



Our mission is to: prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system.

Council for Equitable Youth Justice

Meeting Minutes (Hybrid)

Jan 15, 2026, 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Public Location: Waterbury State Office Building, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT

Attendance: Jessica Barquist, Donn Hutchins, Kate Hayes, Mercedes King, Sparks, Zoe, Katherine O'Day, Stu Berry, Linda Johnson, J Brand, Laurey Burris, Peter Brown, Amy Davenport, Matt Wolf and Karen Vastine

Absent: Paul Groce, Hudson Ranney, and Mike Loner

Partners: Sheri Lynn and Lindy Boudreau (Dept for Children and Families), Hunter Hurst (NCJFCJ-NCJJ), and Nate Hines (Public)

Welcome and Introductions

Jessica called the meeting to order with a quorum at 10:36.

There were no public comments.

**Restorative Practices (Lindy, Boudreau, Adolescent Unit Director, Family Services Division)
see PowerPoint handout**

1. **Review:** elements of the project, history and support from the consultants Jennifer Llewellyn Professor Dalhousie University Nova Scotia and Paul Nixon Independent Social Worker Edinburgh, Scotland
2. **Focus:** relational, system transformation leadership, and policy outcomes.
3. **Framework:** perspective on involvement, focusing on restorative and relational aspects.
4. **District and State plans:** a report will be shared with CEYJ. Noted examples include the Abenaki relationship and statewide CHINS C youth initiatives.
5. **Casey Foundation Application:** Encouraged DCF to apply for the 3rd cohort, due in March or April. Currently FSD is using the Casey model for CHINS C.
6. **Family Work Impact:** Emphasized the positive impact on family work and improved outcomes, particularly in CHINS C
7. **Measuring Success:** Phase 3 implementation will evaluate 15-16 different plans.
8. **Restorative Opportunities:** Separate restorative work is ongoing internally and externally at Woodside. NCJJ will be informed by consulting restorative work. Tyler is managing HESOC work at GM Campus, with listening sessions planned.
9. **Staff and Family Restorative Process:** Restorative processes for families and youth are still being determined, with future recommendations expected. Community concerns about youth are noted.



Our mission is to: prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system.

High End System of Care (Hunter Hurst, National Center for Juvenile Justice -NCJJ): Project to gather feedback from stakeholders and youth to build recommendations to ensure Vermont's high-needs youth detention center provides safe, effective care.

1. Meetings and Interviews:

- Initial meeting with Lindy and will meet with other leadership, and Family Services Division staff.
- In-person interviews to be scheduled for February or March, focusing on meeting with FSD leadership, and directors/staff of facilities like Red Cover, Depot, and Bennington. Other meetings have to be scheduled with prosecutors, and law enforcement.

2. Youth and Family Engagement:

- Consideration of focus groups with kids and families.
- Current plan involves working with the Elevate Youth- Youth Advisory Board virtually, approved by IRB.
 - 1. **Next Step:** Sheri will coordinate a meeting with Hunter, Zoe, J, and Karen to discuss incentives and logistics for the virtual Youth Advisory Board sessions.
- Exploring possibilities for in-person engagement.

3. Interview Protocols:

- Protocols for youth, caretakers, parents, and agency partners are ready and approved.
- Stu will review and provide feedback.

4. Judges and Defender Generals:

- Meeting with the defender general in Montpelier for in person.
- Judges may be engaged best virtually on Friday afternoons.
- Kate and Amy will assist in connecting with Judge Zonay and Hunter.

5. Agency Partner Interviews:

- Virtual interviews with agency partners and council have been successful.

Council Business

1. Don asked that the Dec 18 Minutes include absent council members. He motioned to approve the minutes as modified and Kate seconded. Motion passes.
2. Stu motioned and Linda seconded to approve the distribution of FFY 24 program funds as outlined. Motion passes
 - a. Vote FFY 24 Budget: Approval of the distribution of FFY 24 program area funds totaling \$430,017 distributed evenly among the SI, YS, and ERD committees
 - i. Proposed Allocation:
 1. SI Committee: \$143,339
 2. YS Committee: \$143,339



Our mission is to: prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system.

3. ERD Committee: \$143,339

3. Dollars to Impact One Pager – suggested “To be spend in 4 years”. Number 8 add plural best proposal(s).

Federal, State, and Local Updates

1. Federal Grants- FFY 25 notice of funding expected in 2026 - late due to the delay from the shutdown.
2. Legislative session kicked off last week. Jessica is watching for the Council and will inform SI/council.
3. Reschedule Feb 19 meeting: No clear winner. Sheri will send out a poll
4. Mathematica will have the final draft of report (roadmap) on Jan 21, for review. The presentation on the final recommendations will be in Feb.
5. Annual Report- Sheri is working on the draft for review by volunteers from the executive committee.

Committee Report Out

1. ERD no update.
2. Governance:
 - a. **Recruitment Matrix and Flow Chart Process:** Finalize and implement the recruitment process. Recommend replacing names with titles on the flow chart.
 - b. **Onboarding:** Develop a checklist for onboarding. Consult with recent council members to gather feedback on what they would have liked to have in an onboarding process.
3. Youth Services:
 - a. **Orientation:** Gathering bios from council members.
 - b. **Funding:** Discuss potential funds for crisis planning and funding basic needs for youth. Consider setting aside emergency funds for youth transitioning out of care or in care who need housing, food, etc., to prevent youth from entering the justice system and support their transition out of care.
4. System Improvement:
 - a. **RFP for DOC Training:** Initially no proposals and will be reviewing one from bidder.
 - b. **Data Strategy:** Develop a strategy for data collection and analysis discussed at retreat
 - c. **Juvenile Justice Principles:** Review and discuss the core principles of juvenile justice at next meeting.

Adjourn at 12:30



Report to

Vermont Governor Phil Scott

Members of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees

2025 Annual Report

Council for Equitable Youth Justice

Vermont State Advisory Group on Delinquency Prevention

**In Accordance with 34 U.S. Code § 11133 [Sec. 223]
and 33 V.S.A. § 3303(e)**

Submitted to:

Phil Scott, Governor

Jenney Samuelson, Secretary, Agency of Human Services

Sandi Hoffman, Interim Commissioner, Department for Children and Families

House Judiciary Committee, Senate Judiciary Committee

Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice

Report Date: February 18, 2026

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Compliance with JJRA Requirements	3
Background Information.....	6
CEYJ Mission	7
Currently Appointed Council Members	7
Section 1: Monitor and Oversee Compliance	8
Definitions.....	8
Section II: Elimination of Racial Disparities.....	11
Figure 1: Selected Contact Point Numbers for FFY2024 (Oct 1, 2023 – Sept 30, 2024).....	12
Section III: System Improvement in the Juvenile Justice System	13
Section IV: Reducing Delinquency through Youth Services.....	15
Conclusion	16
Appendix.....	18
Circles of Peace for Youth.....	19
Turning Dollars into Impact Brief	20

Executive Summary

The Council for Equitable Youth Justice (the Council), in collaboration with the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF), oversees the activities of the Vermont Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Three-Year Plan (Federal Fiscal Year 2024-2026). The state receives funds from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Title II formula grant program to support these activities. As a recipient of the Title II grant, the Council is required to submit a report focusing on the progress with the three-year plan and compliance with the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), as amended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (JJRA). Please refer to Sections I, II, III and IV for details about compliance monitoring of the JJRA requirements, addressing racial disparities, systems improvement to the juvenile justice system, and delinquency prevention efforts.

The three goals of the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Three Year Plan](#) are to eliminate racial disparities, prevent delinquency, and improve the juvenile justice system.

Compliance with JJRA Requirements

DCF collected and reported data from Oct 1, 2024 – Sept 30, 2025, to OJJDP in July 2025. OJJDP issued a letter regarding areas where the state was in compliance or non-compliance. Vermont was in compliance with four of the five key areas:

- section 223(a)(11)(A) of the JJDP (the “**deinstitutionalization of status offenders**” or “**DSO**” requirement) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(11)(A)).
- section 223(a)(11)(B) of the JJDP (the “**juveniles charged as adults**” or “**JCA**” requirement) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(11)(B)).¹
- section 223(a)(13) of the JJDP (the “**jail removal**” requirement) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(13)).
- section 223(a)(15) of the JJDP (the “**racial and ethnic disparities**” or “**R/ED**” requirement) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(15)).

Vermont is **not in compliance** with section 223(a)(12) of the JJDP (the “**separation requirement**”) (34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(12)). The Council and DCF will collaborate to develop a plan for addressing this core requirement. Vermont had eleven site and sound separation violations and did not meet the .81 threshold established by OJJDP (refer to the 2025 Site and Sound Separation Violations).

Addressing Racial Disparities

One of the JJRA core requirements is to address racial and ethnic disparities. Partnering with DCF, the Council contracted with an anti-racism consultant, Mathematica, to achieve three objectives in 2025:

1. Help the Council members understand and identify what white supremacy culture and systematic racism are within themselves and their work
2. Develop and review the Council's core values to ensure that the Council's primary goal is the elimination of ethnic and racial disparities in Vermont's juvenile justice system by initiating and acting as a catalyst for both direct intervention and primary prevention strategies
3. Assist the Council with training and assessment of its three-year plan, policies, programs, and practices, and include written recommendations on how to proceed.

The Council members participated in seven training sessions between Oct 2024 and August 2025. One of the sessions was a two-day retreat to reflect on the data and learning from the prior training sessions and to develop an action plan moving forward to address racial disparities in the juvenile court system.

The Burlington School District (BSD) received Title II funds from December 1, 2020, to September 30, 2024, to address racial disparities in school suspensions. In the 2024–25 school year, BIPOC students made up 42% of BSD's student population but accounted for only 33% of suspensions, according to [the district's report](#). This is a drop from the 2021-2022 school year when students of color — 38% of the population — represented 50% of suspensions in the school district. This data highlights significant progress toward more equitable disciplinary practices and reflects BSD's decades of commitment to addressing this issue. Additionally, the district reported a decrease in overall school suspensions, fewer incidents requiring suspension, and a reduction in lost school days due to suspensions, all contributing to improved educational outcomes and student engagement.

