



Quarterly Meeting  
Minutes  
June 8, 2021  
WebEx Virtual Meeting

Attendees:

JJAG Members

Staff and Guests

|                            |           |  |
|----------------------------|-----------|--|
| Edward Fergus. Chair       | Y         | <i>NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)</i>  |
| Joseph J. Coccozza         | Y         | Mark White   |
| Brendan Cox                | N         | <i>Office of Youth Justice (OYJ)</i>                     |
| Michelle Diaz              | N         | Damon Bacote   |
| Michael C. Green           | Y         | Tom Andriola   |
| Niasha Hamilton            | Y         | Meagan Armstrong   |
| Precious Lugo              | N         | Trista Deame   |
| Robert M. Maccarone        | Y         | Shalain Garcia   |
| Hon. Edwina Mendelson      | Y         | Taffney Wallace  |
| Sheila J. Poole            | Y         | <i>State Commission of Correction</i>                    |
| Meredith Ray-LaBatt        | Y         | Amanda Grimes  |
| Karen Richmond             | Y         | <i>Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS)</i>     |
| Allen Riley                | N         | Nina Aledort   |
| Euphemia Strauchn          | Y         | <i>Office of Justice Research and Performance (OJRP)</i> |
| Emily Tow                  | Y         | Leigh Bates  |
| Jason Williams             | Y         | <i>Office of Program Development and Funding (OPDF)</i>  |
| Lester Young               | Y         | Jeff Bender  |
|                            |           | Benedicta Adewunmi                                       |
|                            |           | <i>New York State Courts</i>                             |
|                            |           | Kristen Conklin  |
|                            |           | <i>New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI)</i>      |
|                            |           | Giza Lopes   |
|                            |           | <i>The Tow Foundation</i>                                |
|                            |           | Diane Sierpina   |
| <b>TOTAL in attendance</b> | <b>13</b> |  |
| <i>Required for Quorum</i> | <b>9</b>  |  |

## **Introduction**

Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) chair Dr. Eddie Fergus opened the meeting, welcoming members and guests, who were attending via teleconference as a result of COVID-19. The agenda was approved, and the minutes from the December 8, 2020 meeting were approved as submitted. The 2019 JJAG Annual Report was also considered and approved as submitted.

## **Partnership for Youth Justice**

Deputy Commissioner Nina Aledort presented an overview of the Partnership for Youth Justice (PYJ) and its function. Discussions going forward will be had to frame opportunities for at risk communities that are most impacted, which will include practitioners on the state level. The JJAG is interested in having additional representation on PYJ to further enhance knowledge and utilize the work to leverage JJAG alignment, and this would be consistent with the alignment goals of the JJAG Strategic Action Plan. Deputy Commissioner Damon Bacote stated that definitive steps would be implemented for the PYJ to benchmark progress and practices to decrease youth misdemeanor arrests while working with new members from law enforcement as well as supporting community healing. Attendees were encouraged to contact JJAG Chair Eddie Fergus, Chief of Policy and Implementation Tom Andriola, or Deputy Commissioner Damon Bacote to express interest in participating in the PYJ.

## **Staff Updates**

### **Federal Funding Status Update**

Deputy Commissioner Jeff Bender presented the Title II funding charts, and announced that DCJS has successfully coordinated with the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to request their withdrawal from litigation in Federal Courts related to the sanctuary city award conditions attached to several grant program (Title II, FY18 and FY19) awards to date. DOJ has posted materials to their website and worked with DCJS to add language to our acceptance documents indicating they will no longer be enforcing conditions that were previously an issue. The process to start accepting FY19 funding should commence in the coming days, and DCJS is currently working on compliance determinations for the FY20 and FY21 grant years.

FY16/FY17 awards ending September 2021 are almost exhausted. FY18 is largely committed; approximately \$250,000 (total). FY19/FY20 funding anticipating acceptance should occur by the end of 2021, with \$5.7 million (net) available to be programmed (\$4.1 million for local projects and \$1.5 million for state projects).

