



Youth Justice Oversight Committee

Meeting Minutes from February 13, 2025

The Youth Justice Oversight Committee (YJOC) met on February 13, 2025, from 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. at the Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room C. Judge Dana Kenworthy chaired the meeting.

Members Present:

The following members of the Committee were present in person:

- ☒ Dana Kenworthy, Chair
- ☐ Dr. Matthew Aalsma, Indiana University School of Medicine
- ☒ Stephen Balko, Indiana Department of Education
- ☒ Judge Marshelle Broadwell, Marion Superior Court 7
- ☒ Shannon Chambers, Johnson County Probation
- ☒ Terrie Decker, Indiana Department of Correction
- ☒ Judge Darrin Dolehanty, Senior Judge
- ☒ Mark Fairchild, Commission on Improving the Status of Children
- ☒ Tracy Fitz, Indiana Prosecuting Attorneys Council
- ☒ Magistrate Carolyn Foley, Allen Superior Court
- ☒ Judge Faith Graham, Tippecanoe Superior Court 3
- ☒ Judge Ryan King, Ripley Circuit Court
- ☒ Emily Krauser, Indiana Housing and Economic Development Authority
- ☒ Jade Palin, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute
- ☐ Nichole Phillips, Bartholomew County Probation
- ☒ Catheryne Pully, Indiana Office of Court Services
- ☐ Magistrate Amy Richison, Huntington Circuit and Superior Courts
- ☐ Sarah Sailors, Indiana Department of Child Services
- ☒ Nancy Wever, Indiana Office of Court Services, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative
- ☒ Joel Wieneke, Indiana Public Defender Council
- ☒ Kia Wright, Voices, Inc.

Members Attended Via Zoom:

Senior Judge Darrin Dolehanty

Members Absent:

Dr. Matthew Aalsma, Nichole Phillips, Mag. Amy Richison, and Sarah Sailors

Staff:

Leslie Dunn, Payton Lester, Colleen Saylor, Chris Biehn, Megan Horton, Janie Ames, Michelle Goodman, and Mindy Pickett from the Office of Judicial Administration attended. Blane Cook from the Commission on Improving the Status of Children (CISC) also attended.

Welcome and Introductions:

Judge Kenworthy welcomed members.

Approval of Minutes from December 5, 2024 Meeting:

Nancy Wever made a motion to approve the December 2024 minutes as written; Tracy Fitz seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved.

Commission on Improving the Status of Children (CISC) Update:

CISC's youth, family, and caregiver engagement bill (HB 1098) is doing well. The appropriation was removed but will be added to the budget; this bill will also provide support for the engagement of people with lived experience into YJOC. HB 1403, which aligns language with current plan implementation and administration of grants, is up for second reading. This bill allows for more flexibility in grant formulas, while still retaining priority for rural counties. Legislators contacted like the idea of us figuring out the right way to get the funds to rural communities. The bill deletes the word "pilot" because it sounded too short-term. We did not ask for more funds for the YJOC grants at this time but may ask for more later. There are a couple of bills focused on defining chronic absenteeism and providing options for prosecutors to pursue before filing criminal charges against parents. The bill creating a Family Recovery Court fund is probably dead; because it required no funding allocation and has no fiscal impact, it could return next session. HB 1605 has provisions about time to permanency; it is still pending, and judges are providing input. We do not want to create more burdens at the local court level. Nancy Wever mentioned there was a 9.2% reduction to JDAI funds in the budget bill.

Workgroup Updates:

Grants Workgroup:

Jade Palin reported that the Grants Workgroup met last week to make recommendations about the next round of funding. The Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI) Board meeting is March 7, and the Board will decide on the grants then.

Judge Kenworthy said that she and Mark Fairchild met with Representative McNamara, the Chief Justice, and staff from the Governor's Office to discuss what YJOC and the workgroups do and to discuss the grant funds. There is \$55 million left of the \$60 million given for the grants. The funds are non-reverting. Representative McNamara wanted additional funding and asked that the JDAI funds be returned to the same level (the funds were cut in the proposed budget). The Governor's Office wants updates on the grant cycles and on grants requested and awarded. Judge Kenworthy requested replacement of members from the Executive Branch on YJOC and in the workgroups. The Governor's Office will work to get new members appointed to replace Devon McDonald and Sirrilla Blackmon's co-chair positions.

Judge King asked if we are tracking where the grant applications are coming from; are they from rural areas? Jade Palin from ICJI shared that they are tracking the grants and there has been an assortment of counties apply, both smaller and larger. Judge King would like to track where the monies are going to make sure they are going to rural counties. He noted that 75 of the 92 counties in Indiana have a population of 100,000 or less. Judge Kenworthy said that they are tracking this, and a summary was completed for the Governor. Judge Kenworthy mentioned that we may want to consider a statewide RFP for services to rural communities to meet their needs, possibly involving telehealth. Judge King said that the same application must be filled out regardless of the county and this may deter some small counties from applying as they do not have adequate staff or knowledge to complete the grant application. Judge Kenworthy noted that ICJI and the Indiana Office of Court Services (IOCS) have support available for applicants. Magistrate Foley suggested we remind judges about the grants in the Wednesday Weekly message; IOCS will add the reminder to the message.

