



University of New Haven

HENRY C. LEE COLLEGE OF  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND FORENSIC  
SCIENCES



### JJPOC Meeting Minutes

March 21, 2024

2:00-3:30 PM

LOB – 300 Capitol Avenue Hartford, Room 2C

Virtual Option Available

#### Attendance

Amy Marracino

Betty Ann MacDonald

Charles Hewes

Christina Quaranta

Curtis Booker

Daniel Karpowitz

Elizabeth Bozzuto

Hector Glynn

Lisa Sementilli

Martha Stone

Melanie Dykas

Michael Pierce

Miriam Miller

Paul Cicarella

Ray Dancy

Renee Cimino

Robyn Porter

Sarah Eagan

Sharmese Walcott

Steven Abbagnaro

Tais Ericson

Talitha Coggins

Tammy Nguyen-O’Dowd

Tammy Nuccio

Toni Walker

Véron Beaulieu

Vin Duva

#### TYJI Staff

Bill Carbone

Brittany LaMarr

Erika Nowakowski

Eva Ott Hill

Hunter Clark

Joshua Levin

Paul Klee

Shelby Henderson

#### Welcome and Introductions

Representative Toni Walker welcomed all in attendance to the meeting and introduced the new Co-Chair of the JJPOC, Daniel Karpowitz. Mr. Karpowitz is the Undersecretary for the Division of Criminal Justice, Policy and Planning.

#### Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Erika Nowakowski sought a motion for the approval of the February 2024 meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded and approved.



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## **Overview of Meeting and Announcements**

Erika Nowakowski, the Executive Director of the Tow Youth Justice Institute, welcomed all in attendance to the meeting and provided a brief overview of the meeting agenda. The agenda included a presentation from the Department of Social Services on the Medicaid Waiver announcement, specifically focusing on justice related matters as well as a discussion panel on community youth gun violence.

Teen advocates from Speak Up, a program from the Center for Children's Advocacy, were in attendance and participated in the meeting alongside appointed members.

## **Community Youth Gun Violence Panel Discussion; Moderated by Ray Boyd**

The Community Youth Gun Violence panel was made up of four members, Dr. Chico Tillmon, the Director of the Community Violence Intervention Leadership Academy (CVI); Leonard Jahad, the Executive Director of the Connecticut Violence Intervention Program (CTVIP); Jacquelyn Santiago-Nazario, the CEO of Compass Youth Collaborative; and Edward Calderon, a community activist and case manager for StreetSafe. The panel was moderated by Ray Boyd, cofounder of Next Level Empowerment Program and the Program Manager for New Visions for Public Safety at the Law and Racial Justice Center.

The discussion commenced by highlighting some of the changes taking place regarding the types of gun violence seen throughout the state of Connecticut. In New Haven, the average age of a gun violence victim is between 27 and 28 years old for Black males, with Hispanic/Latino and White males averaging a slightly higher age. Recently, the CTVIP has expanded the age range of youth they serve, depending on particular crimes, going as low as 11 to 12 years old. Another emerging group that CTVIP is beginning to focus on is young women entering high school. Make Her Space is a program recently established to help address the emotions that these young women face. Fights within schools and communities are occurring. Abuse, neglect, trauma, and depression are the main factors driving this increase in fighting.

In the city of Hartford, similar trends to New Haven are being noticed. Over the past few years, data has shown that the average age of certain criminal offenses is lowering. More women are becoming involved in these incidences with hospitals reporting a higher rate of



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SCIENCES



stabbing victims as well. A point of clarification was made following this statement to ensure that the youth in reference to these incidents are lacking guidance, with social media being one of the main catalysts in the rise in youth violence. Additionally, a rise in drug use, particularly opioids, has been noted in these youth committing crimes.

In Bridgeport, social media is one of the main reasons youth related violence has increased. Harm to youths' pride and retaliation to insults made over social media is seemingly the driving factor.

On a national level, one of the major factors to consider is the disconnection that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic where youths were forced to shelter in homes; these youths lost out on pivotal moments of social-emotional learning. Social norms must also be addressed regarding the pressure youths face from their peers to respond, in person, to remarks made over social media.