DOJ will work with DCJS on funding extensions with lapse dates for some current funding scheduled to expire in September 2021. Emily Tow expressed concern with approximately \$4,000 in unprogrammed funding remaining to be spent before September 2021. Jeff Bender stated that currently there are no obligations scheduled against the FY18 award actively being utilized, and that DCJS will move on to FY17 award to minimize turnback. Tom Andriola also mentioned that the solicitation for the FY21 award is currently being written and due to be submitted by July 13, 2021.

### **Interim Grant Proposal**

Meagan Armstrong reported that the Integrated Community Alternatives Network (ICAN), in partnership with Oneida County Probation and the Oneida County Department of Social Services (DSS), was able to utilize some funding (\$49,500) that was scheduled to expire in September 2021. These organizations have collaborated to bridge a funding gap to continue the operations of SPIN, KEY, and Navigator services, as well as support and oversight of the County Diversion Program. The KEY program will use approximately 15 percent of the funds, which will include 16 sessions over two groups and will consist of 4 to 10 youth per group. SPIN services will account for about 25 percent of the funding and will target between 10 and 15 youth. The Navigator services component will utilize approximately 20 percent of the funding to assist four youth currently in the Raise the Age facility with the possibility of assisting others who might come into contact with the juvenile justice system. The remaining 40 percent of the funding be used to serve between 15 and 20 youth through the Court Diversion Program in an attempt to keep them in the community instead of being placed in a facility.

### Policy Equity Academy

Trista Deame spoke about the 2016 JJAG approved funding for the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) to assist New York State in reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R.E.D.). The initial contract period was for two years, but was extended for an additional three years to assist in reconstituting the R.E.D. Advisory Committee, assist in program development and the use of racial impact statements, develop a new three-year plan, and create the new Policy Equity Academy. The JJAG has been very interested in building capacity in New York State by sending teams to Georgetown University, and DCJS has worked closely with CCLP and the Youth Justice Institute to create a similar program here in New York State. We have been able to braid together some Annie E. Casey Foundation funding, a federal Delinquency Prevention award received by DCJS, and the JJAG funding to build the new Policy Equity Academy.

The Policy Equity Academy is designed to improve outcomes at the point of adjustment for children of color and African American youth in particular while keeping them in their communities. A targeted application process was developed utilizing data with assistance from the Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (OPCA). Deputy Commissioner Maccarone added that OPCA held informational sessions for largest contributors at the state level for equity at the justice system point. Five teams are being targeted and five applications have been received as of the application deadline, which was yesterday. The Academy requires that each team include youth and family, educators, probation, and community-based organizations totaling 8 to 10 members. A kickoff event will be held on June 30<sup>th</sup>, and will include Commissioner Green, First Deputy Commissioner Mark White, and Deputy Commissioner Bob Maccarone as guest speakers.

Teams will participate in synchronous and asynchronous learning opportunities and the development of an action plan to implement for policy practice and program implementation. Teams will be eligible to receive up to \$50,000 to implement action plans created during the Academy subsequent to the completion of certificate program. The impact of the Academy will be measured by reviewing the goals and measuring outcomes utilizing race, ethnicity, and gender data collected by DCJS. Probation and court system points have gone live for all counties including New York City. The Academy would like to increase the number of youth who are offered adjustment services and who successfully complete adjustment services, and decrease number of youth who are referred to the presentment agency for petition. Teams have been asked to align needs with agency desired outcomes. OPCA will complete training in in the Academy with OYJ and then assist with technical assistance of the teams to get outcomes desired.

DCJS also plans to collaborate with Georgetown University and the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Institute in

Florida to develop a gender specific certificate program that will be held virtually Fall 2021 with reconvening early 2022.

