



Youth Justice Oversight Committee

Data Work Group

Minutes from April 8, 2025 Data Work Group Meeting

The Youth Justice Oversight Committee (YJOC) Data Work Group met on April 8, 2025 from 2:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Indiana Office of Court Technology. Dr. Matt Aalsma and Chris Biehn chaired the meeting.

1. Attendance

Members Present:

- Dr. Matt Aalsma, Indiana University School of Medicine, Chair
- Chris Biehn, Indiana Office of Court Services, Co-Chair
- Melanie Pitstick, Marion County Juvenile Probation
- Kristi Bruther, Johnson County Juvenile Detention Center
- Christine Reynolds, Indiana Criminal Justice Institute
- Kaitlyn Christian, Management Performance Hub
- Colleen Saylor, Indiana Office of Court Services
- Nancy Wever, Indiana Office of Court Services, JDAI

Members Present Electronically via Zoom:

- Traci Lane, Madison County Juvenile Probation
- Judge Sarah Mullican, Vigo Circuit/Superior Court 3
- Morgan Leever, Indiana Department of Child Services
- Todd Albin, Indiana Department of Child Services

Members Absent:

- Judge Paul Felix, Indiana Court of Appeals
- Olga Volokhova, Indiana Youth Institute
- Sarah Schelle, Indiana Department of Correction*

OJA Staff Present:

- Lisa Thompson, Indiana Office of Court Technology
- Leslie Dunn, Indiana Office of Court Services
- Brendan O'Connor, Office of Judicial Administration

Guests Present:

- Katie Schwartz, Indiana University School of Medicine

* Sarah Schelle is no longer with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC). Dr. Aalsma will work with Leslie Dunn to find a replacement representative from IDOC.

2. Approval of Minutes from February 11, 2025 Meeting

Committee members were provided with a copy of the February 11, 2025 meeting minutes prior to today's meeting. Nancy Weaver made a motion to approve the minutes; Melanie Pitstick seconded the motion. The work group members unanimously approved the February 11, 2025 meeting minutes.

3. Update on Data Evaluation Project and Diversion Survey/Interviews

Katie Schwartz from the IU School of Medicine provided an update on the Data Evaluation Project and shared key findings from the Diversion Survey and recent site visits.

Katie reported that the IU research team has received administrative data from all 24 participating counties. However, survey responses were submitted by only 20 counties, and site visits and interviews have been completed with 18 counties. The administrative data includes approximately 38,000 unique youth involved in the justice system between 2020 and 2024. Of those, around 3,000 records provided by Quest lacked corresponding referral data for the specified period, leaving roughly 35,000 records available for evaluation. The team will continue working with Quest to better understand the nature of those 3,000 records. Katie also noted that Quest counties—many of which are larger jurisdictions—contributed a significant portion of the data, which may impact interpretation. Additionally, she emphasized that youth IDs are not standardized across counties, meaning the same ID could refer to different individuals in different Quest counties.

The diversion survey aimed to gather insight into how counties document youth diversion opportunities. The IU team sought to capture a broad range of local practices that prevent further system involvement—not just those resulting from prosecutorial decisions. Katie noted that diversion by law enforcement is particularly difficult to track due to the lack of formal documentation. In cases of school-based diversion, some probation departments have established agreements with schools to share records, but this is not universal. Communication from prosecutors to probation regarding diversion decisions also varies widely, and there is no standardized method for probation departments to document diversion activity. These practices differ not only between counties, but also across case management systems. One small county even reported offering no diversion options, and several others lacked formal diversion policies altogether. Dr. Aalsma recommended using Informal Adjustments as a baseline for consistent diversion tracking, as they are more clearly defined and reliably reported.

The IU research team also conducted interviews with counties to gain a deeper understanding of local diversion practices and data entry procedures. They found considerable variation influenced by factors such as case volume, decision-making

structures, and the types of diversion programs available. Several counties noted limited training in data entry and the absence of a standardized user manual. Many departments reported having multiple individuals responsible for data entry, often without consistent, independent data quality checks beyond those required for JDAI. In smaller counties, some staff indicated that data entry is often delayed until the entire case has been disposed.

One frequently observed practice was the informal “wait and see” approach, where a referral remains open or pending while the youth participates in diversion programming, without advancing through the system. This approach complicates efforts to identify youth in this legal status and makes it nearly impossible to measure the scope of the issue at any given time.

Katie addressed the ongoing challenges related to data quality and alignment between the SRS and Quest systems. She emphasized the importance of having a variable mapping or codebook to improve data interpretation and minimize inconsistencies during data sharing. Katie also noted the value of having a test environment for both systems and requested JDAI reporting instructions to enhance understanding of data processes. She shared examples of how the team evaluated the data, including tracking the frequency of missing fields and assessing how various methods of data organization influence the analysis.

Looking ahead, the IU research team plans to take a deeper dive into service referrals and assessments, examine ID combinations across different data management systems, and analyze relationships between variables—such as identifying logical inconsistencies, timing gaps, and case disposition reporting. They will also begin formulating recommendations for potential pilot initiatives aimed at improving data quality.

During the presentation, members discussed the challenges of training staff amid high turnover rates. While SRS agencies received initial training on data entry practices when transitioning to the system, there is no formal ongoing training for new personnel. Instead, departments are responsible for in-house training and onboarding. Additionally, the training provided is system-focused, rather than centered on process or policy guidance. Ongoing training will need to be a key consideration as recommendations are developed to enhance data quality.

4. Next Meeting

The next YJOC Data Work Group meeting will be on **May 13, 2025 from 2:30 pm to 4:00 pm** at the Indiana Office of Court Technology.

The next Youth Justice Oversight Committee Meeting is **June 12, 2025 at 10:00 am** at Indiana Government Center South, Conference Room A, 402 W. Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN. There will be a live webcast of this meeting available on the Youth Justice Oversight Committee website: www.in.gov/youthjustice.