

ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

THURSDAY, December 12, 2024

2:30 PM – HYBRID

212 Washington St. Newark, 10th fl. Room 1070

Or/ via Zoom:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82904967832>

Attendees: **Hon. Philip Degnan** – Designee for Presiding Judge, **Kenneth James** - Assistant Family Division Manager, **Anibal Ramos Jr.** - County Human Services Department and Valentina Richards-Green Designee for County Human Services Department, **Ana Rivera**, Chief Probation Officer, **Asmeret Ghebremicael** -Designee for the Highest elected official of County government, **Anthony R. Higgins** -Designee for County Prosecutor, **Michelle Callari** – County Public Defender, **Lenora Humphrey** - County DCP&P District Manager, **Laura Mattia** Designee for County Mental Health Administrator, **Rosi Hermida** Designee for Superintendent of the County Vocational School, **Mabel Elmore** - Youth Shelter Director, **Todd A. Barcliff** – Designee for County Youth Detention Center, **Tyrone Hunter** - Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit – Director, **Colette DeGrezia** – Designee for County Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Director, **Det. John Patino** - Law enforcement representative who works primarily with youth/police, **Apryl Caldwell** - Workforce Investment Board representative, **Jobi Odeneye** - Business representative, **David Armstrong** – Parent Organization, **Shelton Thurman** - Community youth, **Lori Scott-Pickens** – Education Sector, **Laquanda Williams** - Victim Witness Advocacy, **Rev. Bernard Wilkes** – Clergy, **Kenneth Douglas** - Civic organizations, **Taieta El-Amin** - Representative of major urban areas within the county, **Reggie Bledsoe** - Representative of major urban areas within the county, **Amy Godfrey** – Mental Health,

Erica Cashaw - NBOE Director of Alternative Education, Amanda Compton-Dover and Ronald Small – JJC Court Liaison, Jacqueline Henry – UCC’s RTJ Pilot Program and Susan Biegen, Isaiah Fudge – ACNJ, Altarik White – Leaders for Life, Shalene Hill – UCC, Jailene Montalvo – UCC, Edwin Ramos – IT for Superior Court, Alicia Holman, Flohisha Johnson, Nayellie Collazo - MDT, Karina Silva – Community Service Aide, Michelle Washington Davis assistant to ECYSC Administrator, Jason Martinez - Administrator of Essex County Youth Services Commission,

This meeting is being held by 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.

Judge Degnan, asked for a roll call of voting members, which Administrator Martinez administered. It was determined that there was a quorum. Judge Degnan read the Open Public Meeting Act.

Approval of Minutes:

The minutes from September 19, 2024 were approved and motions were made by Mrs. Lori Scott Pickens and Anthony Higgins.

New Business

I. By-Laws: Mr. Martinez explains – “Regarding new business and the by-laws, I believe I mentioned multiple times that we are updating them to align with the new state regulations from the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). Specifically, in 2025, the regulations will stipulate that the supervisor of the Administrator cannot serve as the chair. Currently, our by-laws designate the County Human Services Department Director as the chair.”

“To comply with the updated regulations, we have revised the bylaws to allow the Presiding Judge or their designee, as well as the Youth Detention Center Director or their designee, to serve as the chair. This revision is a draft, and we will confirm who will officially serve as the chair in 2025. I will also ask Amanda to provide us with various options for appointing or voting on our chairs for the upcoming year.”

Mrs. Amanda Compton Dover responds, “Certainly, the options for the Youth Services Committee (YSC) are as follows:

- You can proceed with the current recommendation, where the Director of the Detention Center is designated as the co-chair, or you may propose and vote on a different designated member to serve as co-chair, according to the regulations.
- Another option is to elect a co-chair every two years, with the nomination and vote taking place at the first YSC meeting of the new term. This would allow any voting member present at the meeting to be nominated and elected as co-chair.

Subcommittees Report:

- I. Planning:* Laquanda Williams stated that the subcommittee had met and reviewed the Comprehensive Plan Update and was ready to vote.

II. Monitoring: Lori Scott Pickens stated that all funded 2024 programs have been monitored and evaluated. Monitoring ratings are as follows:

- **Rating 1 (90% or higher):** Achieved by most programs.
- **Rating 2 (75%-89%):** **Aspira Inc. ERC** and **Recreational Program** scored in this range.
- **Rating 3 (below 75%):** The **Home Detention Monitor** program fell into this category.

