

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

AUGUST 4, 2025 -YSC MEETING MINUTES

First Floor Conference Room, Human Services Building with Zoom Link Option Available

Attendance:

Trude Arnette, Tara Buckley, Stephanie Cella, Carlton Cummings, Achille Dejean, Thomas Fichter, Laurie Gerhardt, Ivan Kaplan, Dustin Knoblauch, Honorable Lourdes Lucas, Dr. Lester W. Richens, Raymond Santiago, Lynn Seaward, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Christine Talbot, Sebastian Trapani and Elizabeth Williams.

Ellen Cohen, Kathleen Peterson,

Rev. Lyddale Akins, Det. Aaron Shaw, MCPO, Mary Jo Donnelly

I. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING’S ACT –

Prosecutor Raymond Santiago and Honorable Lourdes Lucas provided a welcome, made introductions and read the Open Public Meeting’s Act statement.

A motion was made, seconded, and carried (Arnette:Richens) to approve the minutes from the June 3, 2025, Youth Services Commission meeting.

II. YSC Co-Chairs Report

Prosecutor Raymond Santiago shared information regarding the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office Mobile App that has been developed and provides residents with critical information on community resources and events.

III. Restorative Justice Pilot Project

Thomas Fichter, Rev. Lyddale Akins, Aaron Shaw and Mary Jo Donnelly jointly gave an overview presentation on the restorative justice pilot project implemented at Monmouth Regional High School. The presentation included information on the RJ model and the training that was received. Mary Jo Donnelly indicated that the school administration gave a green light to the project, and that students are chosen or nominated by teachers and there is a mixture of kids (25-30 students and teachers who have an invested interest). Monmouth Regional High School will continue to provide training for the students to help them learn relationship and communication skills to assist with the facilitation of RJ circles. The restorative justice circles provide a structure for conflict resolution and peer mediation. By intervening early, the intent is to decrease school disciplinary issues, suspensions and juvenile charges by diffusing situations and repairing harm. Restorative justice circles are facilitated by the youth, with support from guidance and the Prosecutor’s Office liaisons. Students learn to ask open-ended questions and

work towards an agreement the parties can abide by, where there is no blame and confidentiality is maintained. Their experience implementing the restorative justice pilot with students has been very positive, and interest was expressed in expanding the RJ model to other schools such as Asbury Park Middle School and Keansburg. Dr. Richens suggested outreach to the Principals of Schools relative to expansion in lieu of the Superintendents.

IV. Division of Child and Youth Services Report

CIACC

- Last meeting of 2024-2025 school year complete; next meeting Sept. 2025
- I/DD & Early Childhood Development Focus
- Education Partnership Trainings scheduled for 2025/2026
- Youth Service Presentations - 30 delivered/1000 individuals reached, including CIT

Youth Behavioral Health & Contracting

- Monitoring complete, finishing reporting; some transition in funding. Contracted agencies include: Child Family Crisis Clinicians & Crisis Diversion Program of MMC/Family Growth Program of Catholic Charities/Youth Suicide Prevention of MHAMC/Boys and Girls Club.
- Division Hosted Adolescent & Youth Clinical Training for Suicide Prevention; positive feedback and a need for more training both clinical and non-clinical.
- Postvention Team – Division of Child and Youth based contract to provide support and consultation to schools/community following a youth related loss for up to 18 months; support to follow a TLC stabilization period, not a replacement for TLC. Susan Tellone is lead; county to process referrals and initial coordination.

YSC/JDAI

- A collection of Asbury Park feedback (youth/family/stakeholders) continues to best inform services and programming as it relates to youth-based violence and loss. Please contact Desiree Whyte (DHHS Assistant Director of Operations) or Dustin Knoblauch (Director – Division of Child and Youth Services) for more information. AP community voice presentations have been shared with the following: Children's Interagency Coordinating Council (CIACC)/Positive Youth Development (PYD) Hub/Coordinated Community Response to Violence (CCR of Project HEAL)/Community Development Initiative (CDI) of AP; we are working on a collaboration plan.

