



Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services

Commission on Juvenile Justice Annual Report 2021-2022

Mission Statement

The Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice is a thirty-four-member board, whose primary tasks include:

- Evaluating State and County-funded programs and services that serve juveniles and families involved in the juvenile justice system to address capacity, utilization, and effectiveness;
- Informing and advising the Juvenile Court, County Council members, the County Executive, and State legislators on the needs and requirements of juveniles and the juvenile justice system;
- Studying and submitting recommendations, procedures, programs, or legislation concerning prevention of, and programs addressing, juvenile delinquency and child abuse or neglect;
- Making periodic visits to juvenile facilities serving Montgomery County juveniles; and
- Promoting understanding and knowledge in the community regarding juvenile needs and the effectiveness of programs.

History of the Commission on Juvenile Justice

The Montgomery County Juvenile Court was created by Maryland statute in 1931. The Juvenile Court Committee, along with its counterparts in other Maryland jurisdictions, was formed to support and assist an evolving juvenile justice system. Under County law enacted in 1981, the Juvenile Court Committee began serving in an advisory capacity to the Montgomery County Council and Executive. The Juvenile Justice Court Committee of Montgomery County served this role actively and effectively.

On April 4, 2000, the Montgomery County Council passed legislation revising and expanding the functions of the Juvenile Court Committee, and transformed it from a committee into the Commission on Juvenile Justice, effective July 14, 2000. Thoughtful analyses and position papers on such far-reaching issues as judicial appointments, treatment alternatives, State legislation, local budget allocations, and disproportionate minority representation in the juvenile justice system have become associated with the work of the Juvenile Court Committee and the Commission on Juvenile Justice.

Meetings

The Commission on Juvenile Justice meets on the third Tuesday of each month, except for August and December. Commission meetings are held from 7:00pm - 8:30pm; open to the public and held virtually through "Teams Meeting." A link to all assemblies is offered through the Montgomery County website. The work of the Commission is supported and staffed by the Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Behavior Health and Crisis Services, Juvenile Justice Services.

Contact Information

For more information about the Commission, please contact:
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Commission on Juvenile Justice Vision Statement and Objectives

Vision

The Commission on Juvenile Justice envisions an effective partnership between the State and County, in which the State is responsive, with funding and other resources, to locally identified, data driven service needs. The Commission will work with the State and County in collaboration to create and bolster a framework for optimal service provision to youth, their families, and their support structures. The Commission recognizes that a county may be in a better position to identify and propose solutions to direct needs, align and coordinate already existing county-provided services to youths, and build on pre-existing in-county relationships. The Commission seeks to strengthen mutual accountability on the State and County levels. The Commission strives to enable the state to enact standards of practice and care that will ensure equity across counties.

Commission on Juvenile Justice Membership 2021-2022

Executive Committee

Executive Committee

Chris Jennison, Chair

Tracey Friedlander, Vice Chair

Francha Davis, Legislative Committee Chair

Citizen Commissioners

Kimberly Alfrend

Bonnie Beavers

Carol Cichowski

Don Chisholm

Bruce Clark

Eddie Ellis

Tracey Friedlander

Gerda Gallop-Goodman

Melissa Goemann

Ijeoma Okoro

Christopher Jennison

Erynn Penn

Joshua Pestaner

Kevin Redden

C. Jonathan Scriven

Thomas Smith

Ebony Stoutmiles

Thomas Squire

Heather Sweren

Shua Tajammul

Erin Whaley

Program Manager

Diane M. Lininger, LCSW-C

Agency Members

Joanna Bonner, Juvenile Court
Frank Duncan, Department of Juvenile Services
Francha Davis, Voices for Children
Susan Farag, County Council
Steven Miller - Department of Health and Human Services – Juvenile Justice
Amy Daum, Montgomery County Police Department – Special Victims Investigations Division
Steve Neff, Montgomery County Public Schools
Mary K. Siegfried (Brett Lonker substitute), Office of the Public Defender
Vacant, County Executive's Office
Nathaniel Tipton, Department of Health and Human Services – Child Welfare
Vacant, Montgomery County Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families
Carlotta Woodward, State's Attorney's Office

Emeritus Members

Carole L Brown, Editor
Christopher Fogleman
Wendy Pulliam

Commission Structure 2021-2022

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the Commission had two committees:

The **Executive Committee** represents the Commission at meetings with the Department of Health and Human Services Director, County Executive, and County Council. They also draft and present testimony on relevant legislation and provide administrative support to the Commission. The Executive Committee organizes Commission memberships, and annual orientations, work plans, and reports.

