

The Council is grounded in prevention and works to ensure justice by building equitable and effective opportunities for children, youth and families to thrive in Vermont.

Council for Equitable Youth Justice
Meeting Agenda and Approved Minutes
July 17, 2025, 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Via Zoom
Public Location: 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT

Members Present: Donn Hutchins, Karen Vastine, Sparks, Stu Berry, Amy Davenport, Matt Wolf, J Brand, Laurey Burris, Jessica Barquist, Mike Loner, Kate Hayes, Linda Johnson, Paul Groce

Members Absent: Katherine O'day, Zoe Souder, Peter Brown, Mercedes King, and Hudson Ranney

Partners Present: Mark Hughes (ERD Community member/Racial Justice Alliance), Alissa Shethar and Sheri Lynn (Dept for Children and Families)

Call to Order: Karen called the meeting to order at 10:33 am with a quorum.

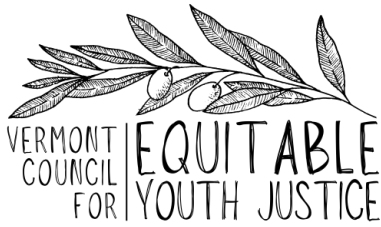
Welcome and Introductions:

National Updates:

- Sheri: Registration is open for the 2025 Youth Justice in Action Conference, scheduled for October 14-16 in Minneapolis, MN.
 - Karen: Contact Sheri if interested in attending.
 - Next Step: Add a vote on sending attendees to the August retreat agenda.
- Stu: The Casey Foundation is launching a new model to train a team from the local pilot and state for Family Engagement Case Planning.
 - Karen: Consider proactive measures and discussion at Systems Improvement meeting.
 - Stu: State buy-in is essential; the model shifts focus from compliance to a "change" model.
 - Amy: Add this to the SI agenda; consider what county base vs. state system model. Proposed knowing more about Vermont's youth probation system.
 - Stu: Positive outcomes in Jefferson Parish and Maine.
 - Karen: Offered assistance in presenting this to DCF.

Recent Press:

- Donn: Concerns about a recent Digger article on Middlesex and Vergennes; need updates from DCF.
 - **Next Step:** Invite Tyler for a September update.
- Stu: Caution advised in a Seven Days article; focus on community services over facilities.
- Karen: Align with HESOC contractor and emphasize community-based resources.



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Council Business:

- **Vote to Approve of June 26 Minutes:** Motion to approve the report with the update to reflect the Raise the Age date by Stu, seconded by Donn; passed unanimously.
- **Annual Report Questions and Vote:**
 - Kate: Inquiry about Raise the Age effective date. Confirmed July 1, 2027.
 - Karen: Asked for a motion to approve report. Amy motioned to approve, and Stu seconded; passed unanimously.
 - **Next Step:** Karen and Sheri submit the report.

Committee's Proposals for Funding:

- Karen requested that each committee chair present high-level bullet points detailing the process and rationale behind their respective proposals. She emphasized that the budget for each grant year is available for review prior to the presentation of the proposals

1. **SI Proposal (Chair Amy):** Funding for training Department of Corrections (DOC) officials on youth brain development and sight/sound separation.

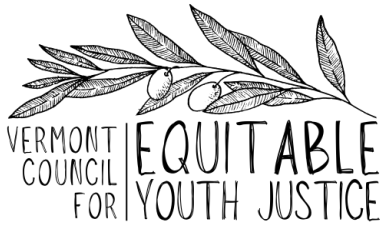
Purpose:

- The proposal aims to fund a training program within DOC correctional facilities where youth are held, addressing the noncompliance issues related to sight and sound separation that led to reduced funding in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022.
- The initiative involves developing a training curriculum focused on youth brain development and educating correctional officers. The training will initially target specific facilities identified as housing youth.
- Additionally, the training will be transformed into a video module for new DOC staff.