### Strategic Action Plan

JJAG Chair Eddie Fergus talked about the fact that the JJAG had finalized the Strategic Action Plan and that it was now time to move toward implementation. First Deputy Commissioner Mark White indicated that there had been some conversations about the JJAG's role as an advisory board and not necessarily one that provides policy direction. Mr. White also spoke about the most efficient way to move forward with implementation of the plan, which was not necessarily through the establishment of work groups because of the number of meetings that would be involved and the lack of efficiency. He indicated that we would continue to assist the JJAG in ensuring the successful implementation of the goals and action steps included in the plan, potentially through the revival of the JJAG Grants Working Group, staff working with JJAG members, and a possible Request for Proposals (RFP) process for future funding opportunities.

Chief of Policy and Implementation Tom Andriola reinforced Mr. White's message that we wanted to implement the most efficient process possible, and that it seemed like creating work groups would end up being too cumbersome. He indicated that we would be looking at additional staff support to assist in the process, bringing back the Grants Working Group would help to set priorities and process, tapping more into the expertise of the YJI, and better connecting with the PYJ and the Regional Youth Justice Teams. Experts could also be brought in to help inform certain projects that the JJAG might want to undertake that align with the goals and action steps in the plan. We would also take a closer look at how to tap into the expertise of youth, families and the community, and partner with them on doing some good projects. There is also a proposal for consideration later in the meeting that would more intentionally engage the JJAG youth members in driving some of the projects directly.

Mr. Andriola continued that the Plan has a four-pronged implementation approach that asks certain questions. How do we expend funds working directly on the plan goals and action items? How do we get the Plan into the field among juvenile justice stakeholders to educate them about the JJAG and its purpose? How do we bring data into the conversation more than we have in the past? How do we engage and align the JJAG with all of the other groups that are working in the area of youth justice?

JJAG Chair Eddie Fergus indicated that we took a pause to make sure that we were moving forward in the best way possible. How does this range of information that is pivotal for JJAG to leverage the set of dollars available to make the most significant impact in New York to align with what we are trying to do? Is there a cadence to which we organize this set of information? How can the various entities involved in the area of youth justice support the effort to implement the Plan?

Jason Williams indicated that he likes all the partnerships, which will make everything run more smoothly. Joe Cocozza indicated that this is one of the best strategic plans that the JJAG has put together. His major concern is that the various groups each have their own goals, and he doesn't want that to get all the work that the JJAG has done to be lost. Perhaps there could be an implementation committee set up? We just don't want to forget about the items included in the plan.

Emily Tow indicated that she wanted to echo the point that implementation is key. Perhaps we might continue to work with the YJI to ensure that we stay on task. On another note, we may want to leverage funding from other sources. Commissioner Sheila Poole indicated that there is value in looking at other funding sources, including foundations, but that the vision is not always aligned. We need to make sure that the broader community has

some visibility into this amazing plan, which is something the YJI could be well positioned to assist us with. Commissioner Poole also indicated that OCFS has started to using Tableau widely, which is a tool that can bring visualization to project management. Perhaps there is a way to tap into that, and OCFS could offer some expertise in how to use it. Executive Director Giza Lopes also said that the YJI is well versed in Tableau and willing to assist.

### JJAG Orientation Materials

Tom Andriola indicated that staff has pulled together a current set of orientation materials for new and existing JJAG members, which was distributed with the meeting materials. Five new members were appointed in 2019 and didn't receive an orientation or orientation materials. Existing members have also not had a refresher in quite some time, so we also thought it would be a good time to update the orientation materials and distribute them to all JJAG members. Among the materials included in the packet are the role of the JJAG, its legal authority, the Executive Order designating DCJS as the agency to assist the JJAG in its work, the JJAG bylaws, an interim grant approval process that was authorized in December 2015, a current flow chart of the juvenile justice system, a Juvenile Justice Reform Act Summary from legislation that was enacted December 2018 along with the accompanying statutory language, helpful links, the current JJAG roster, and a glossary of terms.

First Deputy Commissioner Mark White also mentioned that biographies of each JJAG member had previously been requested and should be included in the orientation packet. Mr. Andriola indicated that staff would add the biographies and provide an update packet when completed.

Chairman Fergus offered an open invitation to members who would like an orientation to walk through the materials and ask questions, and that we would follow up after the meeting to assess interest.

