



COUNTY OF ESSEX
DEPARTMENT OF CITIZEN SERVICES
DIVISION OF YOUTH SERVICE-YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION
50 South Clinton Street – 3rd Floor, East Orange, New Jersey 07017
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Joseph N. DiVincenzo, Jr.
Essex County Executive

Anibal Ramos, Jr.
Department Director

Jason M. Martinez
Division Director

Essex County Youth Services Commission

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 2:00 PM 50 So. Clinton St. East Orange
Suite Samuel Okparaekwe, 2nd Floor
or
Via Zoom <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87138238255>

AGENDA

CONVENE: OPEN PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT:

“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.”

- 1. Open Public Meeting Law:** Announcement of the Opening of the Public Meeting Act
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. Minutes Approval:** January 15, 2026
- 4. Presentations:**
 - I. United Community Corporation – Art Therapy**
 - II. YMCA – YES Program**

5. ECYSC (Updates/Announcements): ECYSC Planning Framework Overview Jason Martinez, YSC-Administrator

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

- I. Division of Youth Services | YSC - Multi-Disciplinary Team Convenors
- II. Essex County Prosecutor's Office – Summer Internship Program & What's it all about Conference
- III. Imatter Inc. – Early Intervention Program
- IV. Leaders For Life – Prevention, Day & Evening Reporting Center Programs
- V. Superior Court of New Jersey- Essex Vicinage Probation – Youth Engagement Program
- VI. Township of South Orange Police Dept. – Junior Police Academy
- VII. Township of West Orange Police Dept. – Junior Police Academy
- VIII. United Community Corporation – Summer & Family Engagement Programs

7. Youth Justice Commission (Updates/Announcements):

- I. Court Liaisons
- II. JDAI
- III. RTJ

8. Public and/or Youth Service Commissioner (Updates/Announcements): Public Portion of the Meeting

9. Adjournment: Next Meeting, April 16, 2026 Via Zoom

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87138238255> or In Person, 50 So. Clinton St. East Orange, NJ - Suite Samuel Okparaekwe, 2nd Fl

ESSEX COUNTY YOUTH SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING

Thursday, 15 January 2026

2:00 PM – Via ZOOM

Attendees: Hon. **Leonardo Hernandez**, Designee for Presiding Judge, **Kenneth James** – Designee for Family Division Manager, **Keisha Walker**- Designee for Chief Probation Officer, **Asmeret Ghebremicael** – Designee for Highest elect official of County government, **Donna Cameron** – Designee for County Prosecutor, **Michelle Callari** – County Public Defender, **Anibal Ramos Jr.** - County Human Citizen Services Department Director, **Brittney Murray** – Youth Shelter Director, **Todd Barcliff** - Youth Detention Center Director, **Tyrone Hunter** – Juvenile Family Crisis Intervention Unit Director, **Colette DeGrazia** - Designee for County Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Director, **Apryl Caldwell** - Workforce Investment Board representative, **Samar Williams** – Young person under the age of 26, **Jasmine Joseph-Foreman**, **Erica Cashaw** - Educator Sector, **Laquanda Williams** – Victims’ Rights Group, **Rev. Bernard Wilkes** – Clergy, **David Sims** – Family Counseling, **Sarah Cruz** - Municipal Youth Services Commissions, **Reginald Bledsoe**, **Taieta El-Amin**, **Adejobi Odeneye**, **Shelton Thurman**, **Josephine Garcia**, **Carol Lucus** - Representatives with knowledge, experience, or interest in local youth, the local community or the juvenile justice system. *Amanda Compton Dover*, *Ron Small* and *Nicole Jackson*, Youth Justice Commission and *Jason Martinez* - *Administrator of Essex County Youth Services Commission*

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

A Roll Call with 26 voting members and 3 non-voting ex officio members was present.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion to approve was November 6, 2025 meeting minutes made by Jasmine Joseph Forman and seconded by Donna Cameron.