The **Legislative Committee** recommends the legislative agenda for the Commission. Its duties include lobbying and testifying before local and State legislators and monitoring and tracking legislation that affects the juvenile justice system. .

The Commission also worked within *ad hoc* committees, as follows:

- **Orientation Committee**
- **Nomination Committee for Executive Committee and prospective new members**
- **Youth Panel**

Members of the Commission served on the following County boards, commissions, committees, and task forces, and reported to the Commission on their activities:

- **Alfred D. Noyes Children's Detention Facility Advisory Board**
- **Montgomery County Criminal Justice Coordinating Commission (CJCC)**

- **Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force**
- **Juvenile Justice Information System Task Force**
- **Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families – Racial Ethnic Disparities Committee**
- **Criminal Justice Behavioral Health Initiative**
- **Family Justice Center Steering Committee**

In addition to its committees and the above referenced groups, the Commission worked closely with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Office of the Public Defender, State's Attorney's Office, Family Crimes Division of the Police, Montgomery County Circuit Court, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Program, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, Montgomery County Public Schools, Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families and the Office of the County Executive.

A Message from the Chair

By Chris Jennison, Chair and Citizen Commissioner

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (CJJ), I am honored to present the Commission's Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 2022.

The Commission on Juvenile Justice recognizes the importance of supporting and advocating for youth. The group is generally defined as people between the ages of 16 and 24, who are neither in school nor working. Young people who may be in school, may also have been involved in the juvenile justice system. Youth represent a social and economic opportunity; and many are eager to further their education, gain work experience, and help their families and communities. The Commission on Juvenile Justice's priorities for FY-21 reflected the Commission's commitment to promote youth and enrich Montgomery County and focus on the critical need for significant juvenile justice reform across Maryland.

The Commission on Juvenile Justice advocated for education, resources, opportunities at-risk youth, and children in detention. CJJ examined effective reentry options for youth; and addressed this priority by: (1) identifying and meeting with agencies that are providing services and reviewing these programs' effectiveness, (2) identifying, meeting with and visiting nongovernmental organizations that are providing community engagement and professional development for opportunity youth, (3) identifying and creating relationships with the Maryland State Department of Education and other agencies within Montgomery County and statewide who have responsibility for this work to facilitate collaboration and information gathering, (4) meeting with circuit court judges who are involved in the juvenile justice system, and (5) participating in fact-gathering, community-engagement, and stakeholder events. Through our prior work and engagement, the Commission noticed a disparity in the services being provided to female youth.

As in past years, the Commission continued to actively monitor and advocate for legislation. The Commission voiced its support for three important bills affecting juvenile

justice involved youth. As in FY 2021,, the CJJ once again expressed its support for the Child Interrogation Protection Act, previously called the Maryland Juvenile Interrogation Protection Act. By allowing minors access to counsel before any questioning takes place while they are in custody, the Act guards against false confessions. At a minimum, the Act requires that law enforcement notifies - not just make reasonable efforts to contact - a parent or guardian before an interrogation. After the General Assembly passed the bill, it was vetoed by Governor Hogan. However, the veto was overridden by the legislature before the end of the session. The Commission also supported the Juvenile Reform Act, which was the vehicle for making a number of reforms recommended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Council, one of which was to establish a minimum age for juvenile court jurisdiction. Subsequently, the Commission began the process of identifying its legislative priorities for the 2023 General Assembly session.

In carrying out its advocacy activities on behalf of Montgomery County's youth, the Commission met with several key officials in the juvenile justice system and others whose work affects justice involved youth. These included judges and representatives from the Montgomery County Circuit Court, elected officials from the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates, the State's Attorney's Office, Office of the Public Defender, Department of Juvenile Services, Montgomery County Recreation Department, Maryland State Department of Education, and Alfred D. Noyes Children's Center.

After reading the report, if there exist questions concerning the Commission's work, we will be pleased to provide answers.

On a personal note, I regret to inform you that this is my last Annual Report as Chair of the Commission. After 6 years on the Commission, I have been appointed by County Executive Marc Elrich to the new police Administrative Charging Committee. Therefore, despite being unable to serve on the CJJ, I will continue to work for the county and be ready to do my part to enhance justice in Montgomery County.

Legislative Committee

By Francha Davis, Chair of the Legislative Committee and Ex-Officio representing Voices for Children

The 2022 Legislative Session was very successful, where actions comprise the Commission's support of legislation enacted to dramatically improve Maryland's juvenile justice system.