Delinquency Prevention

The Council funded youth centers and the Vermont Afterschool Program to support positive youth engagement in their community and promote adult youth relationships. The results of these projects include building protective factors among the youth such as positive self-esteem, improved parent/caregiver relationships, positive leisure/recreational activities and being part of prosocial peer group. The youth centers that received Title II grant funds included The Hub in Bristol and the Berkshire Family YMCA in Bennington. One of the positive outcomes reported by The Hub was a steady increase in at-risk youth that participated in activities after school. They started the project with 47 youth participating from Jan 1 – March 30, 2024, and increased participation to 152 youth between April 1 – June 30, 2025.

The Vermont Afterschool Program received proposals from several community youth organizations and awarded funds to two programs: 1) The Lounge, Center for Restorative Justice, serving Bennington County and 2) the Barra School, East Corinth, service area which includes the towns of Topsham, Bradford, Washington, Chelsea, Fairlee and Orange. Reported highlights from each program include:

- The funds provided youth with new tools and resources to manage and overcome adversity and stress in a healthy/productive way, education on life skills, including self and co-regulation skills, and support for youths' self-esteem through "challenge by choice" activities that provide a sense of accomplishment and success.
- In Bennington, there was an incident of hitting between students in their lounge space outside of program hours. In response, the program provided more targeted and deeper support in teaching youth to develop healthy relationships with each other that are rooted in productive conflict resolution.

Although the Berkshire YMCA and Vermont Afterschool grant project have successfully ended, the Council supported additional funds to the Hub in Bristol for another year (until Aug 31, 2026). The Hub proposed adding one new staff member to foster meaningful connections between youth and adults. The Hub director explained that every individual connects differently, and having a variety of staff members allows more opportunities for young people to build important relationships with safe adults who make them feel truly seen and supported.

System Improvement

The Council approved funding to the Hartford Community Justice Center (HCJC), Circles of Peace for Youth program to employ restorative practices to address domestic violence caused by youth, blending early intervention with accountability, empathy, and atonement. This project was based on an earlier project funded by the Council which provided recommendations for a youth domestic violence intervention program in accordance with Vermont's Statewide Standards for Domestic Violence Accountability Programs (DVAP) approved by the Vermont Council on Domestic Violence. During the first year of the project (2024 – 2025), the program which is the first of its kind in Vermont, engaged in extensive outreach and education across the state. This outreach led to the first referrals to the program by the end of the first year of the project, March 31, 2025. The project was extended for another year with the goal that eligible youth statewide would continue to be referred to and participate in Circles of Peace for Youth. HCJC reported that one youth expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the program.

Background Information

The Council for Equitable Youth Justice (the Council) is the Vermont state advisory group (SAG) that supports compliance with the four core requirements of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), as amended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (JJRA) [34 U.S. Code § 11133 \[Sec. 223\]](#). The Council's role and responsibilities to promote an effective Vermont juvenile justice system and support compliance of the JJRA requirements is defined in [33 V.S.A. § 3302](#).

The Department for Children and Families (DCF) within the Agency of Human Services, is the designated state agency (DSA) charged with coordinating with the Council in the preparation and administration of the three-year state plan required by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). DCF is also the State agency responsible for monitoring and data collection for purposes of compliance with the JJRA.

The Council and DCF have a longstanding partnership to fulfill the JJRA requirements, focusing on reducing racial disparities, improving the youth justice system, and preventing delinquency. DCF annually receives a grant award from the Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through the Title II formula grant program. The Council and its committees strategize with DCF to expend these funds to community-based agencies or consultants capable of executing work that supports the JJDP three-year state plan.

The Council's priorities for the Federal Fiscal Year 2024-2026 (Oct 1, 2024 – Sept 30, 2027) plan are:

1. Eliminate Ethnic and Racial Disparities (ERD) within the juvenile justice system in the State of Vermont by initiating and acting as a catalyst for a combination of direct intervention and primary prevention strategies that achieve this goal.
2. Ensure that Vermont's juvenile justice system has an appropriate response based on risk and need principles for youth, with a view toward dismantling inequities.
3. Promote active youth engagement in their communities and participation in initiatives and programs that promote civic participation, social responsibility, and community development.

The current JJDP Three-Year Plan was released in August 2024 for the Federal Fiscal Years 24 - 26 (Oct 1, 2024 – Sept 30, 2027).

CEYJ Composition

The Council consists of up to 25 members who are appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate for three-year terms. Membership is based on experience with delinquency prevention, and federal membership requirements from the JJRA. For example, the

JJRA requires that there be designated representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy groups, members who have direct experience with the juvenile justice system, youth members and more.

CEYJ Mission

Our mission is to: prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system.

Currently Appointed Council Members

Karen Vastine, Chair
Jessica Barquist, Vice Chair
Donn Hutchins, Secretary/Treasurer
Stuart Berry
Julia Brand
Peter Brown
Laurey Burris
Hon. Amy Davenport
Paul Groce
Hon. Kate Hayes
Linda Johnson
Mercedes King
Michael Loner
Katherine O'Day
Hudson Ranney
Zoe Souder
Henri Sparks
Matt Wolf

Section 1: Monitor and Oversee Compliance

The Council is charged with supporting the monitoring of compliance with the JJRA by DCF. For a state to be eligible to receive a federal formula grant, each year, the state must satisfy 33 state plan requirements. Within these 33 requirements, 4 are deemed to be "core" because by statute OJJDP must reduce a state's annual formula grant award by 20 percent for each requirement with which the state is out of compliance ([eligibility requirements](#)). OJJDP will reduce a state's formula grant by 20 percent if the state is out of compliance with any of these core requirements. Additionally, OJJDP requires that 50 % of the remaining grant funds be dedicated to address the noncompliance areas.

The Council uses a portion of its formula grant to fund a part-time Compliance Monitor who monitors violations of the core requirements and reports them to the OJJDP annually. OJJDP requires that all facilities with the ability and authority to hold youth securely are inspected on a three-year cycle which is in line with the Council's three-year plan. The four core requirements are: (1) deinstitutionalization of status offenders, (2) sight and sound separation of juveniles from adult inmates, (3) removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups, and (4) addressing racial and ethnic disparities. Vermont reports on core requirements (1- 3) as part of the annual Compliance Monitoring report. For core requirement 4, we submit progress with our goal in the three-year plan to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities.

Definitions

Deinstitutionalization of status offenders:

- A status offense is a nondelinquent (and noncriminal) act that is illegal for underage individuals, but not for adults. Status offenders are juveniles charged with offenses such as running away or truant behavior or violating underage liquor law. These juveniles shall not be placed in secure detention facilities or secure correctional facilities. Unlike most states, Vermont treats running away and truancy as grounds for a child protection case rather than delinquency.

Sight and sound separation of juveniles from adult inmates:

- Juveniles may not be subject to sight or sound contact with adult inmates while securely detained.

Removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups:

- Juveniles charged with a crime may not be detained in adult jails or police holding cells except for processing and release, and for a limited duration of time (6 hours for metropolitan and 48 hours for micropolitan facilities). Vermont also has a state statute that bans juvenile delinquents (of any age) from being housed in DOC facilities.

Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities:

- Youth of color are involved with the juvenile justice system at disproportionately higher rates than white youths. States are required to track ethnic diversity and disparities in involvement and treatment in the juvenile justice system and to create and execute an action plan to address disparities.

Federal Definition of Juvenile:

- Federal law does not specify the upper age limit of a “juvenile” covered by the core protections. The upper age limit is defined by state law. **On July 1, 2020, Vermont became the first state in the nation to raise its upper age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 18-year-olds.** This means that, apart from the most serious violent crimes referred to as “the Big 11,” youth accused of breaking the law when they are 18 years old are charged and adjudicated in the Vermont Judiciary’s Family Division as delinquents rather than in the adult Criminal Division. Supervision and coordination of services are provided by the Department for Children and Families (DCF), rather than the Department of Corrections (DOC). Youth accused of breaking the law at age 19 will be similarly included in the juvenile justice system on July 1, 2027, making the 20th birthday the upper age of juvenile jurisdiction in the state.
- Vermont raised the minimum age a youth can be adjudicated in the Family Division from 10 years old to 12 as of July 1, 2025. Currently 12 - 18-year-old youth are covered by the core protections of the JJRA.

Applicability of the Core Requirement to Juveniles Charged as Adults

The JJRA expanded the federal core requirements to include juveniles charged as adults in addition to juveniles charged as delinquents. Juveniles charged as adults cannot be held in an adult jail or lockup or have sight or sound contact with adult inmates, unless the court finds after a hearing and in writing that it is in the interests of justice to do so [34 U.S.C § 223(a)(11)(B)]. If the Court determines that it is in the interests of justice to hold the juvenile in an adult facility, that finding must be reviewed and renewed every 30 days (or 45 days in rural areas) until the juvenile is moved out of the facility. The Judge must continue to make this finding every 30 (or 45) days. This change came into effect on December 21, 2021.

In 2022, Vermont law was amended to require an Interest of Justice (IOJ) hearing for juveniles charged as adults and held in an adult lockup or other secure adult facility. 33 V.S.A. § 5294 provides as follows:

“Not later than the next business day after a juvenile who is awaiting trial or other legal process and who is treated as an adult for prosecution in the Criminal Division is taken into custody, the court shall hold a hearing and determine whether to issue a written order, pursuant to 34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(11)(B), that it is in the interests of justice to hold the juvenile in a jail or other secure facility for adults owned or operated by the

Department of Corrections and, if such an order is issued, whether to allow sight or sound contact with adult inmates. Hearings held and orders issued pursuant to this section shall conform with the requirements of 34 U.S.C. § 11133(a)(11)(B), including the criteria set forth therein.”

Compliance with the 6-hour requirement for an IOJ hearing is difficult in a small, rural state like Vermont. Vermont courts are not open on weekends, holidays or evenings. Thus, if a youth is charged with an offense on a Friday night, the earliest opportunity the Court can hold an IOJ hearing is Monday morning, days after the federal law requires it to have occurred. There is a “rural removal exception” which extends the 6-hour requirement for the hearing to 48 hours for facilities in rural micropolitan areas. This excludes Chittenden, Grand Isle, and Franklin counties, which are defined as ‘metropolitan’ by the Office of Budget Management.

OJJDP has announced that it will collect baseline data regarding IOJ hearings from states for the first two years before making compliance determinations. As a result, Vermont’s funding has not been reduced for failure to hold an IOJ hearing in a timely fashion. This two-year period has been an opportunity for states to evaluate and identify where and how improvements can be made in their justice systems with the goal of preventing and removing all juveniles charged as adults from adult jails and lockups. The Council has provided information to OJJDP and our Congressional delegation on the difficulties of complying with the 6-hour hearing requirement for small rural states.

DCF Compliance Monitor continues to collaborate with the Judiciary’s Court staff to gather information on IOJ hearings and report them to OJJDP.

2025 Sight and Sound Separation Violations

In July 2025, DCF submitted the data for the OJJDP concerning violations for the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 (October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024). There were eleven cases of sight and sound separation violations for juveniles held in secure facilities with an adult population. OJJDP issues a threshold rate that states must be at or below to be in compliance. Adjusting for Vermont’s juvenile population the threshold was .20 per 100,000. Vermont’s threshold rate to achieve compliance was .81 or lower. As a result for the FFY 2025 Title II Formula Grant, Vermont will receive a 20% decrease in funds and will be required to develop a plan to address the noncompliance with 50% of the remainder of the funding. The Council and DCF will collaborate to develop a plan and submit this to OJJDP for approval.

Update on Coming into Compliance

The FFY 22 grant award was reduced because Vermont did not achieve the threshold for sight and sound separation for the data collected from October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2021.

The Council implemented their compliance plan to expend the \$241,570 of FFY 22 funds that

must be used to address the problems of the site and sound noncompliance. A request for proposal was released to identify a national consultant to assist DCF and the Facility Planning for Justice Involved Youth Stakeholder work group with planning DCF's High End System of Care (HESOC) which serves youth with intensive needs and youth held in secure facilities. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges – National Center for Juvenile Justice was selected, and a contract was executed Oct 1, 2025. NCJJ will evaluate the current state of the HESOC and develop recommendations on ways to improve the current system based on national research, their subject matter expertise, and stakeholder feedback.

The second strategy was to identify an expert to train the Department of Corrections officers that interact with young people in the DOC facilities. Because these facilities house adults too, the training would include:

- Understanding federal and state laws requires separation from older incarcerated adults (e.g., consequences when younger offenders are mixed with older more experienced offenders).
- The rationale behind these laws and the research related to adolescent brain development.
- Practical intervention when working with youthful offenders who are held securely.

DCF released a simplified bid in September 2025, but no proposals were submitted by the deadline. However, at the time of this report, a bidder has come forward with a proposal. The Council, DCF, and DOC will review and discuss next steps. If changes to the original compliance plan are warranted, we will submit information for OJJDP to approved before moving forward.

Section II: Elimination of Racial Disparities

The JJRA requires states to “implement policy, practice and system improvement strategies at the state, territorial, local and tribal levels, as applicable, to identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities among youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system, without establishing or requiring numerical standards or quotas.” DCF submits statewide data to OJJDP at the following five key decision points where research has shown that racial disparities may occur: **arrest, diversion, pre-trial detention, secure confinement, and adult transfer**. While Vermont's race/ethnicity data is incomplete (37% unknown or blank), there is reason for concern based on the data that is available.

The FFY2024 data reveals racial and ethnic disparities at almost every contact point in the juvenile justice system. Disparities exist for black youth at arrest, diversion, and pre-trial detention/secure confinement. There is some improvement in transfers to adult court.

Figure 1: Selected Contact Point Numbers for FFY2024 (Oct 1, 2023 – Sept 30, 2024)

Juvenile Case Filings	4.14% of the total black youth population had arrests compared with 1.02% of white youth population had arrests. The black youth population represents 2.9% of the juvenile population and white youth represent 90.6%. This percentage is higher than last year; 1.63% of the black youth population had arrests compared to .82% of the white youth population.
Diversion	Black youth are less than half as likely to have their cases diverted or dismissed: 61% of white youth vs 27% of black youth cases were resolved this way. Last year the percentage of white youth cased diverted/dismissed was 50.80 % compared to 51.60% of black youth cases.
Pre-Trial Detention	For secure holding, 34 % of black youth, 29% of Hispanics and 10% of their white peers were held securely.
Secure Detention	The definition of secure confinement is specific to delinquent offenders, “those in which, following a court disposition, ... are placed in secure residential or correctional facilities for delinquent offenders.” Vermont’s only secure juvenile rehabilitation facility was closed in October of 2020. Vermont did not have a secure juvenile detention facility until October 2024, when the Red Clover Treatment Center opened. Red Clover is a small, four bed secure facility and is intended for short term stabilization. Plans to design and build a permanent facility are underway.
Adult Transfer	Black youth are slightly less likely to have charges transferred from juvenile court to adult court (5.06%) is slightly lower than that of white youth (5.43%).
Unknown Data	37% of juvenile case filings are missing race data. This is slightly worse than last year (33%).

Goal: Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) in Vermont's juvenile justice system through direct intervention and prevention strategies to Eliminate Racial Ethnic Disparities

The following reflects progress with the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Three-Year Plan](#)-August 2024, pages 32-34, 44-45.

Progress: Achieve a shared understanding of anti-racism and identify systemic Racism to prioritize eliminating disparities.

- Mathematica was hired and led seven anti-racism trainings between Oct of 2024 and Aug of 2025. The training sessions supported the Council to establish the foundation of concepts including understanding power and privilege that influence systems, priorities and strengthening roles for change, addressing data and decision points, deepening data analysis, and developing an action plan.

Progress: Improve the accuracy of race data collection for delinquency filings and juvenile arrests.

- The Council worked with members of the judiciary to prioritize accuracy in race and ethnicity data, prompting juveniles to provide this information, and making sure that the juvenile intake sheet that law enforcement use has clear instructions.
- DCF's Compliance Monitor continued to support police departments, sheriffs and courthouse staff to improve efforts to collect race and ethnicity data for the secure holding logs than they have for initial case filings reported to OJJDP.
- Mathematica's training of the Council members included two sessions on data analysis and reviewing available data to identify priorities for developing strategies for the action planning session.

Progress: Fund community programs to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and ensure youth feedback.

- The Council's Ethnic and Racial Disparities Committee and DCF released a request for proposal to address racial disparities by implementing alternatives to suspension. There were seven bids and DCF is negotiating with the bidder selected by the review team, comprised of Council members and DCF staff.

Section III: System Improvement in the Juvenile Justice System

The Council is federally charged with advising the administration on juvenile delinquency needs and strategies for prevention. The Council advises on state and federal legislation that affects youth by engaging with governmental partners and advising on compliance with the JJRA. Historically, the Council has partnered with DCF and other stakeholders to implement state legislative changes in youth court jurisdiction such as the Raise-the-Age (RTA) legislation described earlier and the hybrid "Youthful Offender" option for 14- to 21-year-old youth and young adults.

The Council's System Improvement Committee monitors state and federal legislation related to juveniles and recommends funding for programs related to improvement of Vermont's juvenile justice system. In 2025, the Committee monitored legislation in the Vermont Legislature to raise the minimum age from 10 to 12 and maximum age of 19 years. The legislation was passed that delayed the maximum age until 2027 to give the state more time to open a secure facility for youthful offenders. Furthermore, the committee set forth policy recommendations for the federal delegation to address issues in the JJRA. One was noted earlier in this report regarding the timeframe for IOJ hearings, and a second relates to the formula used by OJJDPs to determine the number of allowable violations. For low population states like Vermont, the OJJDP threshold adjusted for population is less than one. Vermont's allowable number of sight and sound violations was .6 youth.)

Goal: Ensure that Vermont’s justice system has an appropriate and equitable response for youth.

The following reflects progress with the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Three-Year Plan](#)-August 2024, pages 35-38, 46-47.

Progress: Support the development of innovative programming and ensure current programming is in compliance with OJJDP requirements and provide appropriate services that help

- The Council’s System Improvement Committee developed criteria to fund a consultant for the High-End System of Care to assist in the development of hardware-secure and staff-secure residential placement availability in Vermont. The secure residential facility Woodside closed in 2020. As a result, Vermont has faced challenges with placement of youth in secure facilities that house adults and compliance with the JJRA site and sound separation requirement. The consultant will work with the Council, DCF, and Facility and Planning Workgroup in the development of short-term stabilization and longer-term treatment programs in a secure facility, based on the following: stakeholder feedback, subject matter expertise, and lived experience. The consultant selected for this project is the National Council of Juvenile and Court Judges, National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ). Through extensive interviews with all of the players including youth, the NCJJ will develop recommendations for the operation and programming in the high-end system of care that promotes clear and sustainable system oversight, regulation, and accountability. NCJJ will also address the enhancement of post-placement community-based services for youth.
- The Committee supported an extension to the Hartford Community Justice Center to continue its implementation of the Juvenile Domestic Violence Accountability Program (DVAP), Circles for Peace project. In the first year of the project the focus was on outreach and education of potential referral sources and training volunteers to support youth in the program.
- The Council and DCF released a request for proposal to identify a trainer to develop a curriculum for DOC staff to enhance their understanding of the JJRA sight and sound separation of youth in facilities, the rationale for it, adolescent brain development, and best practices when working with youth. At the time of this report one consultant has submitted a proposal for consideration.

Progress: The data in Vermont’s juvenile justice system better reflects the system and the youth that are involved in the system so that it is possible to monitor progress towards a more equitable system

- The Council approved funding for a recidivism study to measure the impact of legislation that raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction in the Family Division to include 18-year-olds (Raise the Age legislation). The first step in that process was a recidivism study completed in April of 2022 by the Vermont Crime Research Group that analyzed

recidivism for 18- and 19-year-olds adjudicated in the Criminal Division. This study established a benchmark that can be used to compare recidivism outcomes for 18-year-olds adjudicated in the Family Division after implementation of the Raise the Age law on July 1, 2020.

The law has been in place for almost five years, and the follow-up study will look at the number of offenders who have had any subsequent disposition adjudicated in the Family Division or the Criminal Division within 3 years of the disposition of their case in the Family Division in the base year.

Crime Research Group was the selected bidder and started on Sept 1, 2025, by requesting data from Judiciary with support from the Council.

Progress: Educate legislators on research, best/promising practices, and public policy that can best ensure the justice system will help youth thrive.

- The Council continued to educate lawmakers about the value of raising the minimum age of delinquency to 12 years old and provided testimony on the legislation to raise the maximum age to 19-year-olds in April 2025. The 12-year-old minimum age passed, effective on July 1, 2025. Raising the age to 19 was delayed until 2027.

Section IV: Reducing Delinquency through Youth Services

The Council's Youth Services Committee focuses on programming for youth and the development of youth voice. In 2025, the Committee had a two-pronged approach to develop youth voice. First, it created a fact sheet to educate and recruit youth to the Council. JJRA requires at least one fifth of the members of the State Advisory Group to be under the age of 25 at the time of appointment. This and other onboarding materials being developed will formalize the orientation process for all new members.

Second, the Committee conducted a survey of Council members about expectations related to youth voice.

Goal: Youth are actively engaged in their communities—participating in initiatives and programs that promote civic participation, social responsibility, and community development.

The following reflects progress with the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Three-Year Plan](#)-August 2024, pages 39-41, 42-43.

Progress: Provide Vermont communities with tools to strengthen youth engagement and voice.

- The Committee reviewed the outcomes of one of the youth center grantees that requested a continuation of its work with at-risk youth through August 2026. The Hub serves Bristol and surrounding towns and has positive results. They started the project with 47

eligible individuals who participated in positive leisure/recreational activities from Jan 1 – March 30, 2024, and increased participation to 152 youth April 1 – June 30, 2025. The Hub had asked to use the funds to hire another adult to help build youth and adult relationships. The Committee agreed with this idea and the proposal was approved by the full Council. We receive quarterly updates on their progress to engage at-risk youth.

Progress: Create a structure for youth who are justice system-involved to provide the Council and other youth justice decision-making entities with youth perspective.

- The Committee surveyed the Council members to understand and identify criteria to collect youth voice. This led the Committee to propose a project to hire a consultant to gather youth input about juvenile system impacted youth: a) what specifically they need from the system; b) how the system could be more helpful/or improve; c) what has been harmful in their experience involved in the system; and d) what youth believe would've prevented their system. A request for proposal yielded seven proposals and the review committee identified the best bid. DCF is working with the bidder to enter into a contract agreement for 2026.

Conclusion

Key 2025 Successes:

- Council members participated in seven training sessions to build on their strengths and develop an action plan to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities.
- The Council developed a budget plan and in partnership with DCF funded two significant juvenile justice projects:
 - NCJJ was hired as the High End System of Care consultant to develop recommendations for a secure residential treatment facility.
 - A recidivism study by the Vermont Crime Research Group is in progress. The results will assist the Council and the State of Vermont in its understanding and evaluation of the impact of the 2020 legislation raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to include 18-year-olds.
- The Council has approved funding for the following additional projects:
 - To address racial disparities in school suspensions.
 - Training for DOC officers related to adolescent brain development, the JJRA sight and sound separation requirements, and best practices when working with adolescents.
 - To collect and analyze input from youth impacted by the system to develop recommendations to improve the juvenile system, policies, and practices.
- The Council reconvened its Governance Committee to operate a recruitment and retention plan for filling in any gaps in the JJRA requirements for Council membership.
- The Council recruited three new youth members.

Key 2025 Challenges:

- The state of Vermont's system of care continues to have implications for compliance with the core requirements of the JJRA. While the FFY 24 federal grant award reduction is now appealed, the lack of a secure juvenile facility for juveniles charged either with delinquencies or criminal charges creates a situation that makes it difficult for Vermont to comply with the JJRA core requirements.
- There is uncertainty when the FFY 25 federal Notice of Funding Opportunity will be released. In past years, the NOFO was released in the summer. We are already well into FFY 25 and still awaiting notification.
- Incohesive (and for some members of the juvenile justice system, antiquated) databases create significant challenges for data collection and analysis. However, we expect some new strategies from action planning that are in development and will address the data system. Committees are also discussing strategies to improve the data the Council relies on to measure progress.

For more information please email:

Karen Vastine, Chair, Council for Equitable Youth Justice, karen.vastine@uvmhealth.org, or

Sheri Lynn, Juvenile Justice Coordinator, DCF, sheri.lynn@vermont.gov

Appendix

The **Hartford Community Restorative Justice Center's** *Circles of Peace for Youth* program employs restorative practices to **address domestic violence** caused by youth, blending early intervention with accountability, empathy, and atonement. Voluntary "Applicants" (youth who caused harm) engage in exercises to understand their actions' impact without excuses, identifying harmful behavior patterns and beliefs. Supported by "The Circle," youth are **held accountable while being affirmed in their commitment to change, fostering better communication, healthier relationships, and positive life outcomes.**



THE CIRCLE

PEOPLE

- Youth Applicant
- Two Circle Keepers (including a victim advocate)
- 3 - 5 community volunteers
- Support person, if the Applicant chooses

PROCESS

- Presentation of a topic or issue
- Sharing and discussion
- Creating and reviewing goals

TOPICS

- Understanding domestic violence
- Self-reflection and responsibility
- Emotional skills development
- Relationship dynamics
- Progress and goals

Survivors have the choice to participate in any or all of the following:

- Meet with a confidential advocate
- Participate in survivor-only Circles
- Participate in Circles with the Applicant
- Receive info about the Applicant's program attendance
- Receive support from a Circle facilitator and/or Circle volunteers
- Choose not to participate

Email bharvey@hartfordjusticecenter.org or call **(802) 291-7173** for more info.

*The mission of the Vermont **Council for Equitable Youth Justice** is to prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system.*

This infographic walks through how youth justice funding moves from idea to impact. It shows who makes decisions, how projects are chosen and supported, and how the money is used responsibly.

01 FEDERAL FUNDING

The Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) provides Vermont with about \$600,000 annually to be spent within four years.



02

SUPPORTING YOUTH THROUGH GRANTS

Around \$400,000 of this funding is set aside for projects that support youth.



03 OVERSEEING FUNDS & REQUIREMENTS

The Vermont Department for Children & Families (DCF) manages the funds and ensures compliance with the JJDPA's 33 requirements.



04 COUNCIL OVERSIGHT

The full council approves funding decisions, allocating grants across priority areas and committees.



05 COMMITTEE WORK

The CEYJ committees meet to develop ideas and then draft funding proposals.



07 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

If approved, DCF & council members will put a "Request for Proposals" out to the community.



06 FULL COUNCIL APPROVAL

Committees present proposals to the full council for approval.



09 FINALIZE PLAN & BEGIN WORK

DCF works with the selected organization to finalize the agreement, then the project gets underway.



08 PROPOSAL REVIEW & SELECTION

Submitted proposals are reviewed by a team of CEYJ members and stakeholders. The best proposal(s) is selected.



10 ONGOING SUPPORT

CEYJ, DCF, and grantees stay in touch to troubleshoot and support project success.



11 ANNUAL REPORTING

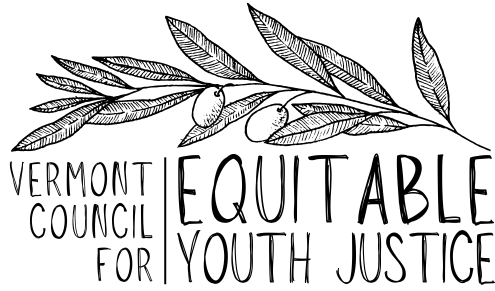
Each year, DCF reports outcomes to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).



12 SHARING OUR IMPACT

CEYJ shares updates with legislators, partners, and the public about how these funds supported prevention and positive outcomes for youth.





Council for Equitable Youth Justice: Racial Equity Roadmap

January 21, 2026

Vanessa Quince, Kamillah Smith, Lauren Amos

Contents

The Council for Equitable Youth Justice 1

 CEYJ overview 1

 CEYJ subcommittees 2

Overview of Racial Equity Work with Mathematica 3

Summary of Mathematica’s Sessions 3

Key Areas of Future Work 6

 Area 1: Experience related to racial equity 6

 Antiracism learning and capacity 6

 Equity impact in policy and practice 9

 Area 2: Internal effectiveness and governance 10

 Shared baseline 10

 CEYJ meeting effectiveness 11

 Reflection and accountability 11

 Policy and stakeholder collaboration 13

 Area 3: Data infrastructure 13

 Data Related Recommendations 14

 Area 4: Youth and family engagement 16

 Centering youth and family voices 16

 Accessibility and support in diversion 16

 Restorative and rehabilitative approaches 17

Conclusion 17

Appendix A Overview of CEYJ 21

Appendix B Additional Notes and Resources 23

Tables

1 Summary of racial equity training sessions4

2 Mapping recommendations across subcommittees 18

Figures

1 Menti results from first racial equity training.....6

2 Language considerations7

This roadmap consolidates insights from Mathematica's racial equity sessions with Vermont's Council for Equitable Youth Justice (CEYJ) conducted between October 2024 and October 2025. The roadmap identifies key issues that emerged from the training series and provides recommendations to support CEYJ's work in reducing racial disparities in the juvenile justice system. The roadmap is intended to inform subcommittee planning, align council training discussions with the CEYJ three-year plan, and serve as an action-planning guide for CEYJ members to support their future work and implementation of their three-year plan.