Subcommittee's Report:

I. Planning:

No Announcements

II. Monitoring:

Jason Martinez stated, "There are three programs from 2025 that still require monitoring. Those programs are the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Winter Internship Program, the Youth Advocate Program, and Team Resurrection." The committee noted their hopes to conclude the monitoring by the end of this month.

Mr. Martinez continued, "One program did not meet monitoring expectations and has been issued a corrective action plan. Continued funding will depend on compliance."

Mr. Martinez concluded "I will be sending an out an email requesting for volunteers for the three programs that need to be monitored. After our first quarter, I will be asking again for more volunteers."

III. Allocation/Proposal:

Michelle Callari stated, "The Allocations Committee met in November to review the Community Partnership Program applications. We reviewed and scored all submissions and are bringing forward the following funding recommendations."

Ms. Callari continued, "The first is Big Brothers Big Sisters for one-on-one mentoring for \$ 20,000 dollars. The second is United Community Corporation for an after-school program for \$20,000. The third is United Community Corporation for an art therapy program for \$115,000. And the final recommendation is the YMCA Youth Emergency Services program for \$85,000."

Action Items – Roll Call Votes

- **Big Brothers Big Sisters – Mentoring Program:**
Roll Call Vote: **25 in favor, 1 abstention**
- **United Community Corporation – After-School and Art Therapy Programs:**
Roll Call Vote: **23 in favor**
- **YMCA – YES Program:**
Roll Call Vote: **26 in favor**

Presentation:

United Community Corporation Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program

Jacqueline Henry, Deputy Director of United Community Corporation, stated, “The mission of the Restorative and Transformative Justice Pilot Program is to create a safe space where all are welcome, and all will have the ability to experience healing, restoration, and transformation.”

Ms. Henry reviewed the program services, partnerships, and outcomes.

A youth participant, Blessed, discussed his journey with the RTJ Program and how it supported his transition home, education, and vocational training.

Ms. Henry continued highlighting the program’s holistic approaches including restorative circles, creative & digital reflection, and life skills. She also noted the program, 5 days a week, offers homework assistance, tutoring, and additional mentoring.

Bernard Wilks asked if the participation of the offender and the victim were still included in the program.

Ms. Henry responded stating “Yes, that is very much included in the program. The restorative circles allow both the offender and victim to be able to work towards a resolution. There are no definite timelines as to how long we work with a young person, because until that young person can accept responsibility for their actions, and the individual that has been on the receiving end of the harm, is ready to face that individual; we will not bring them together.”

Mr. Wilks asked if the participation of the offender and the victim is an anticipated action or a prominent component of the program.

Ms. Henry responded, stating that the participation of the offender and the victim is an actual element of the program.

Director Martinez asked how many peace circles the RTJ Program has conducted as of now.

Ms. Henry answered stating “For 2025, we had 18 peace circles”

Director Martinez followed up by asking how many of the peace circles that were conducted received positive resolutions.

Ms. Henry noted all the peace circles were able to be resolved and for those unresolved, the RTJ Program continues to work with them. She then stated that 18 out of 24 peace circles have been resolved.

Director Martinez asked what types of crimes the youth were committing.

Ms. Henry responded, stating that most of the crimes were fights among young people, throughout parks and outside of school.

Director Martinez continued asking if the RTJ Program could be utilized countywide or statewide. Noting RTJ's eligibility requirement with the youth living in Newark, NJ.

Ms. Henry noted that the RTJ Program would be successful with providing services to youth countywide.

Director Martinez followed up asking who does the RTJ Program receives the most referrals from.

Ms. Henry responded stating "Most of our referrals have come through the Sheriff's Department. We also received referrals through MDT and other community-based organizations."

Apryl Caldwell asked if individuals or the youth themselves were able to refer them into the RTJ Program.

Ms. Henry stated that the RTJ Program would be able to accept the referral. She then mentioned a referral where a mother also requested her younger son, who was not involved in the juvenile justice system, to be referred to the RTJ Program.

