPOC strategic plan is currently being designed. The development timeline of the strategic plan is as follows: the Draft Strategic Plan is sent to JJPOC members on September 24<sup>th</sup>, feedback on the draft plan is due to the TYJI by October 2<sup>nd</sup>, the final draft will be sent to members on October 10<sup>th</sup>, and the vote regarding the strategic plan will take place at the October 17<sup>th</sup> monthly meeting. The strategic plan will outline six workgroups, which are: Education, Incarceration, Diversion, Community Expertise, Racial and Ethnic Disparities, and Cross Agency Data Sharing.

### **Pre-Arrest Diversion Plan Update**

Thea Montanez and Lisa Simone presented updates from the Pre-Arrest Diversion Plan which included four recommendations. The first recommendation is that the Diversion Workgroup develop an implementation proposal for standardization of all Juvenile Review Boards by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024. The second recommendation is that the Diversion Workgroup will partner with the State of Connecticut's Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW), and the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council (POSTC), to develop a "Statewide Pre-Arrest Diversion Policy." The Third recommendation is that the Diversion Workgroup will partner with DESPP, POSTC, and CEW, to develop a "Youth Diversion Training Curriculum" that police departments across the state would be required to complete every three years as part of the law enforcement accreditation process. The final recommendation is that the Diversion Workgroup will partner with members of the CEW to "Identify Youth and Police Engagement Training Programs" that aim to educate young individuals on safe and effective interactions with law enforcement.

The presenters did open to comments and questions at this point where a question was raised regarding whether the Pre-Arrest Diversion Policy would apply to repeat offenders in which a response was provided outlining how the policy would apply to children between the ages of 10-17 who committed a misdemeanor for the first or second time.

### **Conditions of Confinement Presentation**

The Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) presented on the conditions of confinement for youth in Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities. The current report examines the provision of services and other conditions for boys and girls, including provision of individual mental health care, participation in group rehabilitative programming, use of disciplinary confinement and chemical agent(s), the provision of educational services, and the state of current youth/family visitation. In addition, the current

report also addresses the conditions for individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 in long-term restrictive housing across DOC facilities.

OCA then presented the populations within the MYI and YCI facilities. These populations consist of mostly youth who are charged with Class A felonies and certain Class B felonies which are automatically transferred to the adult criminal court as long as the offense was committed after the youth turned fifteen. Though, some B felonies, all C/D felonies, and some unclassified felonies are subject to discretionary transfer rules. Connecticut, as seen over the last 15 years, incarcerates minor children in adult prisons at a higher rate than almost any other state. There also continues to be a disproportionate confinement of Black children and youth.

The needs of incarcerated children and youth were then presented, which discusses that most incarcerated youth exhibit signs and symptoms of mental health disorders, which likely is the result of trauma exposure as found by national research. Justice-involved youth are found to often enter confinement with histories of depression, anxiety, and suicidality; minors incarcerated in adult facilities also have an increased risk of early death and disproportionately higher rates of mental health morbidity and poorer mental health longitudinally compared to youth placed in youth-specific facilities.

The specific demographics of studied youth at MYI were then discussed regarding their involvement with child welfare. The youth studied were classified by DOC as 1s or 2s, meaning they had either no history of mental health treatment or no current need for treatment. OCA found that most of youth involved in the research had histories of involvement with DCF, at least one parent with documented concerns regarding mental health needs and/or substance use, had witnessed interpersonal violence in their families, had history of individual mental health treatment, and had experienced out of home care.

MYI improvements include fewer time spent in disciplinary confinement for youth (which does not remove them from school while in such confinement), a wider range of rehabilitative programming compared to previous months, a second shift clinician was added and restorative circles practice have been included in the weekly routine, tablets were given to youth which has subsequently increased calls to family members, and there are efforts to reform youth's access to commissary products. With these improvements, there still lacks individual therapy for youth and health records do not document consistent monitoring of youth's clinical and functional gains from group programming.

Regarding education, the OCA report notes an improvement in attendance compared to the previous audit but there continues to be a high level of teacher absenteeism. No physical visits were made by CSDE, but desk audits were completed in terms of youth in need of special education.