The Commission's Legislative Committee's role include:

- Keeping state lawmakers informed of proposed legislation that would have an impact on the juvenile justice system,
- Advising politicians of systemic problems that need to be addressed through proposed legislation, and
- Accessing online tracking systems to monitor current legislation, which allows Committee members to swiftly evaluate and update information critical to its role.

The Legislative Committee held multiple meetings before and during the Legislative session. Such practices ensured fast action on proposals in which the Commission expressed interest.

During the 2022 legislative session, the Commission expressed its views on critically important juvenile justice reform legislation in letters to the Chairs of the House Judiciary Committee and the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee and in written and oral testimony. The bills included the Child Interrogation Protection Act (SB0053/HB0269) and the Juvenile Justice Reform bill (HB0459/SB691). Both of these bills passed the Maryland General Assembly and are now the law in Maryland. The Commission also submitted written and presented oral testimony on HB0294/SB0165, a bill to end the automatic charging of youth as adults. This bill was withdrawn by the sponsors after the hearings were held. The Commission also wrote a letter in favor of SB0119/HB0084, a bill to decriminalize disruptive or threatening behavior by students on school grounds, misconduct that should be treated as a disciplinary matter by school officials and not a crime. This bill passed both Houses in slightly different forms, but no legislation was enacted.

While there is still much work to be done, the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice believes that the juvenile justice reform legislation that it endorsed, and that became law in 2022, has put into place much-needed protections for young people and will help address some of the inequities that plague Maryland's juvenile justice system. The Commission believes that the changes will have a major and positive impact on how youth are treated and served by Maryland's juvenile justice system..

Youth Panel Ad-Hoc Committee

**By Joshua Pestaner, Citizen Member and Tia Scott, Member of the Public
CJJ Youth Panel**

On June 21, 2022, the Commission on Juvenile Justice (CJJ) presented pre-recorded interviews with three adults who had been involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice as youth. The interviews focused on positive and negative experiences during adjudication and now. Each discussion revealed unique backgrounds and circumstances in the juvenile legal system.

Commission members questioned the panelists about diverse experiences after seeing the interviews. Numerous opportunities for improvement were identified throughout the panel discussion and the interviews. For instance, case management contacts, school transfers, and educational facilities were topics of concern. As a result, CJJ decided to include these areas for examination in current conditions for youth in CJJ site visits, and interactions with community guests that present in CJJ meetings for the upcoming Fiscal Year.

Youth Mental Health Trends, Pathways, and Practices

By Carole L Brown, Emeritus Member, Editor

National Trends in Youth Mental Health Services

Mental health has impacted youth in every community across the United States. Complicating matters, roughly two-thirds of youth in detention or correctional settings have at least one identifiable mental health or substance use concern. Although the COVID-19 pandemic worsened mental health challenges, some youth detention facilities cut back on program services to help with the crisis. Advocacy research reveal the existence of biases and inequities in mental health service patterns for youth who meet diagnosis criteria (The Sentencing Project, 2022).

Maryland Juvenile Mental Health Services

Mental health resources vary greatly from state to state; and are sometimes fraught with competing demands to address underlying problems. According to Mental Health in Maryland (2021), approximately 1 in 5 youth, aged 13–18 (21.4%), experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. Young girls and boys, residing Maryland detention facilities, are members of this vulnerable population. Currently, the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) assesses and provides mental health services to youth who come through its intake centers and live in DJS ran facilities.

County Youth Mental Health Pathways and Practices

Since most mental health conditions start in childhood, adolescence, or early adulthood, county and state advocates suggest making mental health care for youth a top priority. Practices that focus on mental health security range from education, and training, to treatment for every child - whether in schools, communities, or detention facilities. Community health campaigns help raise awareness of mental health and improve knowledge of early warning signs, and when and where to seek help (Montgomery County, Maryland | National Alliance on Mental Illness, 2022). Other proposals include moving legislation forward to meet the rising demand for high-quality mental health services and substance abuse treatment.

Youth mental health concerns often go untreated and undiagnosed for years. Such disparities can lead to learning impairments, conduct issues, delinquency, and, eventually, involvement with the juvenile justice system. Maximizing support services is critical to protecting mental health of youth in our communities, as it is essential to their overall health and enduring well-being.

Carole is also certified in Youth & Adult Mental Health First Aid USA with the National Council for Mental Wellbeing

References

Montgomery County, Maryland | National Alliance on Mental Illness.
Role of DJS in Maryland Juvenile Justice System: The Department of Juvenile Services. Mendel, R (2022). *Why youth incarceration fails: An updated review of evidence*. The Sentencing Project Report.