The Council for Equitable Youth Justice

The Vermont Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division (DCF-FSD) has long supported the work of the Children and Family Council for Prevention Programs, a statutory body created by the Vermont legislature in 1986. In 2023, the Council formally renamed itself to the Council for Equitable Youth Justice (CEYJ) to more clearly reflect its mission and priorities. That same year, CEYJ worked with the Vermont Legislature to update and clarify the state statute governing its work, intentionally aligning the Council's new name with this legislative advocacy. CEYJ is authorized under both Vermont state statute and federal juvenile justice law to serve as the state advisory group responsible for reducing racial disparities, improving the youth justice system, preventing delinquency in Vermont and support compliance with the Juvenile Justice Reform Act (JJRA). This work is critical, especially in the context of Vermont's growing racial and ethnic diversity.

Vermont has disproportionate juvenile justice outcomes for children of color. According to data from Vermont DCF, Black youth make up only 3 percent of the state's juvenile population but account for 14 percent of arrests, 11 percent of cases filed in criminal divisions, and 14 percent of statewide secure holdings. (Morris 2020) Hispanic youth in the state have similarly disproportionate outcomes (Morris 2020). For example, between 2010 and 2020, the state's Hispanic and Black population grew by 69 and 44 percent, respectively—the third and seventh largest increases in the country (U.S. Census 2020). In September 2024, CEYJ continued its commitment to reducing racial and ethnic disparities by hiring a racial equity consultant to conduct trainings and assess CEYJ's three-year plan, policies, programs, and practices.

CEYJ overview

CEYJ's mission is to prevent youth legal system involvement, shield youth from the adverse impact of a criminal record, eliminate racial and ethnic disparities, and reduce the risk of reentering the system. CEYJ members are appointed by the governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, for three-year terms. Participation is voluntary. CEYJ seeks individuals with experience in human services, the justice system, and prevention. Meetings are held once a month.

The Vermont Department for Children and Families' Family Services Division (DCF-FSD) receives funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) through the Title II Formula Grant Program to support CEYJ activities. DCF-FSD is responsible for data collection and monitoring for purposes of compliance with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). CEYJ supports this work by monitoring and reporting on compliance with the Act's core requirements and advising on strategies to address identified gaps.

Under federal law, CEYJ's work is guided by 33 statutory requirements, including the [four core requirements](#) listed below:

1. Deinstitutionalization of status offenders
2. Separation of juveniles from adult inmates
3. Removal of juveniles from adults' jails and lockups
4. Addressing of racial and ethnic disparities

[CEYJ's duties include the following:](#)

- Advise the governor and legislature about issues related to youth justice, at-risk youth, and prevention
- Provide grants that support improving the juvenile justice system, reducing ethnic and racial disparities in the juvenile justice system and preventing delinquency
- Monitor compliance with the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act
- Promote developmentally appropriate strategies for working with youth and families
- Work to prevent young people from getting involved with the justice system

CEYJ subcommittees

Four committees support the work of CEYJ:

- **Equity & Racial Disparities Committee:** Strives to eliminate ethnic and racial disparities within the juvenile justice system in Vermont, advance antiracism learning, improve the accuracy of race data, and fund equitable community-based programs
- **System Improvement Committee:** Oversees diversion reforms, data infrastructure improvements, and system-wide OJJDP compliance
- **Youth Engagement Committee:** Focuses on centering youth engagement and voice in planning and policy, expanding youth leadership opportunities, and providing community tools to strengthen youth engagement
- **Governance Committee:** Manages the structure, processes, and bylaws to ensure effective governance

As part of its requirements to the OJJDP, CEYJ has developed a three-year plan to guide its activities across committees.

Overview of Racial Equity Work with Mathematica

To advance their goals, the Council leveraged its commitment to learning and equity to examine cultural norms—including those rooted in white supremacy culture—that were affecting their work. Seeing an opportunity for growth, they awarded a contract to bring in expertise that would help build on their strengths and accelerate progress toward their desired outcomes. In September 2024, CEYJ contracted with Mathematica who in turn contracted with Jen Agosti Ltd. to provide racial equity training to support their work in eliminating racial disparities within the juvenile justice system. In this partnership, Mathematica had three goals:

- Help CEYJ members understand and identify *white supremacy culture* and *systematic racism* within themselves and their work
- Develop and review CEYJ’s core values to ensure that the council’s primary goal is eliminating ethnic and racial disparities in Vermont’s juvenile justice system by initiating and acting as a catalyst for both direct intervention and primary prevention strategies
- Conduct trainings and an assessment of its three-year plan, policies, programs, and practices, including providing written recommendations on how to proceed

Summary of Mathematica’s Sessions

Between October 2024 and August 2025, Mathematica led seven sessions with CEYJ. In October 2025, Mathematica met with council members individually to reflect on CEYJ’s racial equity training and goals. Table 1 shows the themes, discussion points, and action steps for each training.

Table 1. Summary of racial equity training sessions

Session	Date	Focus/theme	Key discussion points	Action steps
1. Building Foundations	October 2024	Establish shared language, trust, and equity grounding	• Reflected on lived experience and positionality • Identified discomforts and barriers related to discussing racism • Committed to collective learning and grace • Created group commitments • Assigned personal equity action steps • Assigned accountability buddies	• Mathematica to send out post-meeting survey to inform Session 2 • Mathematica to share updated community commitments
2. Positionality and Power	December 2024	Explore power, privilege, and influence within systems	• Reflected on systemic disparities and political implications • Conducted identity and power-mapping exercises • Began developing shared glossary	• CEYJ to continue glossary refinement • CEYJ to identify high-impact stakeholder targets • CEYJ to analyze Vermont Civil Rights data for disparities
3. Change Agents and Prioritization	February 2025	Align priorities and strengthen roles as change agents	• Reassessed three-year plan • Discussed political context and language sensitivity • Highlighted member strengths and cross-committee work	• Mathematica and CEYJ to finalize prioritized list of three-year plan activities. • Mathematica to share summary of priority matrix with CEYJ
4. Data Gaps and Equity Analysis	April 2025	Address data completeness and systemic barriers	• Identified major race/ethnicity data gaps • Discussed equity analysis tools • Noted political sensitivities around data use	• Mathematica to share tool for analyzing racial equity impacts with CEYJ
5. Data Walk	May 2025	Examine racial disparities across decision points on the pipeline to incarceration	• Reviewed Vermont's youth justice data • Reflected on the extent to which youth of color in Vermont experience disparities • Compared local versus national disparity trends • Highlighted diversion and detention data gaps • Discussed feasibility of disparity-reduction strategies prioritized by CEYJ survey	• Mathematica to compile data walk observations into summary report

Session	Date	Focus/theme	Key discussion points	Action steps
6. Disparity-Reduction Strategies	June 2025	Deepen data analysis	- Identified key data gaps - Reviewed promising disparity reduction strategies employed by other states - Discussed feasibility of three disparity reduction strategies identified in prior survey - Explored diversion tactics and data collection standards - Examined feasibility of SRO training mandate	
7. CEYJ Retreat: Reflection and Action Planning	August 2025	Synthesize learning and define next steps	- Reviewed historic racial inequities in Vermont - Discussed race versus poverty and “Raise the Age” - Reviewed data walk findings and gaps in race/ethnicity reporting - Discussed feasibility of four priority strategies; agreed to drop SRO training mandate - Discussed youth engagement barriers and solutions	CEYJ and Mathematica to finalize action plans for Strategies I–III. - Strategy I: Reform diversion laws - Strategy II: Address youthful offender disparities - Strategy III: Improve data infrastructure
8. Mathematica and CEYJ one-on-one sessions	October 2025	Reflect and look forward	- Received member feedback on the training series and retreat - Discussed CEYJ’s current direction	Mathematica to consolidate member feedback and share a roadmap with CEYJ to assist with action planning

Key Areas of Future Work

Drawing on insights from six racial equity trainings, the August in-person retreat, and individual CEYJ member reflections, Mathematica identified several powerful assets that position CEYJ to advance its mission. These include CEYJ’s innovative approaches to achieving youth justice, its deep and consistent commitment to racial equity, strong work across subcommittees, and a demonstrated willingness to learn, adapt, and strengthen its collective practice. Alongside these strengths, the sessions identified four key areas of future work: (1) implementing strategies related to racial equity, (2) strengthening internal governance, (3) improving Vermont’s youth justice data infrastructure, and (4) centering youth and family engagement. In the following section we identify these key areas along with suggested recommendations. It’s important to note that these reflect a menu of options for the Council to choose from competing priorities and capacity.

Area 1: Experience related to racial equity

Mathematica’s work with the Council builds on a strong, positive foundation. CEYJ has extensive experience in racial equity, which Mathematica identified as a core driver and source of strength across the council. During the first training session, members identified experiences related to racial equity that have created a strong foundational context and infrastructure (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Menti results from first racial equity training

Name any prior racial equity trainings you've had. For each, rate your satisfaction from 1-5

Trainings with Rebecca Haslam - 5	Training on implicit bias 4NCJFCJ historical bias particularly in housing 5Trainings with judicial education leadership - 5Vermont Fold Bank trainings in racial equity - 5	Restore Forward/Black Womens Blueprint- 5Vt State, through the VT Womens Commission- 2Collective Action/Acceleration with the VT Network- 5other employee sponsored or mandatory trainings- 1	Hate crime prosecutions - 4
State-wide welcoming and engaging communities 5Privilege walk and anti bias training 4Currently doing a town anti-bias training 4	Internal/Implicit Bias (5), Micro/Macro Aggressions (5), Equity v Equality (5), White Privilege/White Fragility (4), Allyship (4), Power Dynamics (5), Individual/Structural/Institutional Racism (5)	Dena Simmons and Equity Responsive Teaching Practices - 4.5	Hate crime coursework - 4

Members identified CEYJ’s commitment to racial equity as foundational but not consistently implemented across decisions, data practices, and engagement strategies.

Antiracism learning and capacity

Early training sessions set the tone for future sessions by focusing on lived experience, positionality, power, and the discomfort members felt when speaking about racism. These early sessions revealed varied levels of comfort with speaking about racism and identified opportunities for additional support,

such as a common vocabulary on racial equity. Figure 2 illustrates terms and definitions proposed to the council by Mathematica.

