



Making connections. Informing solutions.

February JJPOC Meeting Minutes

February 27th, 2025

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Legislative Office Building 2C

Zoom Option Available

Attendance

Betty Ann MacDonald	Jodi Hill-Lilly
Christina Ghio	Charles Hewes
Christina Quaranta	Anthony Nolan
Corey Paris	Hector Glynn
Daniel Karpowitz	Sharmese Walcott
Derrick Gordon	Melanie Dykas
Erica Bromley	Catherine Osten
Gary Roberge	Tammy Nguyen-O'Dowd
Gary Winfield	Elizabeth Bozzuto
Tammy Nuccio	Toni Walker
Paul Cicarella	

TYJI Staff

Andrew Zhebrak
Brittany LaMarr
Erika Nowakowski
Izarelli Mendieta-Martinez
Paul Klee
Shelby Henderson-Griffiths
Ryan Connick

Welcome and Introductions

Brittany LaMarr and Erika Nowakowski welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Overview of the Meeting

The February monthly meeting consisted of a review of the Youth Report and a youth panel from multiple different organizations across Connecticut, namely Connecticut Justice Alliance, Our Piece of the Pie, Center for Children's Advocacy, Love146, and COMPASS; as well as young adults from Manson Youth Institute and REGIONS. There were four topics discussed by the young people, those being: goals and future aspirations, anticipated barriers, safety and support, and resources in the community.

Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

University of New Haven

There was no acceptance of the January 2025 JJPOC Meeting Minutes. This acceptance will be moved to the March 2025 JJPOC meeting.

Updates

No updates were provided. The meeting began with the playing of a song that was created by J. White who was sentenced to incarceration as a minor. Data points were given to each JJPOC member, which were shared with the entire group after the song ended.

Youth Report

The Youth Report is the product of the CEW Workgroup, which consists of five organizations: Love146, The Center for Children's Advocacy, Next Level Empowerment, Our Piece of the Pie, and the Connecticut Justice Alliance. The report aims to capture the voices of the young people across Connecticut and highlight the issues important to them. This first report focused on the communities that the organizations have the most access to, with a spotlight on New Haven, while future reports aim to cover additional communities across Connecticut.

Goals and Future Aspirations

The first question asked to the young people was "How do you see yourself contributing to society when you achieve your goals?" Many answers from the young people were given, including being a leader, a source of support, giving back to others, and bridging the gap of services and disparities.

The second question asked to the young people was "What is your motivation for wanting to guide youth onto the right path?" where personal experience was an important motivator. The conversation then pivoted to explore potential barriers.

Anticipated Barriers

A question was asked to the young people regarding the barriers they anticipate when trying to accomplish their goals. Many of the young people shared that their own community, financial struggles, poor and negative company, lack of mental health support, and stress and pressure were sources of barriers. Roughly 15% of the young people surveyed for the Youth Report answered that finances were a concern of theirs. Another question was asked to them regarding what they believe could help them overcome these barriers, to which youth answered that additional

school resources and additional mental health support were needed across the state. The conversation then pivoted to explore safety and support.

Safety and Support

39.5% of youth surveyed for the Youth Report recorded that they always felt unsafe in their community when asked “How often do you feel unsafe in your community?” The youth panel participants were asked how safe they feel in their community and what support they need. Many of the youth reported that they do feel safe and supported but added the caveat that there are unsafe aspects to their communities that cause them to be on higher alert. One individual disclosed that he does not feel safe in his community because of the prevalence of gun violence, drug use, and domestic violence. Many youths also described how they thought their community was safe but now realize they were just immune to the dangers.

Many of the youths described their families as being their source of support. Regarding supports that the youth believe they need to prosper are a loving support system, additional safe places to resort to and spend time in like a recreational center, greater family and community involvement, mentors outside of school, positive peer groups in school, and more one-on-one interaction. A consensus was arrived at by the young people that other teenagers need a supportive mentor who understands them in their life to succeed. The conversation then pivoted to resources in the community.

Resources in the Community

The youth panel was then asked what resources they feel are lacking in their community that they believe would have helped them if they were available. Many of the young people mentioned mental health services, support services, recreational centers, career development and mentors both inside and outside of the school environment. A young person also mentioned more transparent avenues for access to these resources is necessary for those in the community who do not know how to access them. Another individual explained how access to transportation is needed in the Hartford area, which includes the removal of financial and other access barriers. Financial barriers continue to be highlighted by the young people as reasons they are not able to access resources in the community. Economic disparities were mentioned as being a significant barrier for young people and how they experience everyday life.

Some of the young people highlighted organizations like Domus, Project Legacy, Speak Up, Hartford City Mission, and Our Piece of the Pie as being beneficial to

them and the larger community, and they share the importance of having mentors that have similar interests and experiences as them.

The importance of available mental health services was also mentioned due to the increasing stress and pressure that young people experience, whether that originates from academic, social, and/or extracurricular sources, and generational trauma. There continues to exist a stigma around mental health that can be combated by accessible and affordable mental health services. Social media continues to influence young people in the community and contributes to low self-esteem. The violence the young people in the community experience leads to increased needs for mental health and therapy services as well. For instance, the elevated levels of PTSD that young people experience in struggling communities was highlighted.

Gratitude was shared on behalf of the JJPOC membership towards the young people and their willingness to share their experiences. The importance of hearing from the people who are directly impacted by juvenile justice and the work of the JJPOC was highlighted. The young people were then asked about whether they felt like they had a childhood, to which some explained that they do feel like they had a childhood while others do not, where many of the young people felt like they rushed their childhood.

Next Meeting:

Hybrid Model Option (In person and available over zoom)

March 20th, 2025

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM