

Monmouth County Youth Services Commission

Minutes for Tuesday, June 2, 2026

4:00 PM First Floor Conference Room,

Human Services Building with Zoom Link Option Available

Attendance: Trude Arnette, Tara Buckley, Myra Carter, Achille Dejean, Laurie Gerhardt, Jennifer Hoffer, Chanta Jackson, Dustin Knoblauch, Dr. Lester W. Richens, Prosecutor Raymond Santiago, Kaitlyn Silagyi, Christine Talbot, Ellen Cohen, Kathleen Peterson

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

It was indicated that the Honorable Lourdes Lucas was unable to attend the meeting due to a trial she was involved with. Prosecutor Raymond Santiago was running late but expected to attend. Ellen Cohen read the Open Public Meetings Act statement. A motion was made, seconded and carried (Knoblauch: Silagyi) to approve the Youth Services Commission Minutes from April 7, 2026.

II. Division of Child and Youth Services Report

Dustin Knoblauch reported that the Youth Justice Commission is doing things a little different this year with the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, which is positive. She reported that we have done a lot to capture the youth and family voice through focus groups, listening sessions and meetings.

Dustin Knoblauch highlighted the findings in the prevention service category based upon youth and family voice. She reported that mentoring will continue to be a priority area. The benefits of mentoring, positive role models and trusted adults working with at risk in programs such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and the YMCA have been very important. She noted that there may be a focus on specialist mentoring focused on school to work and / or college bound youth; and continued mentoring where older youth mentor younger youth which have shown to have a positive impact.

A focus on evidence-based programming and skill development was discussed and thought to be important. She noted that additional information on the status of whether NJ4S will be renewed is needed. It is unclear if they will continue with a prevention or mental health focus. Municipal Alliances for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse also exist.

Regarding Prevention Services in identified high need municipalities, Dustin indicated that there is a lot of overlap with other planning entities targeting the same communities. There is a desire to provide some county-wide prevention services, as well as those to some targeted areas.

Prevention services that include strategies to engage families and start prevention services at the elementary age level will be included. Dustin reported that there is a desire for innovation- especially related to providing safe and free places for youth.

In the service category of diversion- efforts to help youth avoid arrest will include the biggest shift. With the changes in JDAI Innovations funding at the state level and what is available to Monmouth County being lost, Dustin reported that we are proposing a Youth Justice Family Support Program. The Youth Justice Family Support Program will be implemented by the county. Integration of the Youth and Family Support Services will provide enhanced coordination and communication between our JDAI Unit, the Court, the Family Crisis Intervention Unit, Child and Family Crisis Clinicians and the Elevate Program. Incentives and restorative practices will be included.

The Family Crisis Intervention Unit is a mandated program. Dustin indicated that we need to evaluate the level of service and the funding allocated for this program. There is an expectation that the FCIU will accept truancy cases.

There have been challenges obtaining station house adjustment data. Additional information is needed to determine if police officers are conducting them. We broaden the referral sources for the Keys to Innervisions to include referrals from school Student Assistance Counselors. Discussion with Thomas Fichter regarding use of Station House Adjustments will take place. Dustin noted that we need to think through this a little more.

In the area of detention alternatives, the STEADY program did not have a lot of utilization and will be absorbed with the loss of JDAI IF funding. Regarding juvenile detention beds, Monmouth County has not had the same problem that some other counties have related to youth waiting for a detention bed. Sebastian Trapani has provided us with detention admission data for 2025. We will seek any updates on our shared services agreements for detention beds from him.

In the area of disposition, there is a continued need for specialized treatment for youth with problematic sexual behavior, and individualized services for youth on probation. In the past, we had two separate programs, it is recommended that they be combined. There continues to be a need for adolescent residential substance abuse treatment services for court involved youth. These dispositional options will be recommended to continue as core services.

Dustin reported that a representative from the Monmouth County Parks System will be invited to attend the August Youth Services Commission meeting, to highlight the programs and activities offered for youth.