Figure 2. Language considerations

Term	Definition	What we really mean/jargon busting
Power Dartmouth College Office of Pluralism and Leadership's definition	The ability to influence and make decisions that impact others.	We want everyone, including young people, to have a real say in decisions that affect them.
Empowerment Justice Power's definition	Increasing the number and type of legal actors; diversifying ways to access justice; and creating opportunities for individuals and communities to know, use, and shape the laws that affect their lives.	We want to make sure (young) people have the tools and support to create the changes they want in their community.
Racism Cornell Law School's definition Vermont's Act 33 definition	A set of theories and beliefs, which can be structural, interpersonal, or individual, that establishes a hierarchy of races and ethnicities, based on misconceptions and stereotypes The laws, policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other societal norms that often work together to deny equal opportunity.	We acknowledge that youth of color face systemic barriers because of their race.
Racial equity Race Forward's definition	The process of eliminating racial disparities and improving outcomes for everyone. It is an intentional and continual practice of changing policies, practices, systems, and structures by prioritizing measurable change in the lives of people of color.	We want all young people, no matter their race, to have the same opportunities, resources, and fair treatment within the youth justice system.
Disparities Act 4 Juvenile Justice's definition	Minority youth populations [being] involved at a decision point in the juvenile justice system at disproportionately higher rates than nonminority youth.	Certain groups of youth consistently have worse outcomes than others.
Justice Annie E. Casey Foundation's definition	The systemic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone.	All young people are treated fairly, with their rights upheld, so problems are solved in a fair and meaningful way.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Continue to build on the language glossary developed during the racial equity training, and focus on actions related to increasing racial equity.

Shared vocabulary is critical for effective collaboration. Continuing to refine and expand the glossary gives members a consistent set of terms that can anchor conversations and help reduce misunderstandings. Beyond definitions, the focus should shift toward operationalizing these concepts—connecting terms like “structural bias,” “disparities,” or “equity” to concrete actions CEYJ can take. This will help transform shared language into shared practice.

To address the varying levels of comfort when discussing racism, Mathematica led training exercises that allowed CEYJ members to reflect on their own experiences with racism, recognize their power dynamics, and develop a common racial equity glossary to build shared understanding. When asked what knowledge or skills they most wanted to strengthen, CEYJ members identified two priority areas: (1) tools and practices to counteract racial bias and (2) understanding of the role of data in achieving racial equity. In response to the first priority, Mathematica shared tools and practices such as power mapping, a positionality exercise, a shared glossary of terms, and a racial equity impact analysis. To address the second priority, Mathematica facilitated a series of training sessions on data disparities and strategies on how to strengthen data collection and use.

Throughout the trainings, CEYJ members expressed a desire for a more integrated racial equity approach in how the council pursues its objectives. Members emphasized that racial equity intersects with every aspect of CEYJ’s work and they would like this to be more intentionally reflected in meeting structures and council practices. For example, the use of Robert’s Rules of Order can reinforce hierarchies and make it harder for some members to fully participate.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Continue to periodically fund racial equity trainings in support of CEYJ’s goals and objectives.

Ongoing training ensures that CEYJ members remain equipped with the tools, frameworks, and historical context necessary to understand evolving racial equity challenges in the juvenile legal system and support the lifelong journey of racial equity. Periodic training also helps new members acclimate more quickly and support continuity as the council’s membership changes. Importantly, regular investment in racial equity education demonstrates a sustained institutional commitment—not just a symbolic one—to advancing fair outcomes for youth.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Adopt a consensus-based decision-making model, which may help foster collaboration and shared ownership.

A consensus-based decision-making model focuses on inclusive discussion and shared ownership rather than formal motions and votes. Under this approach, the Council would clearly define the decision at hand, invite input



“I struggle with staying on the growth side when I make a personal mistake. We are all inherently racist and live in this system, so it’s hard not to be overly critical of ourselves.”

—CEYJ member

from all members, and work to address concerns before moving forward. Piloting this model could help reduce hierarchical dynamics and support more equitable participation.

Equity impact in policy and practice

During discussions about data integrity, members engaged in thoughtful dialogue about how best to interpret race-related data from the Vermont justice system. Some council members suggested that poverty, rather than race, is key factor driving disparities in the state based on their lived experience and preliminary data points presented by Mathematica. At the same time, available data show that racial disparities within the state are also prevalent, while indicating data on the socioeconomic status of youth offenders are not collected and reported by the state. These different perspectives highlight the value of developing a shared framework of how both race and poverty play key factors in driving disparities in Vermont.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: *Apply an explicit intersectional race and poverty lens across CEYJ's policy review, data strategy, and onboarding process.* In the absence of consistent socioeconomic data, an explicit intersectional lens can guide CEYJ in examining how race and poverty intersect across youth justice decision points. During onboarding, remind CEYJ members of the statutory requirement to address racial disparities in the juvenile legal system. Council members identified the need for strong onboarding materials and onboarding content can include the history and nature of the Council alongside guidance on applying a race-conscious, intersectional lens to policy and planning decisions. Integrating the statutory language reminder into onboarding helps set clear expectations from the beginning and reinforces that addressing racial disparities is not optional—it is a mandated part of CEYJ's charge. Grounding members in the statutory framework ensures everyone understands why racial equity must guide decision-making, agenda-setting, and policy recommendations. This also helps create shared accountability and a common foundation for the council's work, reducing confusion about roles and responsibilities over time

While universal strategies such as [Raise the Age](#) can meaningfully offer progress towards keeping youth out of the adult criminal justice system, data often show that youth of color remain disproportionately arrested, charged, and transferred to adult court even after age thresholds increase. Members emphasized that no universal reform, on its own, addresses racial inequity. Without strategies that directly confront these disparities, universal reforms can widen inequities—benefiting young people who already receive more diversion and leniency, while youth of color continue to face harsher system responses.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: *Apply a racial equity lens—such as a racial equity impact analysis—when developing or reviewing policy recommendations.* Members expressed wanting to adopt tools to hold them accountable to their racial equity goals. Mathematica recommends leveraging [racial equity impact analyses and or tools](#) in support of that work. The racial equity impact analysis can be applied when considering new policy recommendations, legislative priorities, funding strategies, or system reforms. Using a racial equity impact analysis creates a structured, proactive process for identifying how proposed initiatives might affect different groups of youth—both positively and negatively. Applying the analysis early in

decision-making also supports more transparent discussions and encourages CEYJ to consider alternatives or mitigating strategies when needed. Incorporating member suggestions to use this tool reflects responsiveness and strengthens the council's ability to adopt policies that truly reflect community needs and priorities.

Area 2: Internal effectiveness and governance

Members reflected on CEYJ's progress, highlighting accomplishments such as successfully releasing requests for proposals (RFPs), building momentum on key initiatives such as Raise the Age, and laying a strong foundation for CEYJ's future work. Progress was acknowledged within the constraints of federal requirements and the volunteer capacity. CEYJ members praised the leadership team—particularly committee leads—for advancing efforts and fostering collaboration. However, members noted critical points to work on, including clarification of roles and responsibilities, access to new resources, and the need for a more strategic roadmap.

Shared baseline

Sessions and individual member interviews revealed uncertainty about CEYJ member roles and responsibilities. Several members noted that some members are carrying a disproportionate share of the workload, creating an imbalance in participation and accountability. Members also have varying levels of exposure to the youth justice system and racial equity frameworks, which leads to differences in comfort with terminology and analytical tools and different baselines to understand how to advance the work. Several members emphasized the need for a stronger onboarding process—one that establishes a shared understanding of CEYJ responsibilities, clarifies work assignments, and builds a common foundation in youth justice and racial equity principles.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Develop an onboarding packet that includes roles and responsibilities for each member, and ensure all members review the packet. A

comprehensive onboarding packet can help establish a strong foundation for all CEYJ members, regardless of their prior familiarity with the council's structure. Clear expectations around roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes allow members to engage more confidently and consistently. This also supports continuity when membership changes, reducing the time needed for new members to acclimate and ensuring that the council functions smoothly even during transitions.

Similarly, onboarding materials should include key racial equity terms and offer optional asynchronous trainings to help build a shared foundation among members. Incorporating racial equity terms and optional asynchronous learning modules reinforces CEYJ's commitment to advancing equity from day one. This shared knowledge helps normalize racial equity as a core operating principle, reduces misunderstandings, and equips members with the language and context needed for thoughtful participation. Providing materials that can be revisited allows members to learn at their own pace and deepens the council's collective understanding over time.

CEYJ meeting effectiveness

CEYJ members shared that the council has made meaningful progress in building its structure, strengthening the work and autonomy of subcommittees, and developing practices that keep the work moving forward. As the council has grown, several members expressed enthusiasm for taking the next step toward deeper, more strategic discussions. Council members expressed eagerness to build on that to move conversations that focus more on substantive decision-making, shared priorities, and action-ready next steps. Members highlighted their desire to translate CEYJ's strong engagement and collective expertise into clearer agreements about what is realistic and achievable. Their reflections demonstrate a readiness to shift from foundational work toward more outcomes-oriented planning, which speaks to the council's commitment and momentum.

