



Montgomery County, Maryland  
Department of Health and Human Services

## **Commission on Juvenile Justice Annual Report 2022-2023**

### **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 August and December. Commission meetings are held from 7:00pm - 8:30pm. The meetings are open to the public and held virtually through Microsoft Teams. “A link to all assemblies is offered through the Montgomery County website. We also meet in person occasionally and this information is located on the Montgomery County calendar. 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:  
Diane Lininger, Program Manager  
Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services  
Behavioral Health and Crisis Services  
7300 Calhoun Place, Suite 600  
Rockville, Maryland 20855  
E-mail: [Diane.Lininger@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Diane.Lininger@montgomerycountymd.gov)

# **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 the 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 2022-2023**

---

### **Executive Committee**

Executive Committee  
Kevin Redden, Chair  
Tracey Friedlander, Vice Chair  
Melissa Goemann, Vice Chair  
Carol Cichowski, Legislative Committee Co-Chair  
Bonnie, Beavers, Legislative Committee Co-Chair  
Michael Pinard, Secretary

### **Citizen Commissioners**

Kimberly Alfriend	Erynn Penn
Bonnie Beavers	Joshua Pestaner
Carol Cichowski	Kevin Redden
Don Chisholm	C. Jonathan Scriven
Bruce Clark	Thomas Smith
Eddie Ellis	Heather Sweren
Tracey Friedlander	Shuaa Tajammul
Gerda Gallop-Goodman	Erin Whaley
Melissa Goemann	
Ijeoma Okoro	
Michael Pinard	

## **Program Manager**

Diane M. Lininger, LCSW-C

## **Agency Members**

Joanna Bonner, Juvenile Court  
Frank Duncan, Department of Juvenile Services  
Francha Davis, Voices for Children Montgomery  
Susan Farag, County Council  
Elizabeth Emen - Department of Health and Human Services – Juvenile Justice  
Jordan Satinsky, Montgomery County Police Department – Special Victims  
Investigations Division  
Steve Neff, Montgomery County Public Schools  
Brett Lonker, 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 2022-2023**

During Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, 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, 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**

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

- **Cheltenham Youth Detention Center**
- **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, Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee, Montgomery County Public Schools, Collaboration Council for Children, Youth and Families, Office of the County Executive and Voices for Children.

## **A Message from the Chair**

**By Kevin Redden, Chair and Citizen Commissioner**

On behalf of the Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice (the "Commission"), I am honored to present the Commission's Annual Report for the year ending June 30, 2023.

The Commission continued its years' long support of bills seeking to decrease youth incarceration and increase access to services and programs for at risk youth in 2023. These bills included HB96/SB93-- Youth Equity and Safety Act and HB1180/SB850— Youth Accountability and Safety Act.<sup>1</sup> Each bill aimed to refine the juvenile justice system by restricting the ability to charge youth as adults and limit the felony murder doctrine, respectively. The Commission's decision to support these bills, and many others, is a result of the Commission's recognition that supporting and advocating for youth is a critical aspect to a more efficient and equitable juvenile justice system. This advocacy has become increasingly important in the face of strained State resources.

The Commissioners visited Cheltenham Youth Detention Center on December 6, 2022. The visit was spurred, in part, by the closure of the Alfred D. Noyes Children Center ("Noyes"). Noyes formerly served Montgomery County's youth but was closed in 2020. Noyes' closure was one of several throughout the State that has affected every stakeholder involved in the Juvenile Justice System. The visit to Cheltenham confirmed this reality as the limited number of beds, and the distance from Montgomery County, was viewed as an impediment to the efficient operation of the Juvenile Justice System.

---

<sup>1</sup> Each of these bills is discussed in depth by the Commission's Legislative Chairs, Carol Cichowski and Bonnie Beavers.

In spring of 2023, Judges Karla N. Smith and Kathleen Dumais discussed the County's need for a "one stop" children's services center (the "Center"). The Commission gravitated to the Judges' idea and created an ad-hoc committee tasked with generating a proposal to the County Council. The Center would be modeled after the Family Services Center which is housed in the Montgomery County Circuit Court. The Center would provide a variety of services to the County's at-risk youth before they enter the system. By increasing access to these services, the Center would be able to act as a preventive mechanism which would decrease the number of youth that enter the juvenile justice system. The Commission has recently embarked on this project and is hopeful to have an outline of the Center, and its structure, by this time next year.

Finally, the Commission continues to monitor trends in juvenile involvement in crime and efforts to prevent youth justice involvement. This includes the County's implementation of the CEO program in Montgomery County Public Schools.

The Commission is happy to discuss anything contained in this report and welcomes the opportunity to answer any questions that may arise.

## **Legislative Committee**

**By Carol Cichowski, Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee and Citizen Member  
Bonnie Beavers, Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee and Citizen Member**

The 2023 Legislative Committee continued its work in selecting, reviewing, analyzing, making recommendations on, and drafting testimony on legislation pending in the Maryland General Assembly. This work is part of the Commission's mission to inform and advise State legislators on the needs and requirements of juveniles and the juvenile justice system.

The Legislative Committee met online multiple times during the Legislative Session to discuss relevant legislation, using the Maryland Manual Online (<https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/07leg/html/ga.html>) to monitor current legislation in real time. The Legislative Committee worked on the bills described below during the 2023 session. The Legislative Committee presented recommendations to the Commission at its February meeting.

As a result of its work, the Commission submitted testimony in support of three of the legislative proposals and in opposition to one.

### **HB96/SB93 - Youth Equity and Safety Act (ending automatic charging of youth as adults)**

The Commission once again submitted testimony in support of bills to end the automatic charging of youth as adults if they have committed one of 33 specified offenses. The

Legislative Committee received the Commission's approval to support this legislative proposal during the 2022 session. In 2023, the Commission submitted written testimony to both the House Judiciary Committee and to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. Once again, neither Committee scheduled a vote on the bills after the hearings.

#### **HB1180/SB850 - Youth Accountability and Safety Act (limiting the felony murder doctrine)**

During the 2023 session, in response to a recommendation from the Legislative Committee, the Commission voted to support this proposal to limit the scope of the felony murder doctrine so that young people under twenty-five years of age could not be charged for a crime they did not commit. The Commission submitted written testimony to both the House and Senate Committees, neither of which scheduled votes on the bills after the hearings.

#### **HB297/SB292 - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking and Human Trafficking (Safe Harbor bill)**

During the 2023 session, the Commission voted to support this bill, based on a recommendation from the Legislative Committee. The bill protects minors from being prosecuted for certain offenses if they committed these offenses as a direct result of being a victim of sex or human trafficking. The Commission submitted testimony drafted by the Legislative Committee to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee. This bill passed the General Assembly and was approved by the Governor on May 16, 2023.

#### **HB698 - Lowering the Age for Juvenile Court Jurisdiction**

The Commission voted to submit testimony opposing this bill to lower the age for juvenile court jurisdiction from thirteen to eleven years of age, undoing one of the previous year's legislative reforms. A minimum age was established by the enactment of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act during the 2022 session, legislation that the Commission strongly supported. HB698 died in the Judiciary Committee.

#### **HB385/SB459 - Limiting Solitary Confinement (the Maryland Mandela Act)**

The Legislative Committee recommended that the Commission submit testimony in support of this proposal that would restrict the use of solitary confinement for incarcerated individuals and end restrictive housing for young people under twenty-six years of age. Although a majority of voting members of the Commission voted to support the bill at a meeting of the Commission in February, the Commission did not submit testimony because a question was raised about whether the bill fit within the Commission's mission to focus on the needs and requirements of juveniles. The vote taken by the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee in March resulted in a referral of the bill to interim summer study.

□

## **Plain Language in Juvenile Justice: A Fundamental Element of Human Rights**

### **By Carole L Brown, Emeritus Member, Editor**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation emphasizes that the law mandates that information meant to aid juveniles must be easily accessible, comprehensible, and usable by its intended recipients. In juvenile justice, authorities often precisely define and communicate delinquent acts to ensure clarity and alignment with misconduct. Extending these clear communication standards to interim and post-juvenile services can decisively eliminate any lingering ambiguity, thereby ensuring that the voices of young individuals are heard, and their rights are secure. This article underscores how plain language and clear messaging tools are applied to deliver important support services for youth and their families.

