



JJPOC Meeting Minutes

September 15, 2022

2:00pm-4:00pm

Zoom Conference Call

Attendance:

Rep. Toni Walker
Marc Pelka
Anthony Nolan
Gary Winfield
Christina Quaranta
Erica Bromley
Macklin Roman
Janeen Reid
Martha Stone
Catherine Osten
Robyn Porter
Judge Dawne Westbrook

Susan Hamilton
Brian Casinghino
Vanessa Dorantes
Derrick Molden
Amy Marracino
Lisa Sementilli
Astread Ferron-Poole
Joshua Bernegger
Veron Beaulieu
Derrick Gordon
Gwendolyn Samuel
Greg Howard

Sarah Eagan
Gary Roberge
Tais Ericson
Hector Glynn
TYJI Staff:
William Carbone
Erika Nowakowski
Danielle Cooper
Donna Pfrommer
Brittany LaMarr
Susan Cusano
Shauntaye Monroe
Hunter Clark

Welcome and Introductions

Undersecretary Marc Pelka and Representative Toni Walker welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Overview of the Meeting

Erika Nowakowski introduced Catherine Foley Geib, Cassandra Reyes, and Lisa Simones who will be presenting on the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division REGIONS programs. She also introduced Christina Quaranta from the Connecticut Justice Alliance, who will be giving a presentation on Connecticut Justice Alliance’s 2022 Report.

Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Representative Toni Walker asked for a motion to accept the July 2022, meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

REGIONS Treatment Program Presentation

Presentation from Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division REGIONS Treatment Program on the REGIONS treatment programs. REGIONS is a probation supervision residential placement program for juveniles. REGIONS stands for Re-Entry, Goal-Oriented, Individualized, Opportunity to Nurture Success. This treatment program uses a team-approach aimed at reducing risk to recidivate, increasing well-being and prosocial skills, and facilitating successful return to community. Admission to a REGIONS facility is ultimately determined by a judge; Prior to judicial decision, a Juvenile Probation officer completes a Pre-Dispositional Study (PDS) and the PrediCT which measures a young person’s likelihood of reoffending, social history, risk factors and measures to address risks, address needs and protect the community. A clinical coordinator then provides a forensic clinical assessment, SAVRY



violence risk assessment, and treatment recommendations based on personalized needs on a case-to-case basis. These reports are then brought in front of the judge, with both counsels providing argument.

At the time being, there are 3 different levels of facilities: Hardware Secure Admissions (located in Hamden, Hartford and Bridgeport), Limited Secure Admissions (located in Mansfield and Hamden) and Staff Secure Admissions (located in Milford, Waterbury, and Hartford). The Hartford and Bridgeport Hardware Secure Admissions are currently located at the State Residential Center, with the Hamden location being in partnership with the Community Partners in Action—this location also offers beds for the Limited Secure Admissions. The Limited Secure Admissions is located in a hardware secure facility but provides the opportunity for clients to go into the community as a part of their treatment program. The Limited Secure Admissions and the Hardware Secure Admissions have housed 250 young people since July 1, 2018. Staff Secure Admissions have had 184 admissions since December of 2018. Currently there are only 12 beds available for girls, which is the Limited Secure Admission in Mansfield; there are a total of 34 beds in Hardware Secure Admissions, 6 in Limited Secure Admissions, and 28 beds in Staff Secure Admissions (total= 68 beds reserved for boys).

The REGIONS treatment program prioritizes individualized treatment and discharge plans. Every child and family will have a unique plan to identify needs and what is in their best interest for success upon discharge. Through use of Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), positive youth development, and risk reduction and risk-need responsivity, facets that may be worked on with clients include supportive relationships, building life skills and occupational skills, which are tailored to the needs of the young person. Restorative practices may also be used in combination with the DBT to best develop healthy behaviors.

In addition to the individualized treatment and discharge plans, clients are also met with a wide variety of support staff- available to both the child and the family. The client will have access to a low client-to-staff ratio, highly qualified teachers (general education and special education), licensed mental health clinicians and psychiatrists, pediatricians and nurses, recreation specialists, reintegration mentors and role models. The aim of the support staff is to have staff that are representative of the clients they are working with; reintegration mentors are people with lived experiences. Family services available to the client and family who have access to multi-disciplinary team members, performance-based standards family surveys, and family support specialist (Hamden location).

