



**JJPOC Meeting Minutes**

December 14, 2023

2:00-3:30 PM

LOB – 300 Capitol Avenue Hartford, Room 2C

Virtual Option Available

**Attendance:**

Amy Marracino

Jillian Gilchrest

Sharmese Walcott

**TYJI Staff**

Anthony Nolan

Lisa Sementilli

Steven Abbagnaro

Aishwarya Sreenivasan

Betty Ann MacDonald

Macklin Roman

Tais Ericson

Bill Carbone

Ceci Maher

Marc Pelka

Talitha Coggins

Brittany LaMarr

Charles Hewes

Martha Stone

Tammy Nguyen O’Dowd

Danielle Cooper

Christina Quaranta

Michael Pierce

Toni Walker

Erika Nowakowski

Derrick Gordon

Miriam Miller

Vannessa Dorantes

Hunter Clark

Elizabeth Bozzuto

Ray Dancy

Veron Beaulieu

Joshua Levin

Erica Bromley

Renee Cimino

Vin Duva

Paul Klee

Eulalia Garcia

Robyn Porter

Gary Roberge

Sarah Eagan

Hector Glynn

Sean Cleary

**Welcome and Introductions**

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

**Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes**

Prior to the acceptance of the November JJPOC meeting minutes, some revisions were requested. JBCSSD asked for their title to be corrected and to strike a sentence from the following paragraph. Erica Bromley also requested a revision to the spelling of her name. These requests were noted, and revised meeting minutes were sent out. Undersecretary Marc Pelka sought a motion for the approval of the minutes. The motion was seconded and approved.



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## Overview of Meeting and Announcements

Undersecretary Marc Pelka welcomed Attorney Cimino, from the Office of the Public Defenders, as a new member of the JJPOC.

It was announced that the new Co-Chair for the Gender Responsive Subgroup will be Dr. Sukhmani Singh. Dr. Singh is an Assistant Professor at the UConn School of Social Work and has a plethora of experience relating to this work. Previously, Dr. Singh has presented on matters such as individuals who were convicted prior to the age of eighteen who received early parole and was able to bring the lived experiences of these individuals into her research and presentation. Dr. Singh will be serving as Co-Chair alongside Representative Jillian Gilchrest.

It was also announced that Reverend Ray Dancy has been appointed as a member of the JJPOC. Reverend Dancy has been working on juvenile justice reform for over twenty years and brings a wide array of history, support, and information to the committee.

Undersecretary Marc Pelka mentioned that Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes will be transitioning from her role as the Commissioner of DCF and Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly will be taking on this new role.

Representative Toni Walker and Undersecretary Marc Pelka announced that after speaking to Liz Ryan, the administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, it became known that Connecticut has won an award and rejoined the Title II Formula Grants Program. Connecticut will be receiving, for fiscal year 2023, more than \$600,000 to prevent delinquency, protect system-involved youth, and improve its juvenile justice systems. This grant will help spur innovation to fill gaps, fund pilots, expand, and meet the needs of the goals of this committee. A key component to this effort is having a State Advisory Group (SAG) to oversee the work. SAG puts forth strict guidelines and along with the progress the JJPOC has made, Undersecretary Marc Pelka is excited for the collaborative process between these two bodies and announcements will be made in future meetings to explain the requirements SAG holds to ensure the voices of the committee are able to guide the work on the grant program.

Thanks, and appreciation was given for the students who came to visit the JJPOC meeting this day while in the midst of a busy final exam schedule. Undersecretary Marc Pelka was able to speak to some of the students prior to the meeting and gave them praise and encouragement.

Erika Nowakowski, Executive Director of the Tow Youth Justice Institute, provided a brief overview of the meeting including the presentation that is to follow from the Dalio Foundation, the voting on Workgroup recommendations, and reminding members to submit their attendance via the QR code attached to the agenda both in-person and virtually.

## Dalio Report: Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis Presentation



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The Dalio Report: Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis presentation was prepared and presented by Barbara Dalio, Andrew Ferguson, and Chris Lyddy. The report was commissioned to better inform Dalio Education's work and to determine who the youth are who are at-risk and disconnected, what is causing the disconnection, and how they are able to use what is learned to better identify and support these youths.

