

# ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, September 19th, 2024, 2:00PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86399446852>

**Attendees:** **Hon. Philip Degnan** – Presiding Judge – Family Part of the Superior Court & Co-Chairman of the Essex County Youth Services, **Keisha Walker** - Probation, **Rosi Hermida** – Superintendent of the County Vocational School, **Anthony R. Higgins** – County Prosecutor's Office, **Michelle Callari** – County Public Defender, **Lenora Humphrey** – County DCP&P District Manager, **Dennis Hughes**, Todd A. Barcliff – Youth Detention Center Director, **Tyrone Hunter** -Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit – Director, **Colette DeGrazia**, County Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Director, **Lori Scott-Pickens** – Education Sector, **Jasmine-Joseph Forman** – Educator sector, **Laquanda Williams** – Victims’ rights group, **Rev. Bernard Wilkes** – Clergy, **Reginald Bledsoe** – Other interested persons who deal with children, **Davis Sims** – Child Advocacy, **Amy Godfrey** - Mental Health, *Amanda Compton-Dover* & *Ron Small* – JJC Court Liaisons, **Erica Cashaw** - NBOE Director of Alternative Education, *Jason Martinez* - Administrator of Youth Services Commission,

Flohisha Johnson & Nayellie Collazo - Multi-Disciplinary Team Convenors, Karina Silva – RTJ Community Service Aid, Isaiah Fudge - Advocates for Children of New Jersey, Director of Positive Youth Development Policy & Advocacy, Isaac Medina - Senior Counselor from Aspira's Evening Reporting Center, Nichole Williams - Program Director-Leaders for Life, Susan Biegen - United Community Corporation RTJ Pilot Program, Shiniece Norris - Court Liaison PCE, Nicole Graves-Watson - Community Relations Specialist, Essex County Prosecutor's Office, Rahmel Leake - United Community Corporation Family Engagement Program, David Sharp - Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training, City OF East Orange, Sgt. Edwin Diaz - West Orange Police Department, Iris Wells - Goodwill Industries NJ Employment Services, Alle Ries - M&T Bank, Paul Boxer PhD - Rutgers University, Tonjie Reese - Equal Justice USA

## Reading of the Open Public Meeting

“This meeting is being held in accordance with the provisions of the Open Public Meetings Act, N.J.S.A. 10:4-6 -10:4-21. Notice of this meeting has been provided on the Essex County Website.”

### **Approval of Minutes – April 18<sup>th</sup> & August 1<sup>st</sup>**

Administrator Martinez administered the roll call. Lori Scott Pickens announced the Opening of the Public Meeting Act and a motion to approve the minutes from April 18th, 2024, and August 1st, 2024. Reggie Bleedso motioned to approve the minutes and LaQuanda Williams 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion. Minutes were unanimously adopted.

#### **Subcommittee Reports:**

- I. Monitoring: Lori Scott Pickens reported all programs have been scheduled for monitoring.
- II. Allocations/Proposal: Michelle Callari reported that there are currently no updates.
- III. Planning: LaQuanda Williams, reported a planning meeting is scheduled and is pending confirmation.

**ECYSC Updates:** Administrator Martinez reported that the New Jersey Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Innovation funding proposal and application were submitted to the grant management unit of JJC. A proposal is being written for a single provider for \$50,000 to service 10 youths for the career and life skills readiness program. The service request is to secure life skills and employment for youths on probation and to enhance their ability to obtain positive behaviors

The 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update and Application have been received and are being worked on. The administrator explained that the plan update provides each of the 21 New Jersey counties with a coordinated process to plan for the State/Community Partnership Grant Program Funds and Family Court Services Program Funds. Also, the application provides each of the 21 New Jersey counties with a coordinated process to apply for grants. The due date for the plan update and application is December 16th, 2024.

Regarding fiscal reports, Administrator Martinez will contact agencies to submit their Fiscal Report monthly after they submit their 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.

Mr. Martinez finalizes his update by stating on September 11th, the Board of Commissioners approved a contract extension with the United Community Corporation for the Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program – October 31st, 2024, through June 30th, 2025 – amount not to exceed 821,100.00.”

Mr. Martinez inquired if there were any questions regarding his statements.

Altarik White from Leaders for Life asked, “I understand you requested monthly reports, but certain documents, such as 941s, NJ-30s, and WR-30s, are typically reported quarterly.”

Mr. Martinez emphasized that it is acceptable to continue those specific reports every quarter.

A second question arose for Mr. Martinez, from Reggie Bledsoe, what does the contract extension approved by the Board of Commissioners allow UCC to do?