The client is introduced to a variety of prosocial skills they may not have had access to before including education, vocational skills, and job opportunities while in the program. The education opportunities are provided by accredited providers and have a low student to teacher ratio. IEP implementation is offered while clients work towards credit recovery, a high school diploma, and work on transitional planning to reintegrate back into the school environment. Modeling a traditional school environment, 'school' is from 8:30-3:30, where clients will take part in general education classes, elective/vocational classes, and social and emotional learning (SEL) classes (through Yale clinicians). Clients are also given an interest inventory in an attempt to foster interest in one of the many vocational programs offered. Although some programs may be dependent on location, REGIONS offers barbering, gardening, culinary arts, forklift operation, truck driving, commercial painting, woodworking, automotive, and music/video



production services as well as a variety of certification programs (CPR, first-aid, OSHA, ServSafe). Work opportunities provide a platform for clients to develop a resume, mock-interviews, learn how to dress professionally, and even work inside the program as a store manager, librarian, payroll coordinator, maintenance assistant, journalist, gym manager, or bank teller. These work opportunities help to create a sense of responsibility, develop prosocial behaviors, and an understanding of expectations in the community upon re-entry. Outside of work and education experiences, clients are also given avenues to explore recreational and enrichment activities they may not have had access to in the community. Activities such as a basketball league, arts and design, dance and fitness, music production, and a variety of contests are made available to clients. Some of these activities, such as daily mindfulness exercises, yoga, and self-care, teach clients alternatives for coping and new ways to experience life. Allowing the clients to still receive an adolescent experience is important, since they may not have had many of these experiences prior; attempts are made by REGIONS to take clients on camping trips, to sporting events, and other experiences they may have missed out on.

The re-entry and discharge process differs for each client and is not a judge-ordered timeline. At REGIONS, discharge is dependent on a team consensus. At team monthly meetings, progress of the client and their treatment plan is discussed. If a team consensus is reached for discharge, the re-entry process begins. The connection to care begins immediately, with probation officers taking the client to school to re-enroll in the immediate days following release from the program. Clients are not just released and expected to fend for themselves. Steps are taken to plan and refer prior to client's release. In addition to these, clients are also offered steps for getting a State ID, job applications, social security card, and driver's permit. Discharge circles are available to the client, as well as contact with a reintegration mentor- who supports the client for the 12 months following release from the program- and credible messengers (new service, only available at Bridgeport and Hartford). Phone contacts are made frequently, as well as home and school visits to ensure that the re-entry process is on track and clients are utilizing the skills they learned within the program. Re-entry circles are looking to be piloted in one school district and community but are not currently available. Ultimately, REGIONS does not have control over where clients go upon re-entry, but they aim to provide the client with as many skills as possible to lead to their success in this environment.

REGIONS has had many success stories of successful reintegration, with students earning their high school diploma, getting a variety of jobs, earning scholarships, and attending both community colleges and 4-year colleges. However, there are still a variety of struggles faced by the treatment program. A lack of space minimizes the number of clients the program can take, as well as impacting the availability of vocational programs. There is a desire to move programs out of Hartford and Bridgeport's Juvenile residential centers but requires a space large enough and able to be designed into a hardware secure facility. Funding is an additional issue that is seen that impacts retention of staff, as well as adds to the issue of moving out of Hartford and Bridgeport. Funding has been requested through multiple proposals. Despite these issues, there have been a number of promising developments- including the opening of a REGIONS Transitional Living Program in early 2023, and the introduction of DCF administrative oversight of educational services. REGIONS has also had positive initial findings and implementing recommendations from Development Services Group (DSG) process evaluation.



Connecticut Justice Alliance presentation on action in the community

The CTJA was founded in 2001 with a mission of ending the criminalization of youth. By 2017, CTJA developed a youth-adult partnership in their creation of Justice Advisors.

In June 2020, the launch of the social media movement #InvestInMeCT began, with the goal of the campaign to build opportunity-rich communities where all youth and families can access the resources they need to succeed. The campaign sought to reduce the number of system-involved youth by addressing the root causes of youth incarceration. The report associated with #InvestInMeCT, “Ending the Criminalization of Youth: Address the Root,” elaborates that the action in the community does not end at social media campaigns and awareness alone. Through communicating with young people, community members, teachers, police officers, and legislators- the need for accessibility to job opportunities, reliable transportation, and appropriate educational settings are among the needs outlined to build a more prosperous Connecticut.

