

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

Minutes for Tuesday, February 3, 2026

4:00 PM First Floor Conference Room,

Human Services Building with Zoom Link Option Available

Attendance: Tara Buckley, Carlton Cummings, Achille Dejean, Tom Fichter, Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Chanta Jackson, Ivan Kaplan, Dustin Knoblauch, Honorable Lourdes Lucas, Prosecutor Raymond Santiago, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Christine Talbot, Yolanda Taylor, Sebastian Trapani, Elizabeth Williams, Ellen Cohen, Kathleen Peterson, Caitlin Mejia, Farah Rahaman

I. CALL TO ORDER: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING'S ACT Prosecutor Raymond Santiago

Prosecutor Raymond Santiago called the meeting to order and read the open public meetings act statement. He shared that he was in Washington DC advocating to the legislators for public safety funding.

A motion was made, seconded and carried (Gerhardt: Silagyi) to approve the YSC Minutes from December 2, 2025.

II. YSC Co-Chairs Report

Honorable Lourdes Lucas provided a welcome to the group. She indicated that she was assigned to handle emergent matters and alerted us that she may be called away from the meeting. Judge Lucas thanked Ellen for the various reports and news releases shared with the membership.

III. Division of Child and Youth Services Report Dustin Knoblauch

Youth Behavioral Health & Contracting

CIACC focus – Early Childhood Development/IDD/Youth & Family Voice: looking to extend the Division team to include Early Childhood. Next CIACC Meeting is Feb. 18th - Youth Service Presentation of our local system, including no cost immediate options.

Division met with NJ Quality Institute to share local based initiatives and programming for their mapping project.

Monmouth ACTS

Positive Youth Development (PYD) Hub, Ages 9-17

Next Meeting – March 13th @ 10am via Zoom.

Developing a 5-question survey to collect youth voice to be shared with the Hub, CIACC, and YSC. All County- contracted agencies to participate. Providers can administer anyway they wish; we welcome the opportunity to lead a guided meeting with the youth that

Hub/CIACC/YSC members can attend on a first-come, first-serve basis. All information is to be aggregated by the County and shared for the better good.

Transitioning to Adulthood Hub, Ages 16-24 First official meeting, February 13th @ 10am via Zoom. Please reach out to Dustin Knoblauch if interested attending, Dustin.Knoblauch@co.monmouth.nj.us.

IV. YSC Administrator's Update

Ellen Cohen reported that Monmouth County contracted with 8 separate non-profit agencies in 2025. Combined the agencies delivered 15 separate programs. The agencies included Big Brothers Big Sisters of Coastal and Northern Monmouth County; Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County, IEP Youth Services, Mental Health Association of Monmouth County, New Hope Integrated Behavioral Health, Preferred Behavioral Health-Prevention First Division, Wellsprings Center for Prevention, and the YMCA of the Jersey Shore. Based upon the youth served forms submitted and the quarterly narrative reports entered in the Juvenile Automated Management System, there were reported to be approximately 1,367 youth and families served in 2025. Prevention was the service category with the highest number of youths served in 2025. The total combined state grant awards to Monmouth County in 2025 was \$1,175,394. This includes State Community Partnership Grant (Program Services and Program Management), FCIU and Family Court Services, and JDAI Innovations. The combined total expended out of the 2025 grant awards was \$1,078,015.24 or 91.7%.

V. Family Division

Tara Buckley reported on changes to the Judiciary assigned to the Family Division. She shared that Superior Court Judge Lawrence Shapiro, Superior Court Judge Kerry C. Soranno, and Superior Court Judge Aurelio Vincitore were newly assigned to the Family Division. Superior Court Judge Scott Arnette transferred to the Civil Division, and Judge Lucas is staying within the Family Division. Tara Buckley shared information related to the number of cases that Juvenile Conference Committees and Intake Service Conference handled in the past two months. For JCCs there have been 4 to 5 cases per month, however 1 to 3 show up. For both December and January, ISC handled 5 cases. She stated that the most common charges in the diversion cases involve simple assault, harassment and shoplifting.

VI. Probation Division-Juvenile Supervision

Caitlin Mejia reported that Monmouth had 119 youths on probation supervision or deferred disposition. She indicated staffing changes (probation officers and juvenile supervisor) within the Probation Division-Juvenile Supervision are anticipated. Caitlin highlighted the Monmouth specific statistics related to the Gun Violence Reduction Initiative that began August 2023. Since the start of the gun violence reduction task force, 16 Monmouth County youth have been

involved. Caitlin Mejia reported 5 youths had successful completions, and 9 youths are currently enrolled.

VII. Juvenile Detention

Sebastian Trapani reported that Karen Taylor is the new Superintendent at the Middlesex County Juvenile Detention Facility. Sebastian indicated that she was previously Warden in Camden. Sebastian Trapani highlighted the shared services agreements that Monmouth County has for secure detention beds, at both Middlesex and Ocean Counties. There are 10 secure detention beds in Middlesex County, and 3 shelter beds. There are 2 secure detention beds per day at the Ocean County Detention Center, and one additional bed shall be made available for use on an as-needed basis, as available. Judge Lucas questioned whether the shelter beds in Middlesex County could be converted to detention beds, if needed. Sebastian Trapani indicated that they are not able to be converted. He indicated that in the future this item could be considered. The current shared services agreement with Middlesex County expires 6/30/2030 and for Ocean County it expires 6/04/2027.

VIII. New Business

Farah Rahaman highlighted the Office of the Public Defender's Youth Defense Unit. She is serving as the Deputy for the Central Region that includes Monmouth County. The unit will be comprised of youth defense attorneys who specialize in youth justice, trained specifically to address the unique developmental, legal, and social needs of young clients. A holistic approach that integrates legal defense with the support of families, schools, and communities will be taken. Farah Rahaman indicated that for the day-to-day operations, she does not see many changes.

Tom Fichter provided an update on the Monmouth County Prosecutor's Office- Restorative Practices outreach to schools and indicated a presentation was given to Monmouth County School Principals. He highlighted the members of the dream team who participated, including students who joined them, and described the schools that have expressed interest or they are planning to meet with. Tom Fichter indicated that there was a meeting/training held with Juvenile Officers and School Resource Officers that highlighted resources available, including crisis response and provided legal updates. Dustin Knoblauch commented the Juvenile Officers Association meeting was wonderful and Tom did a great job.

IX. Old Business

Kaitlyn Silagyi reported that the Division of Behavioral Health will be changing its name to the Office of Mental Wellness and Supportive Services. A Division of Integrated Health will be established with the Department of Health and Human Services. As a result, there will be some re-organization taking place.

Kaitlin Silagyi shared two resources available through their office for individuals in need of substance abuse treatment services or impacted by substance abuse problems. One is Ride for Recovery that can be used for uber and lift rides to treatment; and the other is backpacks that

include items for hygiene and personal care for foster care children impacted by parental substance abuse.

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment- The next meeting of the Monmouth County Youth Services Commission is scheduled for Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at 4:00 PM.