Mr. Martinez answered the grant extension gives the program enough time to draw down on funds that need to be spent and meet the level of services for youths they were contracted.

With no further questions, the meeting proceeded to discuss community partnerships and family court programs.

#### **State Community Partnership and Family Court Programs Announcement and/or updates:**

**Township of West Orange Police Department – Junior Police Academy,** Sgt. Edwin Diaz announced that “The Junior Police Academy Program recently concluded its 24th year, serving 90 youths residing in West Orange. Throughout the summer, the program provided participants with opportunities to engage in various activities, including trips to amusement parks, sports events, and outdoor recreation.”

**Essex County Prosecutor's Office - Summer Youth Internship Program,** Nicole Watson reported that the program took place from July 5th to August 2nd. During this program, participants engaged in interactive workshops aimed at fostering positive change and informed decision-making, addressing issues such as substance abuse and violence awareness, as well as enhancing education and career

readiness. The program also included tours of colleges and historic sites, along with extensive hands-on training, including a session on the steps to becoming a state trooper.

**Leaders for Life (Day Reporting and Evening) Programs,** Nicole Williams presented their latest updates, with delivering the announcement. Ms. Williams reported that, as of today, 41 youths have participated in the day program, with 15 achieving successful outcomes. Regarding the evening program, she noted that 12 youths were served, of whom 3 completed the program. Additionally, the regular summer and afterschool programs, catering to youths aged 10-15, currently serve 35 participants. These individuals focus on developing social, emotional, and team-building skills, supplemented by educational trips to the library and zoo.

**United Community Corporation (Summer and Family Engagement) Programs,** Rahmel Leake highlighted an eight-week summer program that ran from July 1st to August 31st, operating three days a week—Monday, Wednesday, and Friday—from 3 PM to 7 PM at West Side Park. It was noted that all available slots were filled, with referrals being received from schools and various community-based organizations. Furthermore, it was specified that 25 youths in grades 9-12 completed the program. Youths are awarded a certificate of completion, which they can present in court. This documentation allows judges and prosecutors to recognize the engagement and progress achieved by the individuals.

**The Multi-Disciplinary Team,** Nayellie Collazo shared that as of today 139 youths have been reviewed and provided program recommendations to the judges between the MDT Convenors.

**The Home Detention Monitors,** reported by Warder Barcliff that there are currently 19 enrollments in the Detention Alternative Program. Regarding the physical GPS units, the division is in the process of transitioning from BI to Track group, with 43 residents already integrated into the new system and 27 currently being transitioned to the new GPS units. Todd indicated that the remaining 16 residents are expected to complete the transition by next week.

**Essex Vicinage Probation's Youth Engagement Program**, presented by Keisha Walker highlighted the program's recent initiatives, including a barbecue event for youth participants. This gathering incorporated educational elements such as DJ performances and barber demonstrations, providing insights into potential career paths. Additionally, the program organized informational sessions focused on education and preparing young people for the upcoming academic year.

**Juvenile Justice Commission Announcements:** No updates.

**Restorative and Transformative Justices for Youths and Communities Pilot Program Updates:**

Susan Biegen from United Community Corporation reported that referrals have been coming in at a slow but steady pace. Also, Susan announced a presentation is scheduled next week with the Newark Board of Education, that highlighted the program and its benefits for youth participants.

Tonjie Reese presented on behalf of Equal Justice. Tonjiie reported that their organization is collaborating with Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) staff to facilitate learning sessions. These sessions cover various topics, including:

- An introduction to the pilot program
- Community conferences
- Available resources for youth and their families

This collaborative effort aims to enhance the understanding and effectiveness of the RTJ program among stakeholders.

**Public and/or Youth Services Commissioner Announcements:**

Isiah Fudge, representing Children of New Jersey. Mr. Fudge outlined the organization's positive youth development initiative, which aims to prevent or reduce youth detention. Their approach includes exploring treatment options for youth returning from detention alternatives and highlighting the

experiences of children who have not been involved in the detention alternative system. This initiative demonstrates a proactive stance in addressing youth justice issues and promoting positive outcomes for at-risk youth.

Erica Cashew, from the Newark Board of Education, reported that NBOE is collaborating with re-engagement centers to support youth in the community. Erica explained that the re-engagement efforts are specifically in partnership with Brick City Collective. This organization provides comprehensive support to youth across multiple domains, including first-response services, mental health wellness programs, and initiatives that foster positive connections with law enforcement.

**Adjournment:**

Lori Scott Pickens entertained the motion to adjourn. Jasmine-Joseph Forman moved to adjourn, and David Sharp seconded the motion.