



Council for Equitable Youth Justice
Approved Minutes
May 15, 2025, 10:30a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Public Location: 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT

Members Present:

Karen Vastine, Jessica Barquist, Donn Hutchins, Amy Davenport, Zoe Souder, Julia Brand, Henri Sparks, Laurey Burris, Stu Berry, Paul Groce, Linda Johnson, Mike Loner, and Katherine O'Day

Members Absent: Matt Wolf, Hudson Ranney

Partners: Peter Brown, Lauren Amos, Sheri Lynn

Call to order: 10:05

- Welcome and introductions Peter King pursuing membership of the council.
- FFY 21 and FFY 22 Funds
 - No cost extension was approved for FFY 21.
 - Center for Coordinated State Assistance (CCSA) has lost their funding
 - RFP HESOC—Stu, Karen, Donn, and Jessica volunteered. Karen noted Stu's experience with residential care.
 - RFP FFY 21—Amy and Laurey volunteer. Stu can do one or the other.
 - **Action step:** Sheri will email council members who were missing if interested in reviewing.
 - Plan Training/Review of the Proposal for Fund – TBD The Executive Committee discuss the process, and the form used to develop Request for Proposals. The idea was that there needed to be support like training to gain clarity and possibly change the current form's questions.

Data Presentation: The meeting focused on a data presentation by Lauren Amos from Mathematica, discussing racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, particularly concerning youth of color. Questions pondered included:

- To what extent do youth of color in Vermont experience the same disparities?
- When and where do youth commit offenses?
- At the end will look at action planning – what data gaps to fill.

Key points included:

1. **Data Walk Activity:** Participants engaged in an interactive activity to explore data on racial disparities in the juvenile justice pipeline, noting that youth of color face higher arrest rates and fewer diversion opportunities nationally. Questions were raised about similar disparities in Vermont.
2. **Data Limitations:** The availability of comprehensive data was identified as a limitation, prompting discussions on what questions arise from the available data.
3. **School-Based Risks:** Concerns were raised about vague data on school-based offenses, with variations in how schools document offenses. The role of School Resource Officers (SROs) and their impact on school culture and policy was discussed. The Bristol School district's high

numbers indicate further exploration. Qualitative and quantitative data work together to understand what is happening.

4. **Diversion Programs:** The meeting explored racial disparities in diversion programs, noting that white youth are referred to diversion more often than youth of color. The process, effectiveness and acceptance of diversion programs were debated (e.g., youth must admit to something). There was discussion about poverty as a factor.
5. **Mental Health and Arrests:** The high suicide rate in Vermont was noted, with discussions on mental health as a potential trigger for juvenile offenses. The need for better mental health services was emphasized. What extent is mental health a trigger? Where are students getting the services? What about youth that are victimized (e.g., girls report self-defense).
6. **Action Planning and Data Gaps:** The council discussed critical data gaps that need to be addressed to understand racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile arrests. Strategies for disparity reduction were proposed, including expanded diversion programs, implicit bias training, and improved data collection.
7. **Discussion on Racial Disparities:** Participants debated the systemic issues of race and poverty in Vermont's juvenile justice system. The need for focused strategies to address racial disparities was highlighted.
8. **Next Steps:** Karen suggested further collaboration with Lauren to discuss the data, and Lauren agreed to respond to the questions collected.

Committee Reports

1. **Youth Engagement:**
 - J and Zoe have reported on survey results, with plans to share these results in June.
 - Orientation efforts are currently delayed but remain a priority for the committee.
 - The committee is considering creating a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify an organization that can involve, pay, and survey youth to gather their views and develop recommendations for youth engagement.
 - Compensation for youth involvement is emphasized, with Stu sharing his experience on its importance. Karen has mentioned that compensation has been discussed, and she can assist with this aspect.
2. **Systems Improvement:**
 - Amy noted that there was no meeting in May.
3. **Race and Ethnic Disparities:**
 - Sparks is working on understanding the RFP process to advance existing goals.
 - There is a focus on youth participation and involvement, with BSD paying students to participate.
 - Efforts are being made to recruit and retain committee members.
 - Committee support is transitioning to Sheri.
 - Sparks is interested in connecting with Zoe regarding youth involvement.
4. **Governance:**
 - Mike Loner is the new chair and is starting to focus on recruitment and developing tools and assessments.
 - A survey will be conducted to determine the composition of the grid council, identifying who is currently involved and who needs to be recruited.
5. **Next Steps:** Karen encouraged members to reach out with questions for the committees to report on.

Other Business

- Vote on April 17, 2025, Minutes: Amy motioned to approve, and Donn seconded. Katherine and Laurey abstained. Motion passes.
- August Retreat: proposed date August 20 - 21 or Aug 27 – 28 with the trainers from Mathematica. There was not one time that worked for all.

Adjourn: 12:30 PM