

ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

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Thursday, July 24, 2025

2:00 PM – Via ZOOM

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/85492279434>

Attendees: **Kesha Walker** – Designee for Chief Probation Officer, **Asmeret Ghebremicael** – Designee for Highest elect official of County government, **Michelle Callari** – County Public Defender, **Rosi Hermida** - Designee for Superintendent of the County Vocational School, **Valentina Richardson**- Designee for County Human Citizen Services Department Director, **Todd Barcliff** - Youth Detention Center Director, **Tyrone Hunter** – Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit Director, **Lt. John Henriquez** - Law enforcement representative who works primarily with youth/police, **Colette DeGrazia** - Designee for County Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Director, **Apryl Caldwell** - Workforce Investment Board representative, **Alle Reis** – Business Representative, **David Armstrong** – Parent or parent organization of at-risk or justice involved youth, **Kenneth Douglas**- Representative of a non-profit community organization of the most densely populated areas within the county, **Lori Scott Pickens, Jasmine Joseph-Foreman, Erica Cashaw** - Educator Sector, **Laquanda Williams** – Victims’ Rights Group, **Rev. Bernard Wilkes** – Clergy, **David Sims** – Family Counseling, **Isaiah Fudge** – Civic Organization, **Sarah Cruz** - Municipal Youth Services Commissions, **Reginald Bledsoe, Taieta El-Amin, Adejobi Odeneye, Shelton Thurman, Josephine Garcia** - Representatives with knowledge, experience, or interest in local youth, the local community or the juvenile justice system. Wilfredo Guzman- ASPIRA Inc, Curtis Moore- IMatter and YAP, Det. Nico Nazzi-SOPD, Sgt. Edwin Diaz- WOPD, Charles Mann- UCC, Laura Varelas Arroyo- Power Back Program, Nayellie Collazo, Alicia Holman – MDT Conveners, Karina Silva – RTJ Community

ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

Service Aide, Michelle Washington, Alex Wolfe, *Jason Martinez - Administrator of Essex County Youth Services Commission*

“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.”

Convene: Open Public Meeting Statement: Read by Dir. Todd Barcliff

A Roll Call with 26 voting members and 1 Non-Voting Ex-Officio member was present.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve was made by Lori Scott-Pickens and seconded by Asmeret Ghebremicael

New Business:

Home Detention Monitors

- Funding through the YSC for the HDM Program will officially end in July 2025, due to poor monitoring results and failure to follow the corrective action plan.

Subcommittee's Report:

I. Planning:

Laquanda Williams reported that the Planning subcommittee finalized proposed bylaw amendments at a recent meeting in anticipation of the September YSC meeting.

II. Monitoring:

Lori Scott Pickens announced that the Monitoring progress is ahead of schedule
With most programs completed.

III. Allocation/Proposal:

Michelle Callari noted that the Allocation subcommittee is exploring one-time purchases using remaining funds from the terminated home detention program.

ECYSC Updates: Jason Martinez, YSC-Administrator:

- **Bylaws Update:** Administrator Martinez announced that the proposed Bylaws will be distributed to all members in advance of the scheduled vote in September.
- **Upcoming Presentations:** The next Youth Services Council (YSC) meeting will include presentations from UCC RTJ and Trak Group Inc.
- **Fiscal Reporting:** Quarterly fiscal reporting will resume moving forward.
- **Members interested in serving in Community Engagement, Racial Disparity in the Juvenile Justice System subcommittees** should contact the administrator directly

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) – Urban League Update:

- The JDAI Innovations Program launched on June 9 with 14 youth referrals. However, only 3 youth have engaged consistently to date.
- The program team is currently reevaluating outreach and participation strategies to improve engagement and retention.

Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program

Updates:

The RTJ program currently serves **71 participants**, including **12 actively engaged in summer programming**.

Program offerings include emotional wellness support, academic/homework assistance, recreational activities, and access to family resources. Activities are held five days a week.

Lori Scott-Pickens offered a point of clarification, recommending that UCC include data in its reporting that identifies participants, tracks engagement, and highlights successful outcomes. This information would help inform YSC's decision-making.

Of the 71 participants, **some have completed (graduated from) the program**, while **new referrals continue to be received from probation, parole, and community-based organizations**.

(Presenter: Jacqueline Henry)

State Community Partnership and Family Court Programs (Updates/Announcements):

ASPIRA Inc. – Evening Reporting Center and Recreational Programs

- Continues to show improvement in team-building and youth engagement.
 - Still accepting weekday evening participants.
 - Program runs Monday through Friday, free of charge.
(Presenter: Wilfredo Guzman)
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Division of Youth Services - Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) Convenors

- 150 youth served so far in 2025, with 15 new participants this quarter.
(Presenter: Nayellie Collazo)
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Essex County Prosecutor's Office – Summer Internship Program & What's It All About Youth Conference

- 32 youths selected for the summer internship out of 80 applicants.
 - Some applicants were waitlisted or ineligible due to age or residency.
 - Internship includes mock trials, field trips, and hands-on legal experiences.
 - Upcoming event:
“What's It All About” Youth Conference – December @ NJIT,
highlighting social service agencies and programs.
(Presenter: Gwendolyn Williams)
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IMatter Inc. - Early Intervention Program