Budget Request: \$91,570 FFY22

Discussion Points:

- Alissa: reported that all facilities might house a juvenile at some point, emphasizing the widespread need for training.
- Stu: commented on the violations that occurred during COVID, noting that the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) did not acknowledge these as contributing factors to the number of violations.
- Alissa: mentioned that some facilities are better at sight and sound separation, and she is collaborating on training with local police departments, utilizing resources from Boston.
- Amy: requested Alissa to forward the name of the Boston resource as a potential organization to submit a proposal.



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Motion: Karen called for a motion to approve the System Improvement proposal for DOC training on sight and sound separation.

- Jessica motioned to approve, and Laurey seconded the motion.
- During the discussion, Jessica expressed enthusiasm about the proposal moving forward.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Next Steps:

- Karen suggested the committee begin developing the Request for Proposal (RFP) with support from Sheri.

2. **ERD Proposal (Chair Sparks):** The proposal aims to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in school suspensions through targeted professional development and enhanced community engagement.

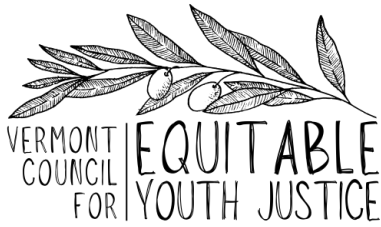
Background: The Ethnic and Racial Disparities (ERD) committee has been actively working to address the issue of racial and ethnic disparities in school suspensions. Recognizing that school suspensions can serve as a gateway to the juvenile justice system, the committee has developed a comprehensive plan based on insights gained from previous evaluations.

Key Components:

- **Professional Development:** Educators and administrators training in restorative practices, which begin in the classroom and extend to administrative decisions regarding suspensions. Equip school staff with the skills to handle disciplinary issues in a manner that minimizes suspension and promotes positive outcomes.
- **Early Intervention and Prevention:** Foster positive relationships among teachers, students, and administrators. Students will be active participants in decision-making processes, ensuring their voices are heard and respected.
- **Community Engagement:** Reduce juvenile delinquency through partnerships beyond the school environment. Build strong community relationships and engage local organizations to support youth and prevent delinquency.
- **Evaluation:** Conduct evaluations using a neutral perspective to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies. Identify strengths and areas for improvement to ensure continuous progress.

Discussion Points:

- **Geographic Scope:** The initiative is intended to be statewide, as confirmed by Sparks.
- **Flexibility:** While there are some parameters, Sparks is open to feedback and adjustments to meet objectives effectively.
- **Standards:** Stu recommends establishing clear standards, such as alternatives to suspensions and support mechanisms for suspended students to keep up with their work.



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- **Proposal Selection:** Amy suggests selecting the best proposal from multiple submissions, allowing bidders to enhance their proposals by addressing any gaps.
- **Reporting:** Regular updates to the ERD committee are recommended to facilitate ongoing feedback and suggestions.
- **Funding for Evaluation:** Amy inquired about funding for evaluation, suggesting the possibility of using future funds. Sparks notes the successful use of a neutral evaluator in previous BSD evaluations.
- **Funding:** Donn asks, and Sheri confirmed availability of funds from multiple grant awards for the project.

Budget Request and Timeline:

- The project is seeking \$250,000 under FFY21 (\$50,000) and FFY 23 (\$200,000)
- Sparks estimates the initiative will take at least two years to implement effectively.

Motion: Karen calls for a motion to approve the ERD committee's proposal for the use of \$250,000.

- Amy moves to approve, and Stu seconds the motion.
- The motion passes unanimously.

3. **YS Proposal (Co-Chair Julia):** Identify a trauma-informed individual or organization to engage with youth aged 14 to 26. The goal is to collect data on their experiences, understand their needs from the system, and explore how the system can be more supportive and effective.