Preventative practices that should be considered to reduce youth violence include evidence-based practices such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). CBT can be introduced to communities prior to violence occurring through modalities such as Rewire. Rewire works by focusing on the most and least-riskiest thought a youth has when faced with an instigative remark. By reflecting on these thoughts, and continually using this practice, youths are able to de-escalate themselves sooner and reduce the risk of committing a violent act. Adults must be looked to as model behaviors for youths. The lack of resources that communities face also needs to be examined. Providing communities with resources lowers the risk of violent behaviors by allowing children to grow in a safe, prosperous community. In order to accomplish this, government intervention is necessary.

Discussion was held regarding other critical programs and interventions, outside of CBT, that can be used to help prevent youth related crime. At COMPASS, they prioritize meeting youth at their bedside while in the hospital to provide a mentor and help them navigate the situation. At the same time, community de-escalation following a serious crime is implemented and has proven to reduce the amount of retaliatory offenses. Follow up programs to meet youths in their homes to help with issues like wound care and service access is necessary as well. After six months of follow up treatment, the youth victim is introduced into a four-year program based around navigating the rehabilitation services needed. An emphasis was made regarding the need to increase the amount of funding that is allotted per youth. Typically, it is around one year. However, recovery often times takes more than one year to achieve.

Discussion around what drove the success of the Raise the Age movement was held with an emphasis made on sustained relationships with youths. From one year to the next, a 60%



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decrease in recidivism for youths on probation was noted due to the efforts made to build relationships with them. By limiting the number of practitioners entering and exiting a youth's life, they begin to feel heard and start to gain trust, which is key to sustaining positive behavior. It was noted that 3 to 4 years of engagement at the highest level is needed to change the trajectory of a youths' life.

Dr. Tillmon was asked to speak about what is and what is not working regarding preventative measures across the state. He noted that he is a firm believer in utilizing a strengths-based approach. While both CTVIP and COMPASS has operated with success, these two organizations are not able to solve the problem of youth violence alone. They need connections to other resources within communities and the ability to leverage processes expeditiously for high-risk individuals. Additionally, Dr. Tillmon noted the high-risk employees of both organizations face in dealing with high-risk individuals, while working part-time and not having access to health insurance, while emphasizing the need to increase funding support to mitigate this issue.

Discussion was held regarding the panel members opinions on the report by Dalio Education, *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back on Track* which was produced in October 2023. It was noted that the combining of multiple sources in such a cohesive manner served to reinforce the importance of collaboration on the progress of youth. An emphasis was made on the severe issue of disconnected youth and the state not capitalizing on opportunities to provide aid due to a lack of cohesion amongst resource providers. Local, state, and federal policies need to be more aligned in their efforts to provide services. Repetitive services result in a waste of time and resources. By becoming more intentional with the implementation of programs, the issue of disconnected youth can be curtailed. A point of emphasis was made regarding the lack of preventative services for youths who are not considered high-risk; providing similar services to youths not considered high-risk can be beneficial long-term.

A point was made to center initiatives targeting at-risk and disconnected youth around the nine recommendations that were proposed by Dalio Education in *Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis*. Comparing the recommendations to Bridgeport's services and efforts, the lack of service cohesion was considered one of the biggest drawbacks to service delivery.

Closing remarks by the panel emphasized the importance of needing to respond to the issues of gun violence and at-risk youth that have been presented upon; further discussion without action would be redundant. Dr. Tillmon noted that a single homicide costs, on average, \$1.2 to \$1.5 million. This figure includes law enforcement, investigation, ambulatory needs, hospital fees, prosecution, probation, and more. He also stated that a shooting costs, on average, \$800,000. Every shooting and homicide that the CTVIP and COMPASS helps to prevent saves the state millions of dollars. By accessing high-risk individuals and dissuading them from engaging in violent behavior, there is cost saving based upon the investment of prevention.



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Following the Community Youth Gun Violence Panel, discussion was held regarding CTVIP and COMPASS relationships with local police departments. COMPASS expressed positive working relations with police departments that took multiple years of effort to achieve. It was noted that most police departments COMPASS works with understand that preventative services and resources are vital to addressing the problems communities face. Additionally, COMPASS has been asked to facilitate a youth listening session to provide input who the next police chief will be. CTVIP expressed positive personal relationships with local police officers and cited events such as police departments providing water to local communities as an example of positive relations.

### **Department of Social Services; Medicaid Waiver Presentation**

The Department of Social Services Medicaid Waiver presentation was postponed to next month's meeting due to a lack of time.

### **Next Meeting**

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

April 18, 2024

2:00-3:30PM