CTJA aims to have partnerships in action through advocacy, policy and organizing. Advocacy for the community and the youth is targeted through hosting vision sessions, Op-eds, media engagements (such as #InvestInMeCT), press conferences, and mass messaging. A vital mission of the CTJA is the focus on developing relationships within the community. Engaging the community, the families impacted, and the youths themselves should become a priority because they provide the perspective of those who are directly impacted by these policies and systems. Allowing for more community engagement showcases that these informative policies are created not only *for* the community, but *with* the community. These partnerships should be authentic, with relationships being intentional and mutually beneficial. These partnerships should also be prepared for transparent conversations and wide ranges of reflection. By investing in authentic relationships, this allows for ongoing capacity building within our systems. Centering our community’s families and young people gives their shared experiences power and value and it should be prioritized in order to help figure out the root causes of the criminalization of youth.

Tow Youth Justice JJPOC Data Pulse Check

The JJPOC is committed to maintaining the most up to date information and strategies to better assist the public and ensure the most benefit to juvenile justice system. With this goal in mind, there is always a need for re-education and re-organization. The Juvenile Justice Data Pulse Check was created as a workplan prioritization through Summer 2024 to ensure JJPOC is reaching the goals set in the strategic plan, as well as adjusting the strategic plan where necessary. The four goals for the 2021-2024 JJPOC Strategic Plan are as follows:

Goal 1: Limit youth entry into the justice system.

Goal 2: Reduce incarceration.

Goal 3: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities of youth in Connecticut’s juvenile justice system.

Goal 4: Right-size the juvenile justice system by setting appropriate lower and upper age limits

Goals in the re-education, oversight, and data collection of the JJPOC are targeted at things such as analyzing program outcomes and utilization, how many children are in the system, and what recidivism may look like. There is also a need to analyze previous legislative changes made in the past five years and how these changes are being implemented, if these implementations are being measured, and what



their outcomes are. Further included in the data pulse check is the examination of diversionary efforts (such as where most referrals are coming from, and their outcomes) and detainment facilities. During the October JJPOC meeting, the Cross Agency Data Sharing workgroup will present preliminary findings in relation to the data pulse check.

The JJPOC has legislative obligations with deadlines to submit reports out for Alternatives to Arrest, Suspension and Expulsion, and Commissary. Draft reports will be delivered to JJPOC membership by December 1, 2022, to allow time for the JJPOC to read and offer feedback at the JJPOC December meeting. All workgroups are still developing other strategies and targeted areas of focus, but these specific subgroups and workgroups are legislative mandate priorities due to January statutory deadlines. The Community Expertise Workgroup recommendation to amend the JJPOC membership and include youth and family members as voting members of the JJPOC has also been identified as a legislative priority.

An update from Erica Bromley co-chair of the diversion workgroup was provided regarding truancy efforts. The truancy subgroup has been working on an initiative involving a permission slip that parents receive from the school that, when signed, would allow for quicker referral to community-based services if their student becomes truant. This initiative is being piloted in the Hartford school district. This permission slip is very explicit and optional, with parents either selecting 'I agree' or 'I disagree'. The permission slip explains that the only information that will be sent over during the referral process is the same information that is already sent during the referral process, this just allows the referral process to be expedited. In addition to the permission slip, the truancy subgroup also worked alongside University of New Haven to create an educational video regarding why attendance is important, what truancy is, what the Youth Service Bureau is, what resources are available through them, and why they are an important resource. This was information commonly requested by members of the community. This video is available in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, and Chinese. This video is being added as a resource on the website, and used at school open houses, teacher conferences, and other community events. Other Youth Service Bureaus have expressed interest in using this educational video with their families outside of the Hartford jurisdiction. Hartford is still evaluating preliminary information regarding the amount of permission slips sent out and response rates. There are goals to have the initiative become state-wide by the 2023-2024 school year.

Research done through Tow Youth Justice Institute's Research Team and CIYPR has completed a state-wide survey and will be conducting public listening sessions. During these sessions, the community can share their perspectives on what next steps should look like for Cohort 2. There is one in-person session at the Hartford Public Library on October 3, 2022, as well as Zoom sessions on October 20, 2022, and November 7, 2022.

Next Meeting: October 20, 2022/Hybrid Model Option (*In person and available over zoom*)
2:00-3:30pm