

# **Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

**Approved February 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
3:00 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.

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Meeting ID: 230 352 635 879

Passcode: vF2YP6HU

**Members present:** Mia Schultz (NAACP), Andrew Laing, Breanna Sheehan (VCNAA), Grace Ahmed (VRJA), Marita Canedo (Migrant Justice)

**Members absent:** AALV Inc., Outright Vermont

**Guests present:** Laura Carter (DRJS), Xusana Davis (ORE), Reverend Mark Hughes (VRJA)

## **WELCOME**

Meeting called to order at 3:03

### **1. Member and Guest Introductions**

Members and guests introduced themselves.

### **2. Changes to the Agenda**

No changes to the agenda.

### **3. Approve November 1, 2024 and December 20, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

The November 1, 2024 and December 2024 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

### **4. Intention, Goal, or Priority Setting**

Mark shared that Grace Ahmed, from this meeting forth, would be representing Vermont Racial Justice Alliance. Grace offered to co-chair the Council with Breanna, and Grace was elected co-chair by consensus. Marita asked about documents for review by the Council.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Update from the Division of Racial Justice Statistics**

Xusana provided an update on the Division's efforts, noting challenges with data quality. Current work includes reviewing requests for data from the Agency of Education (AOE) and addressing data collection practices at a statewide level.

Laura shared updates on the inclusion of exclusionary discipline data in reports and progress on new collaborations with the Department of Corrections (DOC) and Juvenile Justice Coordinator.

### **2. Update on Annual Report**

Breanna shared that the annual report would emphasize agency collaboration, legislative support, and staffing needs for the Division.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **1. Interests and Skills Inventory**

The Council members discussed their interests, skills, and experiences related to data and racial equity:

- Breanna shared her experience in community engagement and her interest in community empowerment and data accessibility.
- Grace highlighted her technical expertise in data analysis and racial equity work.
- Andrew shared his background in statistics and data governance, emphasizing the importance of context and transparency.
- Marita discussed her long-standing commitment to racial equity and experience in community-based data collection.
- Mia focused on her work in connecting qualitative data with community perspectives.
- Mark emphasized data's role in addressing systemic oppression, particularly in juvenile justice.

### **1. Division Priorities and Council Participation**

The Division shared some examples of types of activities and topics areas where Council collaboration would be beneficial. In terms of activities, Xusana emphasized the need for community engagement to make data accessible to the public and policymakers. She also discussed how the Council could offer insight into knowledge gaps and research questions, legislative testimony, and data use agreements. In terms of topic areas, Laura suggested topics related to reentry, education, record administration, Act 180 (Restorative Justice), Act 174 (Expungement and Sealing), juvenile justice, and housing.

## **2. Independent Work and Idea Generation**

Members shared their interests and concerns around demographic data collection, the absence of race categories, and challenges in comparing data without standardized definitions. Algorithmic bias was also highlighted, with a suggestion to invite an expert for further discussion. Additionally, the group discussed exploring the cost of inequity as a large-scale project. To address these and other topics of interest given limited capacity, members proposed to vote on the topics they would like to engage with and to maintain a list of topics to explore in future presentations and conversations. Finally, the group discussed their interest in reviewing education data currently being analyzed by the Division, and the Division shared that going forward, they would keep the Council informed during the analytical process.

### **CLOSING**

#### **1. Final Thoughts**

None.

#### **2. Public Comment**

Mark highlighted the importance of engaging with the Racial Disparities in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice System Advisory Panel (RDAP) and the potential for the Council to provide a different perspective to the Panel. Mark raised the issue of compensation for Council members and suggested further involvement of community members in the future. Mark also flagged the statutory mandate and original intent of the group to identify systemic bias in the criminal and juvenile justice system, and most importantly, provide recommendations on how to mitigate those disparities.

#### **3. Adjourn**

Meeting adjourned at 4:25.