Recommendations and Actions:

1. Attendance Requirement:

As part of their contract and based on monitoring results, all detention alternative programs are required to attend the following:

- **Youth Services Commission (YSC) meetings**
- **Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement (CJJSI) sub-committee meetings**

2. Corrective Action Plan for Home Detention Monitors:

A Correction Action Plan will be issued to the Home Detention Monitors. This plan will include adherence to the Detention Alternative Manual. During each monitoring session, the Home Detention Monitors will perform the following responsibilities:

- Physically identify the juvenile at their home or another approved location.
- Obtain signatures from both the juvenile and their parent/guardian, documented on the Home Detention Monitoring Form.
- Observe and assess the home condition or the condition of the approved location to complete the monitoring form.
- Maintain and report accurate and complete records for each session.
- If conditions warrant further intervention during a monitoring session, the monitor will notify the Supervisor. The Supervisor will then bring the matter to the court's attention for further action, such as the provision of additional resources.

Lori continues to lead state monitoring for Aspira and HDM, which will take place in the first quarter of January 2025. Regarding HDM's corrective action plan, it is aligned with the detention manual, and any additional requirements may be outlined in the MOU. Monitoring compliance remains critical, with prioritized efforts toward improvement."

III. Allocation/Proposal

Michelle Callari goes into depth about funding the home detention monitoring. The current allocation of the HDM is \$174,500, for 3 part-time employees with fringe benefits.

"A six-month Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is suggested to evaluate how well the home detention program adheres to the Corrective Action Plan. During the first three months, the program's progress will be reviewed, and further funding will be considered based on performance. The aim is to evaluate the program's

effectiveness, and if it doesn't meet expectations, an RFP (Request for Proposal) will be issued for other options, ensuring the home detention monitoring program remains available.

Last was the current contract for Aspira's Evening Reporting Center, which is \$204,454, but it is recommended to reduce the contract to \$137,220 due to an evaluation of the service levels.

Ms. Callari elaborates more, and adds, "The recommendation for the allocation is not to eliminate the program, but rather to reduce the funding by half, bringing it down to \$137,220. Since this funding is not part of the one-third set-aside, the program will operate under a six-month contract, with the option to continue after six months based on performance.

Jason Martinez pointed out that with these changes in funding there will be \$280,000 in unallocated funds.

Additional programming and funding opportunities are expected for 2025. Providers and the public should be aware of these upcoming changes.

Action Items:

- I. 1/3 Set A Side for HDM and MDT
- II. 2025 Comprehensive County Plan and Funding Application
- III. JDAI Grant to fund Urban League of Essex County for \$57,000

A roll call vote was taken of one-third set aside with 24 votes in favor and 2 abstentions for both MDT and Home Detention.

The next vote was for the Comprehensive Funding Plan and Application, resulting in a final tally of 26 in favor.

The final vote was for the Urban League of Essex County under the JDAI grant with a final tally of 26 in favor.

(Updates/Announcements):

Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot:

Jacqueline Henry of UCC goes on to discuss the highlights of the program stating: "The RTJ program is performing well, with many participants and their parents currently receiving mental health services through our partner, New Direction. Most participants are engaging in mentoring following their case conferences."

She goes on to say, “Currently, only two cases are pending, with all others successfully concluded. Recent mentorship activities included attending a New Jersey Devils game and participating in a Young Men’s Mental Health Summit.”

Finalizing “This past Saturday, participants attended a Young Men’s Leadership Conference in Paterson. Additionally, several youths have enrolled in educational and vocational training programs, such as YouthBuild or New Jersey Build. They are working toward earning their high school diplomas, construction certifications, and job development training.”

Mr. Martinez further stated, “Are there any programs that would like to provide updates or make an announcement?”

Altarik White of Leaders for Life provided the following updates and highlights: "We recently received a high school appointment on Friday. One student is already working, and two are actively looking for college programs. The students are responding very well, which is great news."

Shalene Hill of UCC, goes on to list some highlights and important upcoming events, “The Family Engagement event will be held on December 20, from 5:30 to 7:00 PM. This event will include families of those who have completed the program, as well as those who may not have been regularly attending.”

She adds,

Alicia Holman of MDT, “Here are some updated numbers: so far this year, we’ve served 190 individuals, with 139 having completed various programs. We are continually seeking additional programs. Ms. Collazo has identified several programs specifically for females, which we plan to present to the judges in the New Year, following discussions with Judge Degnan.

Mr. Martinez then opened the floor for any additional comments or highlights from representatives of JJC, the Court, JDAI, or the public.

Apryl Caldwell shared that WIOA services host an open house every other Thursday at 50 South Clinton, second floor, “For anyone interested in learning more about their program and services. They will be sharing the updated calendar and event details with Jason. For any questions, they encouraged attendees to reach out.”

Judge Degnan asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion by Laquanda Williams and second Lori Scott Pickens

Adjournment: Next Meeting, 2:00, PM January 16, 2025, 2PM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85956421449>