Meredith Ray-LaBatt recalled that there used to be a dedicated JJAG website, which was helpful. Mr. Andriola indicated that there is no longer a dedicated website, as the domain had expired and agencies had since aligned efforts to design websites in a more uniform manner and to avoid using separate domains for groups like the JJAG. He also indicated that all JJAG meetings are recorded and available for viewing on the New York State Public Safety YouTube channel.

### Proposal #1 – Youth Action Committee

Trista Deame presented a proposal to establish a new Youth Advisory Committee (YAC), stating the JJAG has previously supported skill building efforts for youth members in the past, sending several of them to national conferences on youth engagement and also funding local community-based organizations to host Youth Empowerment Academies which focused on building capacity for youth and young people to help inform policy and practice, form true partnerships, and develop some of our own youth-centered practices in New York State.

We have taken a look at creating a program like that in Colorado, which sets aside a specific amount for youth members to program and make decisions on what they feel are priorities for the youth population. This proposal request would allocate \$75,000 to provide hourly stipends for YAC-related work and other JJAG-related work, professional development opportunities for JJAG youth members, and support for one or more youth-led, youth driven initiatives as identified by the YAC.

Emily Tow and Commissioner Sheila Poole both spoke out in favor of the proposal, and Commissioner Poole also wanted to make sure that there would be staff support to the youth members to make it a success. Chairman

Fergus also spoke out in favor and stated that we need to ensure that the professional development component is a clear point of focus for the youth members and to be intentional about it.

Niasha Hamilton indicated that this would be a great opportunity for the youth members to come together and align thoughts and encourage further participation in the JJAG. Deputy Commissioner Aledort stated that OCFS is currently working with YJI in consultation with DCJS to assist in creating a pipeline for more young people to potentially become JJAG members in the future. The first group of youth is scheduled to become prepared to populate this pipeline within about 18 months.

Chairman Fergus called for a vote of the proposal, which was approved unanimously by JJAG members in attendance.

### Proposal #2 – Youth Justice Institute Project Extension

Tom Andriola explained the proposal to provide \$1.9 million in additional support to extend the operations of the YJI from July 2021 through December 2023 in tandem with new Strategic Action Plan. The YJI will continue to expand its role in New York State over the course of the extension. Funding will be used for a plethora of items, including the development and support for the new Policy Equity Academy. A report of activities that the YJI has done to date is included in the annual report provided in the materials and illustrates the level of work the YJI has done since its inception.

Judge Mendelson expressed strong support for the YJI, and particularly with respect to the COVID-19 forums it put together both last year and this year. They bring such value to New York State and make us look good. Deputy Commissioner Maccarone indicated that New York State has come far with the YJI, and that Dr. Giza Lopes has been a tremendous asset as Executive Director of the YJI. Commissioner Green indicated that he observed over the course of the past several years how difficult it has been to get the YJI up and running to the point where it is today, and he expressed his wholehearted support and appreciation for where it is today. Commissioner Poole echoed those sentiments and indicated that hiring Giza Lopes as Executive Director was well worth the wait. She indicated that she never would have imagined we would be where we are today with such a world-class institute. Chairman Fergus concurred. Giza Lopes expressed her appreciation for all the sentiments conveyed by JJAG members.

Emily Tow also expressed appreciation for all the work of the YJI, but also wanted to mention the need to look for long-term sustainability by bringing in other funders to support the YJI going forward. The JJAG believes in this and wants the YJI to be here will into the future, so we need to pay attention to sustainability and bring in other funding sources as well. Executive Director Lopes indicated that the funding request would support a grant writing person as well as a research associate, and that the YJI has also been in conversations with the fundraising staff at UAlbany to ensure adequate preparation for sustainability.

Chairman Fergus called for a vote of the proposal, which was approved unanimously by JJAG members in attendance.

### Wrap-up and Next Steps

The meeting was adjourned by JJAG Chair, Dr. Eddie Fergus.

***The next JJAG meeting will be held Tuesday, September 14, 2021: 10:00am – 1:00 pm in New York City.***