Kenneth Wilson asked if program providers were able to refer youth and access the services of the RTJ program.

Ms. Henry stated that the referral would be possible and will be counted as a community referral.

Director Martinez emphasized the importance of program providers continuing their collaboration. Noting Essex County's positive participation in community-based programs.

Presentation:***Multi-Disciplinary Team Convenors***

Nayellie Collazo, MDT Convenor of the ECYSC, presented a 2025 Executive Summary of MDT and their data.

Ms. Collazo started providing an overview of MDT and its mission with providing adequate services for justice-involved youth. She then highlights MDT's total amount of youth served in 2025 which totaled 239 youth (Alicia Holman: 107, Flohisha Johnson: 37, and Nayellie Collazo: 95).

Ms. Collazo highlights the community-based programs that were utilized throughout the year and discusses the completion outcomes of the program. She shared that 54.9% of youth completed their assigned program, 30.7% of youth received probation terms, and 14.4% of youth received deferred dispositions.

Ms. Collazo discusses the program referrals and states the total amount for youth referred into each program (UCC Family Engagement: 61, UCC Restorative & Transformative Justice Program: 25, YAP mentoring: 29, YAP Family Engagement: 27, Leaders for Life Day & Evening Program: 37, Team Resurrection's New Pathways Program: 43, ASPIRA's Evening Reporting Center: 35, and Multi-Systemic Therapy: 12).

Ms. Collazo continues noting MDT's efficient progress throughout the year with family engagement and their strengths (Improved JAMS data tracking, increased cross-agency collaboration, and faster referral processing). In addition, Ms. Collazo also states the areas of improvement for MDT including expanding Spanish speaking services, strengthen partnership communication timelines, and continued enhancing data tracking.

Ms. Collazo concludes the MDT presentation by proving an overall impact summary and emphasizing their impactful support to 239 youth of Essex County.

Jasmine Joseph-Forman asked who would be the contact person that an organization can reach out to implement collaboration with MDT?

Director Martinez noted that anyone interested in contacting MDT could contact MDT staff, Michelle Washington-Davis, as well as himself.

ECYSC Updates: Jason Martinez, YSC-Administrator:

Director Martinez announced that he will be extending the fiscal reports deadline until the 26th for program providers. He also emphasized that at the next YSC Meeting, he will provide a fiscal report for each program provider and their assigned amount.

In addition, at the next YSC Meeting, An RFP will be issued for a community-based Home Detention Monitoring Program in the amount of \$130,000. Also, a grant from the JDAI for the amount of \$120,000 is being proposed to implement a Life Skills/Job Readiness Program for the Summer. Youth who have previously participated in a Detention- Alternative Program and youth who are currently on Probation would be eligible to attend.

Kenneth Wilson asked Director Martinez if the two RFPs could be repeated. Director Martinez restated both upcoming RFPs and noted to visit the county purchasing portal for additional information.

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

ASPIRA INC.

Kenneth Wilson noted that ASPIRA has implemented a new art therapy-based program at the Temple of Hip Hop. Mr. Wilson stated that the youth attend every other Wednesday and the program is open for other providers to utilize. Mr. Wilson also highlighted that ASPIRA's services (boxing gym and recording studio) are also available to program providers.

Director Martinez inquired if there are any success stories ASPIRA would like to highlight.

Mr. Wilson stated that 6 youth completed the program, 5 youth received resolutions, and 4 youth are currently waiting for their disposition. He also noted the program's success with having limited altercations throughout the program.

Leaders for Life – Prevention, Day & Evening Reporting Center Programs

Nichole Williams provided a final update noting that their Prevention Program is currently serving about 35 participants. A coat and book drive would be conducted on 1/22/2026 and 1/23/2026. On 1/29/2026, Leaders for Life will also be hosting a Young Men's Summit. Ms. Williams stated that for the Day and Evening Reporting Program, they have a total of 17 youth that are a part of the Day Reporting Center and a total of 16 youth Evening Reporting. Out of the completions, the program did receive one successful completion for a youth who were able to obtain their high school diploma through Leaders for Life. Ms. Williams also indicated that a youth just completed the Day Reporting Program and is in the process of scheduling his GED exam.