Data Workgroup:

Chris Biehn reported that the Data Workgroup is very active and just met. They are working on three main projects. The Office of Judicial Administration (OJA) is working on the modification to the juvenile reports that probation officers use so that they align with the IYAS tools when decisions are being made. They hope to have these finalized in time to train people on the new forms at the Justice Services conference in April. The second project is the data evaluation project in 24 counties; they received data from 19 and are waiting on 5. Judge Kenworthy asked Chris to share the diversion discussion from the Grants Workgroup meeting. Chris explained the challenges related to defining what diversion is and when it occurs. He said that 84% of responding counties indicated that diversion most commonly happens after the matter is referred to probation; it is then sent to the prosecutor for diversion. However, there are lots of other points of diversion, i.e., law enforcement and school diversion programs.

Tracy Fitz said it would be nice to track all diversion points, but we only have data from the court system; we cannot track pre-system diversion, aside from maybe through fewer probation referrals. Nancy noted pre-system diversion sometimes occurs through a local stakeholders agreement that certain types of referrals will not go forward. This may meet the statutory definition of diversion. Nancy noted we still need to track grant funds; if they are going to support pre-arrest diversion, we need to track that data.

Screening and Assessment Workgroup

Shannon Chambers reported the juvenile forms were approved to go into effect July 1, 2025, along with a cover sheet. IOCS is offering a session at the Justice Services conference about the changes. Their next meeting is March 15, and they will review other recommendations and set priorities, and create actions steps for those.

Behavioral Health Workgroup

Senior Judge Dolehanty reported that their first goal was diagnostic evaluations; they developed a guidance document that is being reviewed by outside groups. They are looking into telehealth, their second goal. The third goal was the high acuity group; this may go forward under the Behavioral Health Commission (BHC); the BHC may be better equipped to manage it. Judge King asked what falls under the BHC. It was created by statute, but it ended; if it re-starts, they will collaborate with YJOC to see where the groups can align. The BHWG needs a new co-chair since Sirrilla Blackmon retired. They lost other workgroup members, too. They need a new Medicaid expert and a

replacement for Dr. Dwenger. Brittany Kelly from OJA is joining the workgroup. She will help interpret between the legal world and the behavioral health world. Nancy Wever said DCS will not pay for telehealth services; why is that and what can we do about that? We need to talk to DCS about this issue.

Diversion Workgroup:

Tracy Fitz reported that the Diversion Workgroup is working on a game plan to get the diversion directory up and running. Judge Kenworthy asked that as they see programs that could be implemented statewide, they should bring those to the YJOC to see how we can support those programs.

Transitional Services Workgroup:

Magistrate Foley reported that they last met in January and will meet again on March 6. They are meeting every other month. The state agency collaboration subgroup put together a Teams channel to discuss complex cases for youth getting ready to leave the Division of Youth Services (DYS). They are waiting for DOC attorneys to approve confidentiality agreements. They created a case presentation form to share case information. The best practices subgroup is working on the best practices guide. They could not find any evidence-based best practices; there are practices but no statistical analysis of the effectiveness of these programs. They are prioritizing greater collaboration and developing best practices. They would like guidance from YJOC as to where they need to go from here. Only Lake and Marion Counties have practices and policies about transitional services. The workgroup thought that a best practice guide and training for judges may be the best areas of focus.

They do not think they can address some of the recommendations. They do not know how to run a pilot program within their confines, per Recommendation #1. Allen County is implementing a new program and could be a pilot. Nancy Wever suggested a researcher might be willing to study this issue statewide.

Recommendation #6, regarding creating a sub-committee to review referrals to DYS due to the lack of alternative placements for youth, may be better addressed by the BHWG; the BHWG agreed to take this on. Recommendation #7, on data collection to evaluate the effectiveness of services, will be very hard to implement per Lisa Thompson. They do not have a good way to extract this data, and it would not be accurate. The workgroup proposed a case review committee to examine why non-adjudicated youth are being sent to DYS for diagnostic assessments. Judge Kenworthy suggested that they use the new Teams channel to discuss this. Senior Judge Dolehanty stated that judges are sending youth to DYS because they can get the assessment done more quickly and DOC does a better job; judges send the youth to DYS for that reason and are not thinking about the downsides of sending youth to DYS. They are going to make judges more aware of this at upcoming judicial trainings. Judge King noted that transitional services are different than re-assuming jurisdiction.