Youth subjected to disciplinary confinement has been converted into RAMP confinement (Reflection Accountability Mediation Program). In 2024, there was an increase in RAMP placements compared to 2023. There was also an increase in the use of chemical agents through August 2024 as compared to 2023.

The OCA presentation was not completed due to time restraints and will be re-presented at the October Meeting.

### **DOC PA 19-187 Annual Presentation**

The Department of Corrections presented updates regarding the Manson Youth Institution. A review of the MYI population was presented, with most youth being either 16 or 17 years old and a majority of the youth in facilities are children of color. The top five intake cities are Bridgeport, New Haven, Middletown, Waterbury, and Hartford.

The mental health status throughout 2023 of the youth at MYI was presented, which shows that a majority of the youth are classified as Mental Health 2s and 3s, which are described as having a history of mental health treatment, but no current treatment is needed and outpatient level of care needed with mild to moderate difficulties, respectively. Roughly 2/3 of the youth are in active mental health care as compared to the 1/3 of the youth in DOC facilities as a whole.

Suicide risk assessment and mental health infirmity admissions of youth was then discussed. These are evaluated for every youth, and the 2024 data shows that these admissions and suicide risks are a little over half compared to the data from 2023.

The presentation then transitioned to discuss use of force incidents with youth aged 17 or younger. Use of force was defined as when MYI staff must use a hands-on approach to an interaction with youth, including the application of restraints. Therapeutic restraints are used at the discretion of the mental health staff, usually when a youth is a danger to themselves. The breakdown of the type of force used on an individual level was given by month in 2023, with the highest number of uses of force incidents occurring in September.

The presentation was then transitioned to information regarding education. Positive reinforcement is used in the educational setting to encourage students. Students are also evaluated to determine their academic level when they enter the facility; this evaluation procedure is currently being amended by the JJEU to make the evaluation more precise.

Vocational classes have been introduced for the students at MYI, including a culinary class and a barber shop where the students are able to work and gain experience. More programs are currently being implemented at MYI. The programs currently in place at MYI are: the Fatherhood Initiative which connects incarcerated fathers with their children, the Restorative Justice Initiative, the Mentoring Through Credible Messengers, and the Violence Interruption Programs which provides youth a way to move away from violence and towards healthy, safe, and productive futures. The programs and treatment are a part of five subsections: treatment focused, skill building based, life skills, gardening, and the justice education center. Once leaving the facility, the youth are able to reach out to MYI staff as well by email.

In terms of the recent DOJ settlement, it is still an ongoing process but so far the implementation teams and a meeting date has been identified, the implementation plan will be created, the fiscal note is currently in development, staff training curriculum will be developed, staff training will be implemented, a Compliance Officer will be designated, and the policy and procedures will be revised to be consistent with principles and in compliance with the agreement.

The meeting was then opened up to questions from attendees. A question was asking regarding if it is possible to give additional services for youth who have not had access to content specific education. Providing additional services is part of the settlement between the DOJ and MYI which is currently being implemented. Therefore, these changes are to be made in the coming future. Another question was asked regarding the vendors that are providing services at MYI, specifically regarding how the vendors are being evaluated to ensure they are providing the appropriate services. It was then clarified by MYI personnel that the mental health services and USD #1 services are internally provided and are not contracted out.

A question was asked regarding whether students can complete the vocational training once they have left the facility. The DOC presenters discussed how students are able to complete this training once they leave the facility and that it is possible for them to continue certain training at other schools that offer the program.

Another question was asked regarding whether students are evaluated for special educational needs in which USD #1 representatives answered that they do evaluate these students upon entry.

A concern was brought up that the vocational skills that students are learning as part of MYI are not skills required for a living wage.

Two requests were made to the entire JJPOC: a future meeting will be held to determine which recommendations will be implemented and to bring the conversation back to getting youth out of MYI.

A conversation among the JJPOC members began regarding the visitations of the youth at MYI. Visitation levels still remain very low, but youth have access to free phone calls and video calls need to be scheduled. Youth are able to have five visits a week and have contact visiting status regardless of their discipline histories, but visits must occur in the evenings other than on the weekends, which can occur all day.

A question was asked how trauma is addressed at MYI and a detailed explanation of the mental health unit at MYI and the different therapies offered.

**Next Meeting:**

Hybrid Model Option (In person and available over zoom)

October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024