Reflection and accountability

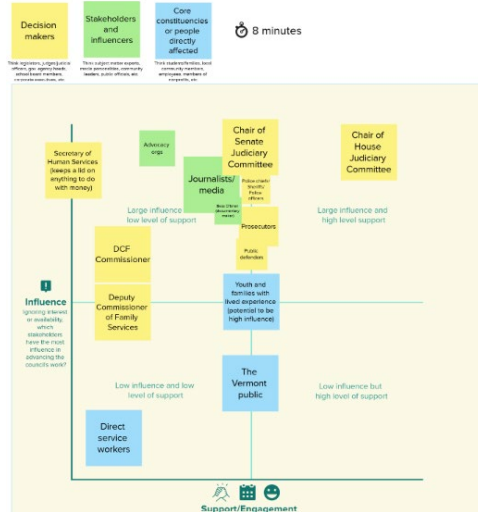
Members also recognized the council's growing portfolio of funded projects and collaborative efforts, and expressed interest in strengthening CEYJ's capacity to measure its impact. During the retreat and trainings, members voiced appreciation for how far the council has come, while also identifying opportunities to reinforce accountability and continuous learning. They emphasized that having a more structured way to reflect on CEYJ's functioning—and on the results of the projects it funds—would help the council celebrate successes, identify areas for improvement, and communicate its contributions more clearly.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Introduce structured accountability tools that support consistent, equity-focused decision-making, including a council self-assessment model and embedded racial equity impact analyses in proposals and reviews. Several members suggested thoughtful and actionable ideas to enhance accountability. For example, introducing an annual self-assessment modeled on other councils, which could include questions about onboarding effectiveness, clarity of roles, and committee performance. Others proposed embedding racial equity impact analyses into grant proposals and post-award reviews practice already piloted in recent sessions—to ensure that funded projects advance equity and reduce disparities.¹

Visibility and relevance

¹ Consider including a question about growth in racial equity. Embedding a racial equity question into the evaluation reinforces its importance as a learning area and helps monitor how well CEYJ's trainings, discussions, and practices support members' development. Understanding where members feel confident—or where additional support is needed—provides actionable information for future training investments and structural improvements.

Power Matrix
Map all of the players who have or could have an impact on the council's racial equity work. Use yellow for **decision makers**, use green for **stakeholders and influencers**, and use blue for those who are **directly affected by the council's work**.



During the second council meeting, Mathematica facilitated power-mapping activity. This activity is designed to help identify the key individuals, groups, and institutions that hold influence and to map their relationships. The goal is to understand who has the power to advance a particular objective and what connections are needed to move forward. During that session, CEYJ members identified key players and relationships in helping to advance their work, including people within DCF, community-based organizations, and the general public. Members noted that mapping spheres of influence was especially useful for visualizing potential allies and determining which groups should be “actively engaged” versus “kept informed,” highlighting their commitment to intentional and inclusive partnership-building.

At the same time, members recognized an opportunity to increase broader visibility of CEYJ’s accomplishments and priorities. While the council has made meaningful progress, several members shared that awareness of CEYJ’s work among policymakers and the public remains limited, making it harder to demonstrate the council’s value and strengthen buy-in. Their reflections underscored a shared desire to elevate CEYJ’s impact.

During the retreat, members emphasized that increasing visibility is not simply about marketing—it is about building credibility with system partners and ensuring that CEYJ’s recommendations are understood, trusted, and actionable. They recommended showcasing measurable achievements and progress toward goals, including the possibility of creating a public-facing dashboard that highlights youth justice disparities, funded projects, and indicators of system improvement. Members also suggested developing concise issue briefs for legislators and community partners to support informed decision-making. These ideas reflect CEYJ’s strengths: a commitment to transparency, a focus on equity, and a collaborative spirit that seeks to bring more partners into the work of improving outcomes for young people.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Develop a SMART aligned dashboard for monitoring progress toward CEYJ's goals. A SMART-aligned dashboard offers a transparent, easy-to-use tool for monitoring progress toward CEYJ's goals. By making objectives specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound, the dashboard ensures that members have a clear view of both achievements and areas needing further attention. Tracking progress visually also strengthens accountability, supports data-driven decision-making, and allows the council to celebrate milestones. Over time, the dashboard can serve as a living record of growth and impact, informing both internal planning and public reporting.

How An Evaluation Partner Can Help

An experienced evaluation partner can play a key role in strengthening the Council's ability to measure progress and communicate impact. By bringing expertise in dashboard design and data visualization, a partner can help develop a user-friendly, interactive dashboard that aligns with the Council's goals and supports transparent accountability.

Beyond initial creation, an evaluation partner can also build a sustainable system that the Council can easily maintain and update over time. This ensures the dashboard becomes not just a one-time product, but a living tool that supports ongoing learning, strategic decision-making, and continuous improvement.

Policy and stakeholder collaboration

The power-mapping exercise also helped surface opportunities for strengthening coordination with key system partners, particularly law enforcement. Members acknowledged that CEYJ has made several attempts to engage law enforcement in the past—through training invitations, outreach, and efforts to recruit representatives to serve on the council. Members emphasized that engaging law enforcement remains a critical connection point, as stronger partnerships could enhance communication, support implementation of shared goals, and broaden CEYJ's influence across the youth justice system.

During retreat discussions, participants also reflected on the broader policy environment supporting CEYJ's work. They noted that Vermont's legislature has generally been receptive to CEYJ recommendations, including initiatives such as Raise the Age and recent data-focused legislation. Members saw this legislative support as a significant strength and a foundation to build upon. At the same time, they acknowledged that shifts at the federal level introduce some uncertainty—particularly around the continued availability of federal funding for states. Members shared that staying attentive to these federal dynamics will be important for sustaining momentum.

Area 3: Data infrastructure

Across retreats and training sessions, CEYJ members repeatedly cited Vermont's data infrastructure and availability as core issues. Members said the State of Vermont's data gaps affect CEYJ's ability to make evidence-based decisions, build consensus across stakeholders, and measure impact and progress over time. CEYJ identified issues related 1) **data collection and reporting issues**, and 2) **data gaps** that were discussed during the latter half of the retreat (sessions 4-6)

Council members noted that its race/ethnicity data are not collected and reported in a standardized way within and across counties and the courts, and perhaps more importantly, key actors are not compelled to do so by mandate. This leads to sizeable data gaps. We identified gaps related to the following questions

in sessions 4 and 5 that inhibit informed decision making for the council and other JJ stakeholders across the state.

1. What data are needed to better understand the extent to which race/ethnicity and/or poverty drive juvenile arrests in Vermont? To what extent does underreporting, data suppression, or imputation rules influence the state's ability to answer this question?
2. What factors may be contributing to incidents and arrests among juveniles in Vermont (e.g., mental health, abuse, homelessness)? What additional data are needed to answer this question?
3. Recognizing that diversion is one of the most successful strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, does Vermont have the data it needs to answer the following questions?

Members also noted the following issues related to data.

1. **Data quality:** Incomplete or inaccurate race and ethnicity reporting remains a major barrier. For example, nearly 37 percent of juvenile case records lack race information, making it difficult to assess disparities or hold systems accountable.
2. **Aggregation and accessibility:** Data are currently fragmented across agencies (courts, law enforcement, and DCF), and quarterly reports from the judiciary are difficult for non-experts to interpret. Members mentioned the need for a standardized and integrated view of diversion, youthful offender, and detention trends. They suggested issuing an RFP to synthesize and present these data in a user-friendly dashboard for policymakers and the public.
3. **Data use and relevance:** Even when data are available, they are not consistently used to inform policy or program decisions. Members stressed the need to obtain action-ready insights—such as by linking data to disparity-reduction strategies and racial equity impact analyses—rather than simply collecting numbers.

Data Related Recommendations

- **Assess and analyze data barriers for youth of color—both at referral to and completion of diversion programs—with a focus on youth with lived experience.** Members emphasized that CEYJ is well-positioned to take a more comprehensive look at where data gaps most impact understanding of system inequities. By assessing barriers in referral data and program completion outcomes, the council can better identify where youth of color encounter challenges or differential treatment. Strengthening this work with qualitative insights from youth and families—particularly those with lived system experience—would provide essential context that numbers alone cannot capture. Members also encouraged deeper efforts to disaggregate data across racial and ethnic communities, ensuring that differences within broad categories are visible and that the experiences of smaller communities are not overlooked. These steps build on CEYJ's existing equity commitments and would help the council advance more targeted, culturally responsive strategies.
- **Partner with the National Center for Juvenile Justice to explore imputation of missing race data.** CEYJ members recognized that missing or incomplete race data hinders the council's ability to monitor disparities accurately. By partnering with the National Center for Juvenile Justice, CEYJ could explore

evidence-based approaches to imputing missing race information, improving data completeness while maintaining integrity and transparency. This partnership reflects CEYJ's strengths in collaboration and its willingness to adopt innovative data approaches used in other states.

- **Pursue the automation of court data CEYJ receives from the Judiciary.** CEYJ should pursue the automation of court data it receives from the Judiciary to improve both efficiency and analytical capacity. Automating data refers to creating a system where information flows from one source to another without manual steps, such as copying, pasting, downloading, or re-entering data and data moves through a secure, pre-built digital process. Members emphasized that an automated data-transfer system would reduce processing delays, minimize manual errors, and improve the overall quality and consistency of incoming data..
- **Improve the consistency with which law enforcement populates race data fields in reports.** Members highlighted that strengthening race data at the earliest system contact points—especially law enforcement—would enhance CEYJ's ability to track disparities across the entire continuum. Improving consistency will require both engagement and education. CEYJ could activate system partners to help communicate the importance of accurate race data collection and establish a sustained information-sharing process with the legislature to ensure policymakers understand why complete data is essential for advancing equity. These efforts represent an opportunity to strengthen relationships and shared accountability across the justice system.
- **Create a centralized data dashboard on the CEYJ website, updated quarterly, and use it as a visibility tool.** A public-facing dashboard would increase transparency, elevate CEYJ's accomplishments, and help external stakeholders—policymakers, community partners, and the public—better understand trends in youth justice and the impact of CEYJ's recommendations. Updating the dashboard quarterly would show ongoing progress and reinforce CEYJ's commitment to data-driven action. Members saw this not just as a communication tool, but as a strategic opportunity to build credibility and foster broader alignment around equity goals.
- **Convene a stakeholder coalition to align reform strategies.** To sustain meaningful progress, CEYJ members encouraged deeper cross-system collaboration by convening partners such as the Defender General, State's Attorneys, Judiciary, and law enforcement. Bringing these stakeholders together would help align reform efforts, reduce duplication, and create shared ownership of strategies to reduce racial disparities. CEYJ's strong relationships and convening power uniquely position the council to lead this coalition and guide partners toward coordinated, equity-centered reform.

How An Evaluation Partner Can Help

By bringing technical expertise in data systems, integration, and quality assurance, a partner can help design a secure, efficient process that transfers data automatically, eliminating manual steps and reducing delays. They can work with relevant teams to map data fields, build automated pipelines, and ensure that incoming information is clean, consistent, and aligned with CEYJ's analytical needs.