Andrew Ferguson, Co-CEO of Dalio Education provided an overview of the terms used within the report as well as the key findings from the report. Boston Consulting Group was the author of this report and they compiled an advisory group of five local Connecticut leaders, two of which are member of the JJPOC. Thanks, and appreciation was given to Martha Stone and Hector Glynn for providing their expertise and advisement throughout.

The two major terms that were used throughout the report were *at-risk* and *disconnected*. These terms are not meant to describe the youth themselves, but the context in which they've grown up in Connecticut. At-risk is defined as one of three subgroups; one may be at-risk if they may not (1) graduate high school on-time because they are not passing their courses, (2) may be chronically absent, and/or (3) a combination of the two former criteria as well as suspension and expulsion issues. Disconnected is defined with two subgroups within the report: (1) moderately disconnected which refers to youth who could have earned a diploma but do not presently have a job or any connection to post-secondary education. (2) severely disconnected refers to youth who may be presently incarcerated or have dropped out of high school with no diploma or GED and have no connection to post-secondary education.

The integrated longitudinal dataset from the report spanned nine years and encompassed multiple agencies worth of data. In 2022, there were 615,000 young adults, between the ages of fourteen and twenty-six. One in five, or 119,000 young adults were at-risk or disconnected. 63,000 were disconnected. Of this group, 44,000 were moderately disconnected and 12,000 were severely disconnected. 56,000 were at-risk; one in three of all high school aged students. Chronic absenteeism was the main factor for their at-risk status. It is important to note, when looking at this dataset, that while the pandemic accelerated this crisis, it certainly did not cause it. The report shows that in as early as 2015, there is a steady and consistent number of young adults who are at-risk or disconnected; between 60,000 to 70,000 youth and every year following, there is about 10,000 young adults who experience disconnection for the first time. When a young adult experience disconnection, it is not a temporary experience. Data indicates that it is a three year or more experience.

This issue is state-wide. Yes, the eight largest cities in Connecticut experience these issues the most. However, in almost every town across the state, these issues are present. It is true that no one school system is best positioned alone to meet the needs of young adults. 70% of school transfers happen across town boundaries. This fact reinforces the notion that all schools, towns, and districts must work together to meet young adults' needs. Over the course of the nine years this report studied; for the first time in 2023, the graduation rates across the state have decreased compared to the year prior.



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When the data is disaggregated by race and ethnicity, a clear disparity is present. Latino and African American young adults, compared to White young adults, are twice as likely to experience disconnection. 41% of young men of color experience disconnection in Connecticut. There are a set of factors that are strongly associated with young adults becoming disconnected. If youth experience homelessness or housing instability, if they experience trauma or poverty, or are moving schools two or more times, along with other factors, it is more likely that that youth may experience disconnection.

Due to the integrated nature of this dataset involving multiple agencies including the state department of education, the research is able to portray how the criminal justice system affects this population. While arrests and incarceration rates are down among young adults, recidivism rates remain high.

The moral case to this issue is evident. However, there is also an economic case. This crisis is incredibly costly to the state. Every year, Connecticut leaves \$750 million on the table due to the 63,000 youth who experience disconnection. \$400 million is the current cost that Connecticut pays to incarcerate young adults, provide services like SNAP, TANF, and Medicaid. Another \$350 million is the future benefit or opportunity cost. If 63,000 young adults were to reconnect to education and employment, the ultimate revenue drawn from this would be \$350 million. The longer-term GDP impact on Connecticut was also researched. The research indicates that economic benefit would be \$5 billion each year, or 2% of the entire state economy.

The presentation now turns over to Chris Lyddy, the Director of Partnerships for Dalio Education, to speak on the recommendations for state leaders, how the recommendations were generated, and the process used collaboratively with P20 WIN to gather this data.