Superior Court of New Jersey- Essex Vicinage Probation – Youth Engagement Program

Nkechi Onwudinjo discusses the success of Youth Enrichment Program the program's mission which is "designed to support youth in Probation, empower families, and engage youth in the community." Ms. Onwudinjo continued to discuss the program's elements and the activities conducted throughout the year.

Team Resurrection's New Pathways Program

Zara Rose provided a quick overview of the New Pathways Program highlighting that over 30 youth have been referred into the program. Ms. Rose emphasized the focus of the New Pathways Program which is "providing structure, accountability, and opportunities for growth; while engaging families and community partners in the process." Ms. Rose stated that all the youth participated in a New Jersey Driver Permit Preparation Class in which upon completion, majority of the youth are ready to take the exam. In addition, family involvement has been a true reflection of their work with Ms. Rose indicating that "many parents and guardians attend sessions alongside their children, strengthening accountability and support."

Township of South Orange Police Dept. – Junior Police Academy

Nico Assisi discussed the South Orange Police Department Junior Police Academy which is "a one-week program for youth aged 10-13 that promotes positive interaction between law enforcement and youth. We utilize other police functions like SWAT teams, motorcycle units, horse units, and marine units. The program also allows youth to participate in recreational activities like attending a baseball game or visiting the Liberty Science Center."

Township of West Orange Police Dept. – Junior Police Academy

Justin Davis of the West Orange Police Department noted the purpose of the Junior Police Academy is to "actively prevent juvenile delinquency and foster any understand of the law in both at-risk and adjusted children at a critical age of development. The program is scheduled to begin their academy from 6/22/2026 to 6/26/2026 at Liberty Middle School. For 2025, 92 youth were enrolled into the program (54 boys, 38 girls).

United Community Corporation – Summer & Family Engagement Programs

Alfred Dill of UCC Family Engagement mentioned that the program has implemented new curriculum which allowed youth to participate in community engagement. Another highlight mentioned was the photography workshop where youth were able to learn about photography and work with digital cameras. Other activities including self-reflection, recreational activities, and STEM activities were also noted. UCC's efforts with family engagement include providing connections for families to receive financial literacy from Citizens Bank and aiding with food during the SNAP shutdown.

Youth Justice Commission Announcements:

Court Liaisons

Amanda Compton-Dover stated that with the new year, a new comprehension plan is needed to continue to provide services in Essex County for the next three years. Any information or thoughts should be relayed to Ms. Williams of the Planning Committee.

JDAI

Nicole Jackson stated that on 12/11/2025, the New Jersey Council on Juvenile Justice and System Improvement, known as CJSI, voted to change the name to the council to the New Jersey Council on Youth Justice System Improvement. (CYJSI). The state also released a detention alternative grant that is open to all counties. Ms. Jackson noted that the CYJSI are currently working on the detention alternative manual.

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

Apryl Caldwell stated that Essex County W.I.O.A. Services are offered to individuals aged 17-24. Ms. Caldwell indicated that every Wednesday, W.I.O.A. host open houses from 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. which provide youth an overview of the services offered.

B. Murray asked if the information previously provided by Ms. Caldwell could be implemented into the ZOOM chat box.

Director Martinez closes the meeting with thanking all the program providers for their continued dedication with providing adequate services for our youth of Essex County

Flohisha Johnson gave a shout out to BRIDGES and their donation of providing 500 pairs of socks to be distributed to youth and their families.

Adjournment:

Reginald Bledsoe motions to conclude with Erica Cashaw seconding the motion.

Next Meeting: March 19, 2026 2PM

Via Zoom: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87138238255>