



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Commission on Juvenile Justice

Marc Elrich
County Executive

James C. Bridgers, Jr. Ph.D., MBA
Director

Tuesday, April 15, 2025

I. Welcome by Carlotta Woodward, Co-Chair

III. Ex-Officios – All Ex-Officios are voting members. (listed by what agency they represent)

- a. Francha Davis, Voices for Children Organization - is a private nonprofit working with foster children and delinquency cases. They receive funding from Montgomery County and Office of Administrative Courts. They recruit, screen and train advocates for youth.
<https://voicesforchildrenmontgomery.org/>
- b. Captain Kathy Estrada, Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD)
<https://montgomerycountymd.gov/pol/bureaus/field-services.html#CED>
Explained the training of Community Engagement Officers (CEOs (formerly known as SROs). From 7 am to 3 pm they respond to elementary schools, middle schools, and high schools. There are 26 CEOs, she explained where they are. They also cover summer school, camps, etc. Explained the career-based learning opportunities, also the DARE program (which is drug abuse treatment), "Youth on the Rise," GAL (Girls are Leaders) program, athletic programs, the law enforcement leadership conference, crisis intervention team. They also deal with hate crimes cases (statistics are on the website).
- c. Susan Farag, County Council - Public safety focus, funding from the budgets of MCPD, State's Attorney's Office, and the Circuit Court. She also spoke about evidence-based best practices.
- d. Brett Lonker, Office of the Public Defender (OPD) - He has been with OPD for 27 years, 20 of those in the juvenile division, and 3 years supervising the division. Process used in the office both for managing in-house cases, as well as cases that must be paneled to private attorneys. Spoke about how the role for attorneys in delinquency cases is to advocate for the child not necessarily for the best interest of the child. He also answered a question regarding the interrogation law for juveniles, which he believes is working as intended.
- e. Nathaniel Tipton, Child Welfare- Nathaniel is the Child welfare ex-officio. He has been working as a social worker in the family preservation unit, and the intersection between his work and juvenile justice system is when there is a co-involved youth. Discussion on joint committee between Department of Juvenile Services and Child Welfare that meets to discuss youth who are co-involved with both agencies. Committee works together for the best outcome for the youth.
- f. Carlotta Woodward, Chief of Juvenile Unit, State's Attorney's Office - Explained the SAO's process, their review of cases and decisions on what cases should be charged in court. The unit covers all cases with juveniles, even if they are charged as adults, except cases with gang allegations. They have 6 attorneys and may be getting a 7th soon. The

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process of transferring a juvenile from the adult system to the juvenile system was also explained

VI. Old Business

- a. Meeting Minutes for March 2025 approved

VII. New Business

- a. Legislative committee – Carol Cichowski, Chair - explained that legislative session has ended, and none of the “bad” bills re: reportable offenses passed, neither did HB 1265. Senator Smith’s bill regarding automatic charging did not go anywhere. The restorative practices bill did pass (HB197, SB68).
- b. Ad-hoc – Subcommittee One – Erin Whaley, Chair - Updates included that the subcommittee met last week with Steve Neff re: suspension rates. Though Montgomery County has a lower rate than the rest of the state, the racial disparity is not better. Also discussed was the lack of understanding of restorative practices from parent community. Carol also spoke to the issues of implicit bias, de-escalation, and that MCPS is working on those issues.
- c. Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging Best Practices – Carlotta Woodward – They had a meeting last Thursday. There was a Vera Institute of Justice presentation. She also spoke about females in juvenile detention, the report to Governor Moore due in the Fall, the facility reports re: juveniles in custody or on probation. Their next meeting is in May.

VIII. Upcoming Meetings

- a. **May Meeting** – At March meeting it was discussed that members would like to talk about scope of the CJJ and what upcoming work should we focus on based on that scope. The May meeting was scheduled to be in-person to facilitate breakout groups for members on various topics.
- b. **June Meeting** – we will be having our annual meeting with Juvenile Judges. Honorable Karla N. Smith, Honorable Kathleen Dumais and Master Lena Kim will all be in attendance. We will be asking members for topics that they would like the Judges to discuss.

VIV. Meeting Adjourned