PYD

- Fostering Youth to Independence Voucher program has been successful; 32 qualified youth/13 vouchers processed. For youth ages 18-24 with a foster placement and at risk or experiencing homelessness.
- Spanish Speaking Mental Health First Aid/Question Persuade Refer Trainings were highly successful; to continue through the Municipal Alliances.
- Transition to Adulthood continues to be an area in need of emphasis. DHHS Leadership is exploring "Youth Employment Pathways" to enhance school to work career options.
- Youth Violence Prevention Awareness (Gang Awareness) – 10/3 @ Ag Building 9-4pm. Topics include: Gang Awareness/Human Trafficking & Sextortion/Social Media/Service Panel.
- Next meeting – Sept. 12, 2025 via Zoom @ 10am

V. YSC Administrator's Update

Ellen Cohen shared information regarding the timeline for submission of the 2026 Youth Services Plan Update and Comprehensive Funding Request Application, as well as the 2026 JDAI Innovations Funds Application to the Youth Justice Commission. Electronic votes will be taken via e-mail once the documents are sent out to the YSC membership. The recommendations then go before the Board of County Commissioners for their authorization and submission to the NJ Youth Justice Commission. Ellen thanked Monmouth's team, especially Dustin, Kathleen and Ivan for their coverage while she was out.

VI. Education Update

Dr. Richens stated that July has been calm. Districts have summer school programs for children with special needs. Dr. Richens stated that he anticipates another good year of monitoring districts and their budgets. He commented that it won't be long before students are back to school and in need of school supplies.

VII. Family Division - Court Processing Update

Tara Buckley stated that there were no updates from the Family Division.

VIII. Probation Update

No report

IX. Detention Center Update

Sebastian Trapani stated that there were currently 8 Monmouth County youth at the Middlesex County Juvenile Detention Facility. One youth was admitted today (8/4/25) from Middletown. Sebastian Trapani reported as a result of the recent retirement of Superintendent David Chippendale and the abrupt resignation of the Assistant Superintendent, several concerns have emerged regarding the day-to-day operations. These issues include intake screening procedures are not being consistently followed (a juvenile was admitted on July 17th without being cleared through juvenile intake) Timely notification of significant incidents, and access to advanced medical care being delayed due to insufficient coverage.

X. Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) STEADY

Ivan Kaplan provided an overview of the STEADY program - "Supportive, Transitional, & Engaging Alternatives Developed for Youth". Ivan stated that JDAI is pre-disposition and Probation is post-disposition. At the time when STEADY was developed, there was a gap in time when Probation began their supervision (due to high caseloads). There was a desire for a warm hand off to probation and a need for the detention alternative unit's continued supervision, and involvement with the youth and their family until the transition to probation supervision took

place. At one time referrals were high at 9 youth. The STEADY program and JDAI Innovations include other components and opportunities to engage and support the youth and their families such as incentives for good behavior while on the detention alternatives, gift cards, school supplies, pro-social activities, thanksgiving family meals, holiday baskets and graduation completion ceremonies. This year, there has been one referral to the STEADY program which involved a complex serious case. A meeting recently took place with Judge Lucas to inform her of this resource. Dustin and Ivan will outreach to probation.

XI. YSC Planning Committee

Trude Arnette reported that the latest draft of the 2026 Youth Services Plan Update was sent out to YSC Planning Committee members. YSC Planning Committee members were asked to let Ellen know by August 11, 2025, as they review the 2026 Youth Services Plan Update, if any additional information or changes are needed before we send it out to the full Youth Services Commission. Trude provided a brief overview of the sections contained in the 2026 Youth Services Plan Update.

An electronic version of the 2026 Youth Services Plan Update will be sent out to members for an e-mail vote, which can be ratified at either a special meeting to be set in September or the regular meeting on October 7, 2025.

A separate e-mail vote will also be taken at that time to approve the 2026 service priorities for Monmouth's Comprehensive Funding Request Application to the NJ Youth Justice Commission for the State Community Partnership Grant and Family Court Services funds.

Monmouth County's Comprehensive Funding Application to the Youth Justice Commission is for a combined total amount of \$1,055,394 for the period 1/1/26-12/31/26. This combined total is comprised of:

- \$90,000 in State/Community Partnership Grant- Program Management
- \$578,640 in State/Community Partnership Grant- Program Services; and
- \$386,754 in Family Court Services funds

XII. YSC Monitoring

Trude Arnette reported that we have completed our monitoring for 2025. Trude Arnette indicated the YSC monitoring team included herself, along with Kathleen Peterson, Dustin Knoblauch, Tom Fichter, Jen Hoffer, Elizabeth Williams, Carla Vreeland (Intern with the PD's office) and Kaitlyn Silagi Deputy Director of Behavioral Health joined us on a few. Trude stated that the team visited nine (9) agencies, some with multiple programs for a total of sixteen (16) funded programs. Special thanks to all the members of the YSC Monitoring Team who participated this year. Agencies with more than one program had their monitoring consolidated on the same date. We had PowerPoint presentations, interviewed staff, toured offices, reviewed files, interviewed families and youth

participants, and we will visit the school-based programs during the school year, as we always do. Trude indicated that she would highlight briefly each agency and then the committee members may add their thoughts, and then a motion will be made.

