

Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging & Best Practices Minutes

April 10, 2025

4-6pm

Virtual Meeting

Commission Attendees: Dr. Aaron Betsinger, Alycia Capozello, Judge Andre Davis, Arntice Nickerson-Crowder, Aubrey Edwards-Luce, Carlotta Ann Woodward, Delegate Sandy Bartlett, Denise Henderson, Dr. Donna Christy, Eric Ford, Judge Lara Weathersbee, Dr. Liz Park, Nate Balis, Rhondalyne Reed, Del. N. Scott Phillips, Susan Leviton, Secretary Vincent Schiraldi

Presenters: Marta Nelson, Sarah Derrigan

Other Attendees: Bethany Young, Brandy James, Dorothy Lennig, Maisha Davis, Marc Schindler, Meghann Galloway, Munazza Abraham, Tina Whiteside

I. Call to Order

Chair Judge Davis called the meeting to order at 4pm, and announced that legislative updates will be given at the May meeting.

II. Approval of March 6, 2025 meeting minutes.

The March 6, 2025 meeting minutes were approved.

III. Update on workgroups from workgroup chairs

Bethany Young gave an update on the Fatality Review Workgroup. The Workgroup is coordinating with the Department of Juvenile Services to set up quarterly meetings. Chairs Judge Lara Weathersbee and Carlotta Woodward will provide reports to the Commission on the Workgroup's findings.

Aubrey Edwards-Luce gave an update on the Prevention Workgroup. The last meeting included a presentation from Baltimore's Promise about their data infrastructure and mapping to build the Baltimore City Youth Data Hub. Dr. Donna Christy announced that the next meeting will be a presentation on the Youth Behavior Risk Factor Survey.

Susan Leviton gave an update on the Juvenile Justice Systems and Processes Workgroup. The Workgroup has been looking at the issue of the automatic transfer of youth to adult courts, and is waiting for the Administrative Office of the Courts to provide more data. The next meeting will be a presentation from Jenny Eagan about the way a case goes through the DJS process. The workgroup also hopes to hear from different stakeholder groups about the process.

Judge Andre Davis added that the workgroup chairs are now meeting monthly for a steering committee to coordinate efforts and cross-collaboration.

Dr. Aaron Betsinger gave an update on the Youth Rehabilitative Services Workgroup. The last Workgroup meeting received a presentation on Youth Service Bureaus, and the next meeting will be a presentation on evidence-based and promising practices DJS utilizes.

Eric Ford gave an update on the Public Education and Narrative Change workgroup. The Workgroup reviewed articles and readings focused on creating effective narrative change. The Workgroup would like to have future meetings with Vera Action and create toolkits, FAQs, or a social media campaign. The Workgroup would also like to collect more information on the way juvenile services work in Maryland and how they vary by jurisdiction. Nate Balis added that they are working backwards to have an end-product by the end of the year, and discussions are happening around what types of audiences the workgroup would like to address. Judge Andre Davis agreed that the role of the workgroup is important in ensuring accurate, deep conversations around juvenile justice in various communities.

IV. Presentation from the Vera Institute for Justice

Chair Judge Andre Davis introduced Marta Nelson and Sara Derrigan from the Vera Institute of Justice.

Marta Nelson went over her presentation on the work the Vera Institute did for the Juvenile Justice Reform Council five years prior.

Secretary Vincent Schiraldi asked about the work the Vera Institute did on youth charged as adults. Marta Nelson clarified that the Institute's technical assistance ended in 2020 before the Council began discussing the issue at length. Nate Balis, a former Council member, said that the Council revisited the issue of youth charged as adults in 2021. The Council passed a majority recommendation to end the practice of automatically charging youth as adults, but not to limit the eligibility of youth to be able to be tried as adults. Eric Ford added that while the Council did not reach a unanimous vote, it was still important to get the majority recommendation. Secretary Vincent Schiraldi followed up, asking who did the data analysis and if the Commission could get a presentation from them. Nate Balis answered that it was most likely the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy, but the data at that time was not complete. Marta Nelson replied that the Vera Institute gave an initial presentation in 2020 on the available data. Bethany Young added that GOCPP is in the process of obtaining more information from various stakeholders.

Chair Judge Andre Davis asked about the significance of charging a youth with a felony versus a misdemeanor. Marta Nelson responded that the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony is often arbitrary and varies by state. Often, kids with misdemeanors still end up in commitment or prison. She emphasized the individualized needs of youth rather than relying on categories like misdemeanors and

felonies to drive policy.