Purpose:

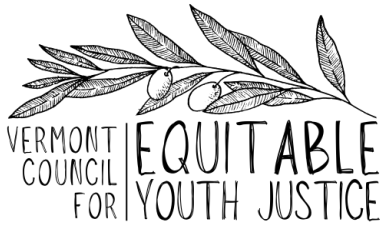
- Provide a platform for youth to voice their experiences and give them a sense of purpose.
- Gather insights from system-involved youth to identify necessary changes for the Council.
- The target population includes youth from the global majority, empowering them to engage in action and policymaking.

Funding and Timeline:

- Funding will be sourced from FFY 21 (\$50,000) and FFY 23 (\$137,649).
- A 3 to 5-year contract is proposed, with the first year dedicated to designing the project and ensuring representation from youth across all 14 counties.

Discussion Points:

- Donn: Inquired about funding sources and recommended removing "hire" when sending out an RFP.
- Amy: Expressed strong support for the proposal but noted potential limitations on contract duration, suggesting 2 or 3 years. Karen assured compliance with OJJDP requirements, while Sheri noted the state's preference for 5-year contracts.



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- Stu: Highlighted the importance of compensating youth to ensure their long-term engagement. Julia confirmed that this was discussed within the committee.
- Karen: Emphasized the need for recommendations on youth compensation.
- Linda: Suggested the RFP could extend up to 5 years and stressed the importance of including youth compensation in the proposal.

Motion: Karen called for a vote to approve the plan with the understanding that the grant period could extend up to 5 years, in compliance with federal OJJDP requirements, and that youth compensation would be included in the proposal.

- Stu moved the motion, Laurey seconded, and it passed unanimously.
- **Next Steps:** Develop the RFP

Retreat (Aug 20-21):

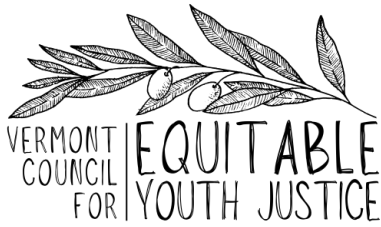
- Sheri: Outbound Stowe provided the best bid, and we will proceed with the agreement unless there are any questions or concerns. None were raised.
- Karen: Attendees will need to purchase meals and seek reimbursement, but we are exploring options to cover costs in advance if necessary.
- Karen: Met with Vanessa Quince from Mathematica to discuss although recent efforts have focused on data, the retreat will shift focus to anti-racist work. Lauren Amos, Jen Agosti, and Vanessa Quince will be attending.

Call for Nominations for Officers:

- Donn: According to the bylaws, officer voting occurs at the annual retreat. The process includes:
 - Informing everyone about officer elections. This meeting serves as official notice.
 - Requesting nominations from individuals interested in officer roles or nominating someone after confirming their willingness to serve on the Council.
 - Voting at the retreat.
- Karen: Submit nominations to Sheri by Aug 5.
- Karen: Committee chairs will also be elected at the retreat. Karen and Donn will email current chairs about the process, and Karen is available to assist with the vote.
- The August retreat agenda will include the election of officers and committee chairs, a vote on the number of attendees for the October youth conference, and the governance survey.

Governance Committee Report (Chair Mike):

- Developing a short survey for council members to complete at the retreat, indicating their position on the OJJDP list to identify gaps in requirements and the skills they bring to the committee (e.g., budgeting, lobbying). Future recruitment can focus on specific skills and other benefits members provide, with examples.
- The committee will establish a timeline for identifying gaps and recruitment strategies by the end of the year.



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- Karen would like to discuss attendance records, acknowledging factors beyond members' control.

Other Business:

- The Mathematica proposal submitted is for a 2-year contract. They began some activities for year 2. We are reviewing the proposal and considering plans for next year. A vote may occur at the retreat. Funds are available.
- August retreat agenda will include
 - election of officers and chairs of committees,
 - vote on how many to send to the Oct youth conference, and
 - the governance survey.

Motion to adjourn at 12:01: Donn motioned to adjourn, and Amy seconded. Motion passes.

Draft minutes submitted by Sheri Lynn.