- New Hope Foundation-6/2, new carpet in the day room was notable.
- Wellspring-6/9, Why Try Program (AP, Neptune and Keansburg in school, after school and summer program) and Life Skills Training to 3rd graders in Asbury Park, on target to reach their Level of Service, Hugh Wallace and Nikki Frances are very respected and experienced with all the districts.
- YMCA Community Mentoring-6/9, to serve 24 youth 9-12 and on target, per our 2024 request they have expanded referral sources outside the System of Care agencies to include Police, Families and YMCA programs.
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters-6/23, they have 3 programs with us and are all on target for level of service, we are always impressed with their “matching” procedure and comprehensive electronic files. Primary Delinquency Program at Bradley Elementary, 4th-6th graders matched with HS students in an after-school program. Community and School Based Mentoring-48 kids, 9-12 years old, Long Branch and Keansburg group. Mentoring. ACES After School and Summer Program-42 kids, 9/12 years old, one on one mentoring.
- IEP-6/25. PMT (Individual Services for Youth on Probation) and Probation Offenders Program. POP has been VERY busy with referrals and will exceed their level of service and funds before years end so we discussed moving funds between the programs, and we will discuss this further.
- JDAI Steady Program-6/25, transition reports between HDP and Probation and includes incentives and holiday baskets given to the families.
- Mental Health Association (MHA)-6/26, Family Navigator-The families are very appreciative of the assistance navigating the Court system as well as the many other ways Christine assists them. FCIU- Anthony Capodanno (FCIU clinician) participates in the “road show” that also includes the Children’s System of Care partners which is greatly appreciated. FCIU’s Level of Service has been low this year, only 13% of Youth Served and 14% of Direct hours. Wrap Program-no utilization for several months in 2025, staff recently hired. A Plan of Correction summary was provided to MHA from the Division, and a Plan of Correction was submitted by MHA based on the summary for FCIU and Wrap. That was effective August 1st, so we are going to recommend that we hold off on the issuance of a 2026 funding request application and we will have a special meeting in September (9/2) to allow them time to execute the Plan of Correction.
- Preferred Behavioral Health-6/30- three programs include Life Skills Training, Secondary Delinquency Prevention-Character Counts, and Keys to Innervisions. Trude stated they are always updating and adapting to keep the lessons current and engaging, and on target in all programs this year.
- Boys and Girls Club-7/24-summer camp, high energy and inspiring to talk to their staff who have been “club Kids” and the young kids who will someday be staff.

A motion was made, seconded and carried (Arnette: Silagyi) to approve the YSC Monitoring Team's Recommendation to issue the 2026 streamlined funding request applications to all the YSC funded programs, except for the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County's Family Crisis Intervention Unit and the Wrap Around Program, who has been asked to implement a corrective action plan. A roll call vote was taken (see attachment).

XIII. New Business

National Night Out Against Crime is scheduled for tomorrow (August 5th). Events take place throughout Monmouth County. Prosecutor Santiago indicated that he plans to attend 10 different town's Night Out Against Crime events.

Kaitlyn Silagyi reported that the Monmouth County Opioid Settlement Survey is on the county website and encouraged members to provide their input. The Monmouth County Opioid Settlement Survey is open for public input on the needs and priorities as it relates to the opioid funds. The survey was developed by Kaitlyn (Deputy Director of Behavioral Health) with input and feedback from the Opioid Settlement Advisory Council and the Local Advisory Council on Substance Use Support Services (formerly Board of Addiction Services).

Prosecutor Santiago thanked Desiree Whyte and Dustin Knoblauch for their recent presentation to the Asbury Park Community Development Initiative focused on youth services and community resources.

XIV. Old Business

XV. Public Comment

XVI. Adjournment- The next meeting of the Monmouth County Youth Services Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, September 2, 2025 at 3:00 PM; with Tuesday, October 7, 2025 at 4:00 PM and Tuesday, December 2, 2025 at 4:00 PM to follow.