Susan Leviton asked if the recommendation from the Council to have a database will all of the evidence based programs and interventions along the juvenile justice continuum was ever realized. Marta Nelson said that the Council was only authorized for a short time, which was not enough to create the database, and perhaps the Commission could undertake this effort.

Chair Judge Davis thanked Marta Nelson for her work on the Council and presentation.

Munazza Abraham asked if data showed whether re-offenses stayed the same, increased, or decreased after releases in 2020. Marta Nelson replied that an analysis was not done during that time, but that DJS does have information about releases on their website.

Sarah Derrigan went over her presentation on the Vera Institute's work on ending girls' incarceration.

Munazza Abraham asked if the Vera Institute had any recommendations of people who might be able to train DJS case managers and other providers in best practices for gender responsive care. Sarah Derrigan recommended to look for local providers, but offered to send a list of national folks who provide technical assistance and training.

Delegate N. Scott Phillips asked what different stakeholders need to be at the table when having multidisciplinary responses. Sarah Derrigan answered that youth and system-impacted people should always have a voice, as well as typical youth legal system stakeholders such as district attorney's, public defenders, child welfare, and community providers. Delegate N. Scott Phillips added that educators should be involved, and Sarah Derrigan Agreed.

Delegate N. Scott Phillips asked about case confidentiality. Sarah Derrigan answered that the presentation is more focused on the larger issue rather than case specifics.

Susan Leviton brought up her experiences with juvenile justice systems and how youth often have crossover with child welfare. Sarah Derrigan replied that mental health and behavioral health departments should be involved in conversations around juvenile justice. There is a significant crossover between child welfare involvement and the youth legal system, and there should be early involvement of multidisciplinary teams to prevent system contact rather than relying on the juvenile justice system to become the default provider for services.

Secretary Vincent Schiraldi discussed the issue of girls' involvement in DJS, stating that often, there are zero girls in commitment, and around twenty girls in detention. There is a desire to create a girls' continuum of care, which would include staff-secured housing, therapeutic foster care, independent living, and wraparound community services. He expressed interest in getting the Commission's feedback on closing the girls' committed unit, as there are so few girls who require a hardware-secure facility. However, there is the possibility that it may have to reopen one day if a judge orders a girl to a hardware-secure facility.

Maisha Davis added that DJS has a statement of need to address this issue, and there have been several responses from community providers who would like to build this continuum of services.

Chair Judge Andre Davis asked how funding was secured for the four pilot jurisdictions Sarah Derrigan went over in her presentation. Sarah Derrigan answered that all of the funding came from the State of California, but it is being invested in innovative ways to community-based organizations based on local needs.

Chair Judge Andre Davis mentioned that investing in gender-responsive care would be a good way to prevent further victimization of girls, especially in regards to sex trafficking.

Nate Balis asked about the desire to connect girls with more services through higher levels of incarceration. Sarah Derrigan responded that stakeholders often detain or incarcerate girls because of concerns for their safety, so many of the girls who are in detention are there due to low-level offenses. Programs should instead focus on diversion and connections to services for low-level offenders instead of incarceration.

Chair Judge Andre Davis shared a personal story about services only being available through the criminal legal system.

Susan Leviton pointed out that often girls will act out as a cry for help, and emphasized the importance of cross-agency collaboration for providing services to girls.

Chair Judge Andre Davis asked how the Vera Initiative has been able to lift youth voices and experiences in pushing their programs forward. Sarah Derrigan responded that it's a priority for youth and their trusted adults should have a say in the services and care they are going to be connected with. On a large scale, youth voices need to be highlighted as experts on the system to inform policy.

Bethany Young followed up by saying that any child who is picked up and suspected of being trafficked is supposed to be taken to a regional navigator program, funded through the state budget, who can address the spectrum of needs the child may have.

V. Housekeeping items

Bethany Young went over the housekeeping items.

Workgroup chairs have begun meeting monthly to ensure coordination and avoid duplication across workgroups. GOCPP is working on an outline of the report due in October to the General Assembly and the Governor, and will share it soon. Commission members were encouraged to take a survey on common juvenile justice narratives they encountered for the Public Education and Narrative Change workgroup. The upcoming workgroup meetings were announced, and the next Commission meeting would be held on May 15th.

GOCPP is hiring a new full-time staff member to run the Commission, and DJS is looking to hire a Superintendent for the Juvenile Services Education Program.

VI. Adjournment

Chair Judge Andre Davis thanked everyone for their time, attention, and engagement.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50pm.