### **Plain Language Communication & Key Principles**

Plain language communication in the context of the juvenile justice system refers to the use of clear, straightforward, and easily understandable language and communication methods.

Some key principles of plain language communication in the juvenile justice system:

- **Clear and Simple Language:** Use words and phrases that are simple and easy to understand. Avoid jargon, legal terms, or complex language that might confuse or intimidate young people.
- **Avoid Ambiguity:** Be specific in your communication. Provide clear instructions and information, so there is no room for misinterpretation.
- **Use Visual Aids:** Incorporate visual aids, such as diagrams or illustrations, to enhance understanding. Visual materials can often convey information more effectively than text alone.
- **Break Down Complex Concepts:** If you need to explain a complex process or concept, break it down into smaller, digestible parts. Use step-by-step explanations.
- **Be Empathetic and Supportive:** Show empathy and understanding in your communication. Young people involved in the juvenile justice system may have faced significant challenges, and a compassionate approach can build trust.
- **Ask for Feedback:** Encourage youth to ask questions and seek clarification. Create an environment where they feel comfortable expressing their concerns and needs.
- **Provide Resources:** Offer information on available resources and support services in a clear and easily accessible format. This may include contact numbers, websites, or pamphlets.
- **Engage in Active Listening:** When communicating with young individuals, actively listen to their concerns and needs. This helps tailor the support and guidance to their specific situations.



- Collaborate with Counselors and Social Workers: Work closely with professionals who have experience in dealing with juvenile justice issues, as they can provide valuable guidance in delivering clear and effective communication.
- Language Accessibility: Ensure that language barriers are addressed by providing communication in the preferred language of the youth and, if necessary, through interpreters.

## **Conclusion**

While plain language is not a standalone human right, its use serves as a critical means to uphold and promote various human rights within the juvenile justice system. By facilitating accessible and understandable communication, it empowers youth and their families to navigate the system more effectively and ensures their rights are respected. Using plain language helps eliminate disparities in access to information and treatment within the juvenile justice system. It ensures that youth and their families, regardless of their background or abilities, can fully participate in the process and receive fair and equal treatment. By implementing plain language communication in the juvenile justice system, stakeholders can help young individuals better understand the processes, requirements, and opportunities available to them. This approach, in turn, supports their reintegration into society and helps youth and their families' overcome obstacles and barriers after contact with the system.

## **References:**

Annie E. Casey Foundation (May 2021). Talking about youth probation, diversion, and restorative justice. A messaging tool kit.

Md. Code, Heth-Gen. § 20-2203. State and local agencies shall use plain language in public communications about health, health insurances, and social services benefits.

Use Plain Language (April 2022). National Institute of Justice Style Guide. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, p. 25.

## **Montgomery County Commission on Juvenile Justice Annual Meeting with Judges and Magistrates**

By Shuaa Tajammul, Citizen Member

On Tuesday, May 16, 2023, the Commission met with Judge Karla N. Smith and Magistrate Lena Kim from the Circuit Court for Montgomery County.

Judge Smith is an Associate Judge for the Circuit Court for Montgomery County. Prior to joining the bench, Judge Smith served as an Assistant State's Attorney for many years. Magistrate Kim is the special Juvenile Magistrate for the Circuit Court for Montgomery County. Prior to her appointment, Magistrate Kim worked in the County Attorney's Office where she represented the County in child welfare proceedings.

The Commission posed several questions to Judge Smith and Magistrate Kim, and among them were questions about programs/interventions they find helpful for juveniles in the justice system, and their thoughts on increasing community-based programs and developing a potential “one-stop-shop” for juvenile services such as counseling and preventative services that could be offered to juveniles to prevent them from entering the justice system. The members of the bench also discussed changes to juvenile reform legislation, and explained the process of a case if a juvenile has a disability.

Through the meeting, the Commission was able to obtain information about valuable resources and programs that the bench finds helpful in cases involving juveniles. It served as a platform for the Commission and the bench to discuss crucial matters concerning juvenile justice. One key takeaway was the importance of understanding the unique needs and circumstances of juveniles who are already exposed to the justice system, and those who may be prevented from such exposure through community-based programs.