Beyond the technical building, an evaluation partner can help CEYJ develop sustainable processes for maintaining the system, troubleshooting issues, and updating data fields over time.

Area 4: Youth and family engagement

Throughout the training series, CEYJ members reflected on the growth of youth engagement over time. This included efforts to expand the number of youth members on the council, opportunities for youth to serve in leadership roles, and youth-led data collection (such as surveys). Recently, CEYJ also released an RFP to support youth's voices in decision making. At the same time members recognize there are additional opportunities to strengthen youth engagement.

Centering youth and family voices

CEYJ members acknowledged that youth and families are not consistently included in decision making or case planning, despite being directly affected by policies. Current practices often remain adult driven, with limited opportunities for youth with lived experience to provide feedback or shape solutions. During trainings, members emphasized that authentic engagement—such as co-designing surveys and incorporating youth perspectives into racial equity impact analyses, are essential for building trust and ensuring reforms reflect real needs.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Create online programming opportunities to strengthen connections between youth and their communities, especially for those who may face barriers to in-person engagement. Virtual platforms can provide flexible, youth-friendly spaces for mentoring, skill-building, restorative conversations, and connections to local resources. By partnering with community-based organizations, educators, and credible messengers, CEYJ can design online sessions that reflect youths' interests—such as career exploration, leadership development, cultural activities, or peer support groups—while also fostering a sense of belonging and increasing access regardless of geography or transportation. Online programming can complement existing in-person supports and ensure youth remain engaged, supported, and connected to positive adult and peer networks that reinforce resilience and community ties.

Accessibility and support in diversion

While CEYJ does not operate diversion programs directly, members frequently discussed diversion outcomes as a critical leverage point for improving equity within Vermont's youth justice system. Members cited challenges to diversion such as a lack of transportation, child care responsibilities, and diversion center hours that do not align with youth's schedules. Coordinators are often not compensated for evening work, limiting flexibility. These logistical gaps, combined with an overemphasis on compliance, frequently result in youth returning to court for noncompliance rather than receiving supportive interventions. CEYJ discussions highlighted the need for practical solutions—such as text reminders, flexible meeting times, and wraparound supports—to make diversion more accessible and effective. To increase meaningful youth engagement with CEYJ, members discussed flexibility in meeting times and onboarding resources.

POTENTIAL SOLUTION: Strengthen diversion outcomes by partnering with diversion boards to address practical barriers that often lead to youth noncompliance, particularly among those balancing school, work, and family responsibilities. Members highlighted that supports like transportation assistance, child-care options, and flexible communication—such as text reminders or

the ability to meet youth at home—can help remove predictable obstacles that hinder participation. They also noted that diversion center hours sometimes do not align with when youth are available, suggesting that offering evening or weekend options could improve engagement. By approaching noncompliance as an access challenge rather than a behavioral issue, CEYJ and its partners can create more youth-responsive practices, strengthen trust with families, and improve completion rates—ultimately advancing more equitable outcomes across diversion programs.

Restorative and rehabilitative approaches

Vermont is a national leader in the development of community-based and restorative justice practices, which allow communities to play a role in the process of justice.² However, members expressed concern that Vermont's juvenile justice system remains largely punitive, with limited adoption of restorative practices. Several participants said youth can “learn right from wrong without law enforcement intervention,” underscoring the importance of shifting from penalizing to rehabilitative strategies. Retreat conversations emphasized expanding restorative justice in schools and community settings, reducing reliance on court involvement, and promoting approaches that prioritize healing and accountability over punishment.

Conclusion

This strategic roadmap positions CEYJ to deepen its impact, strengthen its leadership role, and advance a more equitable youth justice system. By building on the Council's longstanding commitment to racial equity, data-informed decision-making, and authentic engagement with youth and families, the roadmap offers options for moving forward that are grounded in shared values and a collective vision—while also recognizing the practical constraints of operating as a volunteer body.

The priorities outlined here reflect CEYJ's unique strengths—its statutory mandate, diverse expertise, and willingness to learn, adapt, and collaborate across systems—along with opportunities to further build on these assets. Implementing these strategies will require continued partnership, sustained attention to equity, and the flexibility to evolve as new insights and opportunities emerge.

As CEYJ moves into its next phase of work, this roadmap serves as both a guide and a commitment: a guide to coordinated action that strengthens accountability and improves outcomes, and a commitment to ensuring that youth of color, particularly those with lived experience, remain centered in every step of the Council's efforts. Together, these strategies chart a course toward a more responsive, transparent, and just youth justice system—one that reflects the strengths and aspirations of the communities it serves.

To help CEYJ achieve its goals, we have mapped our recommendations to CEYJ's subcommittees, associated partners, and performance metrics in Table 2.

² <https://doc.vermont.gov/content/restorative-justice#:~:text=The%20goals%20of%20restorative%20justice,that%20may%20prevent%20future%20harm.>

Table 2. Mapping recommendations across subcommittees

Subcommittee	Key responsibilities (Goals Three Year Plan)	Assigned tasks/ recommendations	Partners/collaborators	Suggested metrics/indicators	Timeline
Equity & Racial Disparities	Eliminate Ethnic and Racial Disparities (ERD) within the juvenile justice system in the State of Vermont by initiating and acting as a catalyst for a combination of direct intervention and primary prevention strategies that achieve this goal.	Partner with NCJJ and judiciary to improve race/ethnicity data quality and completeness.	Judiciary, NCJJ, Office of Racial Equity, state's attorneys, defender general	Percent of records with complete race/ethnicity data	Short-term (0–6 months): initiate partnership and scope work Medium-term (6–18 months): pilot or implement data improvements
		Continue to periodically fund racial equity trainings in support of CEYJ's goals and objectives.	Racial equity training providers, Office of Racial Equity	- Number of trainings offered - Member self-reported confidence or learning outcomes (post-training)	Ongoing (annual cadence)
		Conduct racial equity impact analyses for proposed policy and legislative changes.	Council	Number of policies reviewed for racial equity impact	Ongoing (integrated into policy and legislative review processes)
System Improvement	Ensure that Vermont's justice system has an appropriate and equitable response for youth	Lead diversion reform strategy: address returns for noncompliance, expand restorative options, and pilot flexible program hours.	Judiciary, law enforcement, diversion boards, DCF data, mental health services	- Diversion return-to-court rates - Number of diversion programs piloting flexible hours or supports - Qualitative feedback from youth and families	Short-term (0–6 months): convene partners, identify priority barriers Medium-term (6–18 months): support pilots and assess early outcomes

Subcommittee	Key responsibilities (Goals Three Year Plan)	Assigned tasks/ recommendations	Partners/collaborators	Suggested metrics/indicators	Timeline
		Oversee implementation of court-data automation RFP.	Judiciary, DCF-FSD	- Reduction in manual data processing time - Timeliness and completeness of data received by CEYJ	
		Convene a stakeholder coalition to align reform strategies	Defender General, State's Attorneys, Judiciary, and law enforcement	- Number of coalition meetings convened - Attendance and sector representation	Short-term (0–6 months): initial convening Ongoing (as capacity allows)
		Develop and launch public-facing CEYJ data dashboard (quarterly updates).	Judiciary, DCF-FSD, technical vendor or data partner, communications support	- Dashboard launched and publicly accessible - Frequency of updates - Stakeholder usage or feedback	Medium-term (6–18 months): development and launch Ongoing: quarterly updates
Youth Engagement	Youth are actively engaged in their communities—participating in initiatives and programs that promote civic participation, social responsibility, and community development.	Partner with community based organizations, to create online programming to strengthen connections between youth and their communities	Community based organizations, schools, libraries	- Number of programs offered - Youth participation rates - Youth feedback or satisfaction	Medium-term (6–18 months): co-design and pilot programming
		Partner with diversion boards to address practical barriers that often lead to youth noncompliance	Diversion boards, Judiciary, community-based service providers	- Identification of common access barriers - Implementation of at least one pilot support (e.g.,	Short-term (0–6 months): identify barriers and opportunities Medium-term (6–18 months):

Subcommittee	Key responsibilities (Goals Three Year Plan)	Assigned tasks/ recommendations	Partners/collaborators	Suggested metrics/indicators	Timeline
				transportation, reminders) Changes in completion or noncompliance rates (where available)	support pilots and learning
Governance Committee	Oversee governance, member engagement, and accountability to JJRA statutory requirements.	Implement new member onboarding process with shared racial equity glossary.	Council chair, subcommittee chairs	- Annual evaluation completion - Attendance rates per bylaws - Number of decisions tracked via SMART goals	Short-term (0–6 months): develop and implement Ongoing: use for new members
		Launch annual self-assessment to measure council functioning and progress.	Council Chair, subcommittee chairs,	- Percentage of new members completing onboarding - New-member feedback on clarity of roles	Annual (once per year)
		Reformat meetings around decision making and progress tracking.	Council leadership, subcommittee chairs,	- Completion of annual self-assessment - Participation rate - Use of findings to inform changes	Short-term (0–6 months): pilot new format Ongoing: refinement

Note: Key responsibilities are synthesized from committee duties and objectives outlined in CEYJ's Three-Year Plan. Assigned tasks and recommendations reflect priorities raised by CEYJ and Mathematica during Mathematica-facilitated trainings, the August 2025 retreat, and individual reflection sessions. Partners/collaborators, metrics/indicators, and timelines were developed by Mathematica.

Appendix A

Overview of CEYJ

Appendix B

Additional Notes and Resources

References

Morris, E. Findings Related to Racial Disparities in Vermont's Youth Justice Response – 2021. Vermont Department for Children and Families, September 2022.
<https://outside.vermont.gov/dept/DCF/Shared%20Documents/Contacts/CFCPP-Findings-Racial-Disparities.pdf>

U.S. Census 2020

Mathematica Inc.

Our employee-owners work nationwide and around the world.

Find us at mathematica.org and edi-global.com.



Mathematica, Progress Together, and the "spotlight M" logo are registered trademarks of Mathematica Inc.