III. YSC Co-Chairs Report

Prosecutor Raymond Santiago reported that at the regular Juvenile Officers Association meeting, they can discuss Station House Adjustments. He reported that there was a meeting with service providers related to the Link to Care program. Efforts are underway to connect law enforcement with service providers. Opportunities for open dialogue are taking place.

He brought attention to the FBI Public Service Announcement shared by Thomas Fichter regarding violent online networks targeting vulnerable and underage populations, as well as the Restorative Justice program for schools that is still growing. Information regarding Project Crash that was

held at Neptune Township High School was shared. Prosecutor Santiago indicated that he found it to be very impactful and demonstrated the dangers of drunk and impaired driving. Multiple emergency vehicles were on site as part of this event and multiple agencies were represented. Emergency response from police, the hospital and even a helicopter were part of it.

IV. YSC Administrator's Update

Ellen Cohen highlighted the outline of the Youth Justice Strategic Plan. She noted that the service categories described remain the same prevention, diversion, detention, detention alternatives, disposition and re-entry. The plan includes an existing program inventory for each category, and quantitative and qualitative data review with programming recommendations. Ellen thanked Dustin for her help gathering the youth, family, and community voice through the various focus groups and listening sessions conducted.

Ellen Cohen reported the YSC Monitoring of our Funded Programs will take place during June and July. Ellen reported that there are 9 agencies that will be monitored that include 17 different programs. The schedule has been set, and the programs have submitted their pre-monitoring reports.

V. Education Update

Dr. Lester W. Richens reported that the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) released the School Performance Reports for the 2024-2025 school year. He indicated that the report provides residents with information on academics and school climate at the school, district, and state levels. The 2024-2025 School Performance Reports include assessment and accountability results, as well as information on college and career readiness, school learning environment, and more. The reports have been redesigned because of the NJDOE's transition to the New Jersey Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (NJSLEDS). He indicated that there is a link to Monmouth County and the districts, and if anyone needs assistance feel free to contact him. Dr. Richens commented that he could not believe where the school year went and that it went fast. He indicated that with the new administration at the state level, there likely will be some changes but fewer changes. He reported that summer is a busy time, preparing for the upcoming school year, and monitoring of 19 districts in Monmouth County will take place to make sure the districts are complying.

VI. Family Division

Tara Buckley reported that Monmouth County had one youth in detention in Ocean County, and 5 youth at the Middlesex County Juvenile Detention facility. Tara Buckley reported that there were 5 cases to be heard by the Juvenile Conference Committee next week. She indicated that that updated information on Juvenile Conference Committees was provided to Ellen by Scott Prato for the Youth Justice Strategic Plan. Tara Buckley reported that there will be a rotation schedule established for the on-called after-hour court intake coverage, beginning the last week

of June beginning July. She shared information on team leader changes within the Family Division. The Family Division is working on addressing the backlog of cases.

VII. Probation Division-Juvenile Supervision

Myra Carter reported that there were 110 Monmouth County youth on probation supervision and gave the breakdown by subcategory (general, deferred, sexually abusive behavior (SAB), gun violence reduction). Myra Carter described some of the programming and events that the Probation Division has been involved with. A fun day was arranged for the youth on probation supervision where they received pizza and incentives. Myra indicated that food helps to engage them. They are looking to conduct a program with Ocean Family Success Center on June 30, 2026, on “Navigating the Next Chapter” for youth and their families. Myra Carter shared information on the recent completion ceremony held for the Gun Reduction Taskforce participants. The Assignment Judge spoke at the ceremony as well as several participants. Myra Carter indicated that a youth participant did not feel comfortable speaking at the event but was happy to complete the program.

Myra Carter reported on meetings to discuss program ideas for youth on probation supervision with IEP Youth Services, and an application for the Administrative Office of the Courts to submit to NJ Youth Justice Commission, for a JDAI set aside.

VIII. New Business

IX. Old Business

X. Public Comment

XI. Adjournment-

A motion was made, seconded and carried (Dejean; Talbot) to adjourn the Youth Services Commission at 4:45 PM.

The next meeting of the Monmouth County Youth Services Commission is scheduled for Monday*, August 3, 2026, at 4:00 PM. * Note change of day due to Night Out Against Crime on Tuesday.