The report offers nine recommendation to state and local leaders and twice as many areas of further inquiry. The nine recommendations are to (1) improve school district data systems and practices to identify and support at-risk students, (2) publish annual reports about at-risk and disconnected young people, (3) establish cross-sector coalitions and partnerships focused on supporting at-risk and disconnected young people, (4) designate an entity in every municipality or region responsible for supporting disconnected young people, (5) significantly strengthen the capacity of organizations that serve at-risk and disconnected young people, (6) invest in expanding supports and services for at-risk and disconnected young people, (7) invest in high-touch case management for at-risk and disconnected young people, (8) invest in tackling chronic absenteeism, and (9) invest in strengthening pathways from disconnection to employment.

This was the largest request for data published by P20 WIN and sets a precedent for the amount of data they can obtain and analyze to benefit young adults and families across Connecticut. This data, analysis, and report establishes the visibility into a clear and profound crisis that we must tackle and continue to track. The first two recommendations center around improved and increased visibility into this crisis. Now that there is a baseline set, communities must increase and maintain visibility to monitor this ongoing crisis to better track, understand,



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and respond to the challenges young adults and their families are facing. With the help of increased visibility; clear goals must be established to reduce the number of at-risk and disconnected individuals over time. Improved data sharing and educational transition planning is necessary to help create a more informed and instructive feedback loop for teams servicing these groups.

The second bucket of recommendations revolves around the need for improved coordination of the teams, services providers, and systems who too often operate without speaking with one another. Even when organizations come together to develop awareness of available resources, there remains a lack of intentional coordination and integration of data as well as a lack of resources to share data. Boundaries between siloed services must be softened in order to make progress. Many of these young adults are involved with multiple different systems due to the multitude of different circumstances they face including poverty, homelessness, and trauma. An example was provided of how data can be used to better understand the needs and vulnerabilities of those who are at-risk and disconnected as well as provide information on where and how to invest funds. The University of Chicago conducted research and found that 90% of school aged Chicago youth were not enrolled in school at the time of victimization. This indicates a direct correlation between disconnection and violence. An approach is needed that goes beyond simply identifying the needs and gaps in services currently being offered. Integrated data between system is essential to gain the most comprehensive understanding of these individuals and how certain life experiences impact their educational life and outcomes. More organizations who are directly and intentionally serving this group of young adults are needed.

The final bucket of recommendations focuses on the need to fund effective programs. The needs of the young adults who are at-risk or disconnected are vastly different from one another. This means that many different programs and services, as well as organizations to provide them, are necessary. Prevention is the best intervention to an issue are paramount as this.

This report makes a compelling argument for local leaders to sharpen their understanding of the continuum of disconnection outlined within the report. Starting with increased and sustained visibility. We do not know if we are making an impact if we do not continue to look at the data provided. Stronger coordination between systems and services; expanded capacity of organizations serving these young people, and a serious investment in intention and size of effective program is necessary to tackle this crisis.

A brief remark was made by John Frassinelli, the Division Director for School Health, Nutrition, and Family Services, from the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) about the recommendation for chronic absenteeism. It was stated that Connecticut is one of the leaders in the nation regarding chronic absenteeism due to the initiatives implemented recently, including the Learner Engagement and Attendance Program (LEAP) that addresses students who are absent often. LEAP is a home visiting program which has conducted over 35,000 visits with over 17,000 students and the data evaluated has indicated that among grades 6-12; six months following the home visit, attendance has increased by roughly 20%. Much work is being done in this area including LEAP workshops facilitated by the state of Connecticut that have been



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attended by twenty-seven states and the nation of Canada. Statewide chronic absenteeism has been declining over the past few years in some of the largest school districts. Additionally, data is being collected monthly, whereas in the past it was collected annually.

### **JJPOC 2024 Recommendations Vote**

#### *Gender Responsive Workgroup*

The vote for the Gender Responsive Workgroup recommendations were 30 Yay's, 0 Nay's, and 0 abstentions.

#### *Education Workgroup*

The vote for the Education Workgroup recommendations were tabled to next month's meeting due to a lack of time.

#### *Incarceration Workgroup; Re-entry Subgroup*

The vote for the Education Workgroup recommendations were tabled to next month's meeting due to a lack of time.

#### **Next Meeting:**

Hybrid Model Option (In-person and available over Zoom)

January 18, 2024

2:00-3:30PM