Lake County will not re-assume jurisdiction of a youth close to 18 years of age or a youth who isn't returning to their community. When they do re-assume jurisdiction, the youth return to local probation for services. Marion County only re-assumes jurisdiction over certain offenses, not over every youth. In Shelby County, community corrections has contact with the youth before and after discharge from DYS and they engage the community to help reintegrate the youth. Judge King asked if we need juvenile re-entry courts or a juvenile transitional services manual? Terrie Decker

explained that the only way DYS can provide transitional services is if the youth is placed on parole. DYS does make a lot of recommendations to the family and may assist in setting up appointments and services. Most parents do not follow through. There must be a connection to compel the family to comply with the recommendations. Judge King noted that we do not know what the best practices are and what practices are out there, so we are not ready for a pilot. Kia Wright noted that if services are voluntary, parents don't engage; however, there are a lot of barriers to families engaging. Youth are returning to the same situation that they left. This needs to be looked at holistically and involve community organizations. Judge Kenworthy asked why courts are not using the Parental Participation Plan to integrate services.

Judge Broadwell noted that some parents do not want the youth back and we must engage parents; they do not know what to do with the youth. Magistrate Foley suggests delaying the pilot and shifting the focus to obtaining a researcher to look at the data. Joel Wieneke would like to learn more about dual status youth; this could be a target area. Senior Judge Dolehanty stated the transition of the youth needs to start at the time of placement. Many counties have never developed expertise regarding transitional services because they place so few youth in DYS. Maybe this needs to be centralized. Senior Judge Dolehanty has not seen kids who get out of DYS and go right back in for minor offenses; he thinks judges are trying to find innovative ways to keep youth in the community.

Discussion: Future of YJOC:

Judge Kenworthy led a discussion about our vision of YJOC moving forward; what do we need to do? Do we need to change course? Judge Kenworthy read YJOC's broad vision statement. She would like to look backward and forward. What else do we need to be thinking about?

Nancy Wever would like our vision statement to be at the top of each agenda. She noted they have had lots of ideas on how to improve the grant process and how to assist agencies with applications. They want to expand on that and improve the process to better align with the vision. Joel Wieneke noted that the CISC has a strategic plan model, but YJOC lacks that structure for setting priorities and providing focal points and objectives for workgroups. Kia Wright would like to see institutionalization of the lived experience voice; they have important information to add. Judge King noted we have unspent funds, and we have unmet needs, so how can we address the needs, especially on the behavioral health side? Judge King said there seems to be a lack of collaboration by the various state-level behavioral health groups. The statewide plan for behavioral health for youth in the system is not being addressed. There are many entities, and they all need a statewide plan but there is no communication. The work groups (especially the BHWG) need to have someone on the Grants Workgroup.

Judge Kenworthy asked Catheryne Pully if Brittany Kelly can help us get an idea of the landscape of everything going on in behavioral health for juveniles. Mark Fairchild noted we need to see if the Behavioral Health Commission is going to come back. Leslie Dunn will ask Brittany Kelly to prepare a summary of current activities.

Magistrate Foley endorsed the idea of a strategic plan. Terrie Decker noted we must come together to deal with the population of kids not being best served in DYS; it is too easy to place kids there when there is nowhere else. Joel Wieneke made a motion to develop a strategic plan; Nancy Wever seconded the motion. No one opposed it. How are we going to develop a strategic plan since the

prior focus was driven by legislative requirements? Judge Kenworthy and Mark noted the proposed legislative language to focus on implementation.

Tracy Fitz stated there are other issues, such as a lack of providers. You can have the best plan possible but if there are no providers, it will not work. There is little data on whether telehealth is working. Grants cannot be written if the county does not have service providers to implement programs. Some grant applications requested training dollars to train staff to be able to provide services. Leslie Dunn and Mindy Pickett talked to Dr. Verdon at DYS. Dr. Verdon noted that they can do such a good job on diagnostic assessments with youth because they understand the intersection of juvenile justice and behavioral health. They are willing to provide training and support to other agencies.

Catheryne Pully stated that IOCS is starting an internal review of all entities doing juvenile work to identify ways to improve collaboration and communication and avoid duplication of efforts. Shannon Chambers noted parents are frustrated; no one will take kids under age 12 for a short-term stay. Senior Judge Dolehanty noted we have very broad goals, but we do not know what completion looks like; hopefully, the strategic plan can answer this. We also need to know if we check all the boxes, are we limited to those problems or may we address other issues? Judge Kenworthy stated some things were very clear, i.e., the Probation Standards Workgroup is finished. Other reports had very broadly worded recommendations and would benefit from a strategic plan. Judge Graham suggested we create an organizational chart on what other agencies are doing and how they intersect. Catheryne hopes IOCS can help with this. The meeting was adjourned.

Upcoming Meeting Dates:

Thursday, April 10, 2025, 10AM-12PM, Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A
Thursday, June 12, 2025, 10AM-12PM, Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A
Thursday, August 14, 2025, 10AM-12PM, Indiana Government Center South, Wabash Hall 1+2
Thursday, October 9, 2025, 10AM-12PM, Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A
Thursday, December 11, 2025, 10AM-12PM, Indiana Government Center South, Wabash Hall 4+5