- Focus areas: financial literacy, mental health, and job retention.
 - 12 youths are currently engaged; 36 served in total for 2025.
 - Of the 12:
 - 9 enrolled in free summer camp (City of Newark)
 - 2 received driver's permits
 - 4 enrolled in the summer youth employment program
 - Recently donated 300 bookbags at Prudential Center.
 - Still accepting youth. Target: 48 (no eject/reject model).
(Presenter: Curtis Moore)
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Leaders for Life – Day & Evening Reporting Center Program

- Second Community-Based Violence Intervention Program launching in September.
 - Community service projects and referrals are ongoing.
 - Daily and weekly indoor/outdoor programs are active, focusing on prevention.
 - Emphasis on counseling, mediation, resume building, and interview skills.
 - HBCU Tour scheduled for August.
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Superior Court, Essex Vicinage Probation – Youth Engagement Program

- Youth enjoyed a summer full of enrichment activities:
 - Trips to museums, Turtleback Zoo, and an upcoming barbecue.
 - Collaboration with other agencies for mentoring.
 - Second graduation of the year scheduled for December 8.
 - Preparing youth for a successful return to school.
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Team Resurrection - New Pathways

- Provides holistic mentoring and court process support.
 - Mentoring occurs 3–5 days/week, with home visits for youth facing travel barriers (e.g., gang conflicts).
 - In-home intake helps assess family dynamics for tailored support.
 - Housing component: *New Pathways Traditional Housing* is seeking state approval for full operation.
 - Clarification (per Alicia Holman): Youth placed with actual family members, not state-certified foster homes—state must approve each placement.
(Presenter: Malika McCall)
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South Orange PD – Junior Police Academy

- Program runs next week for one week.
 - 29 applications received; 29 youth enrolled (target: 35).
 - Age range: 10–13 (flexible: 8–14 depending on capacity).
 - Program includes:
 - SWAT demos, K9, motorcycles, state police
 - Field trips: Liberty Science Center, baseball games
 - Consideration suggested to expand outreach to Irvington, East Orange, Newark.
(Presenter: Det. Nico Nazzi)
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West Orange PD – Junior Police Academy

- Held June 23–27 at Liberty Middle School.
 - 92 youth participated (target was 90).
 - Activities included:
 - Aquarium, fishing, Mets & Yankees games, water park.
 - Notable: A 4-year JPA graduate suggested inter-academy competitions for future sessions.
(Presenter: Sgt. Edwin Diaz)
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UCC – Summer & Family Engagement Programs

- Curriculum includes entrepreneurship and foreign exchange (forex) trading.
 - Two participants have completed the program but continue attending to stay engaged.
(Presenter: Charles Mainor)
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Youth Advocate Program (YAP) – Family Engagement Program

- Expanding family engagement models to reduce detention rates.
- Special support from NFL player Jihad Campbell (Philadelphia Eagles), who:
 - Donated bookbags
 - May visit to speak on family engagement and his experience as a formerly system-impacted youth.
(Presenter: Curtis Moore)

Youth Justice Commission Announcements:

No report.

Public and/or Youth Service Commissioner Announcements: Public Portion of the Meeting:

Laura Arroyo – Teen Dating Violence Awareness

- Introduced herself as an advocate visiting New Jersey high schools to raise awareness about Teen Dating Violence and Abuse.
 - Her work is grant-funded, and she expressed interest in collaborating with ECYSC in the future.
 - Shared compelling data: 61% of 99 surveyed teens reported experiencing abusive relationships.
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Apryl Caldwell – ECYSC Tech & Career Readiness

- Promoted ECYSC's technology and career readiness resources.
 - Open to collaborative programming opportunities with partners and community organizations.
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Kenneth Douglas – Junior Public Safety Academy (JPSA)

- Shared his background as Fire Director in Orange and Trenton and his creation of the Junior Public Safety Academy (integrating police and fire).
 - Stressed the importance of early education to build the next generation of first responders, noting that past academy graduates have entered law enforcement and emergency services.
 - Commended West Orange and South Orange JPA programs and offered to collaborate.
 - Invited attendees to the Trenton JPSA graduation on August 17.
 - In response to Administrator Martinez's suggestion, Douglas indicated he is exploring a 2026 RFP grant application.
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Susan Biegen – NJ Build Program

- Offers trades training for youth ages 16–26, with a focus on supporting:
 - Young women
 - Youth of color
 - Aims to expand economic mobility through skilled labor training.
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Valentina Richardson – Community Events

- Promoted the upcoming Back to School event on August 16.
 - Will share details with Administrator Martinez for broader distribution.
- Also advertised an upcoming vendor/employer fair, aimed at connecting youth with career opportunities.

Adjournment:

Apryl Caldwell moved to adjourn the meeting, and Jasmine Joseph-Foreman seconded the motion. The motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting: Thursday, September 18th

, 2025

Via Zoom:

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

Or In Person:

50 South Clinton, East Orange, New Jersey, 07018 – Suite Samuel Okparaekwe, 2nd FL