

SOUTH CAROLINA GOVERNOR'S JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

February 28, 2025, at 10:30 am

*Epworth Children's Home (Barns Learning Center)
2900 Millwood Ave, Columbia, SC 29205*

Members Present: Chairman John Holler, Blake Taylor, Christopher Ross, David Guyton, Jerry Allred, Kathryn Moorehead, Robert Reid, Antwan Tate, Steven Ferrufino, Dione Carroll, Dee Robinson,

Staff Members Present: Joi Brunson, Jerode Oliver, Traci Dove, Brittany Cain, Jess Leneave, Mariah Riddick (recorder)

Guests: Christine Wallace (Proxy for Eden Hendrick), Katie Cox (5th Solicitor's Office), Tara Pellerin (15th Circuit Solicitor), Trevon Fordham (City of Columbia)

I. Welcome by the Chair: Chairman John Holler welcomed everyone in attendance and called the meeting to order.

II. Approval of Minutes: Chairman Holler asked if everyone had a chance to review the minutes from December 9, 2024. A motion was made to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was properly seconded and carried unanimously.

III. Agency Updates

- a. **OHSJP Update:** Jerode Oliver provided an update on the fiscal year 2024 funds that have been received, and operations are continuing as normal. He also noted that the juvenile justice solicitation is now open locally. Jerode reminded the attendees about the upcoming Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) annual conference, scheduled for May 28-31. Members interested in attending must submit their names for the approval process by the end of March.

Brittany Cain provided an update on the recent federal audit for compliance monitoring. She explained that nine states are audited each year, and South Carolina was included in this round. The audit went well, with only four preliminary findings, which is significantly fewer than the findings from 2019. The full report has not yet been received, but once available, she will provide further details.

Brittany Cain also addressed South Carolina's compliance status, stating that the state is currently out of compliance for the Deinstitutionalized Status Offenders (DSO) requirement. Additionally, she explained that a new compliance requirement under statute 223(a)(11)(B), known as the "Interest of Justice Hearing," must be reviewed. She will be collecting data from adult detention centers to determine if 17-year-olds charged as adults are being housed with adult offenders.

During the discussion, Brittany confirmed that Jerry Allred agreed to serve as the DSO Subcommittee Chair. She stated that she would be reaching out to subcommittee members individually to confirm their continued interest in participating in the subcommittee.

Brittany also spoke about youth membership for the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (GJJAC). During a recent visit to the White Pines facility, she met two young men who assisted with the audit tour. She plans to follow up with them to see if they would be interested in joining the GJJAC. Antiwan Tate suggested developing a tangible outreach tool, such as a brochure, to better engage and encourage youth participation in the council.

Traci Dove provided an update on grants management. She announced the launch of a new grants management system called Intelligrants. She also stated that the Formula Grant application officially opened on February 28, 2025 and is now live on the agency's website. The deadline to apply for Formula Grant funding is April 25, 2025. Additional information, including application instructions, can be found at scdps.sc.gov/ohsjp.

- b. **SCDJJ:** Christine Wallace a representative from the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) provided an update on the agency's budget and operational priorities. She explained that salary increases for correctional officers are being considered to improve staff retention and competitiveness. Additionally, DJJ is looking into increasing compensation for front-end community service staff who work to prevent youth from entering detention facilities.

Christine Wallace highlighted that DJJ previously had the highest workers' compensation rate in the state. To address this, the department has requested recurring funds to support ongoing efforts in this area. She was pleased to report that DJJ has successfully reduced its workers' compensation rate by implementing measures to decrease staff injuries. A new process is also in place to reduce the length of time staff members remain out of work following incidents, particularly those involving direct interactions with youth.

She then addressed the challenges posed by an outdated detention center, explaining that while efforts are being made to refurbish the facility, overcrowding remains an issue. As of today, there are 94 youth housed in the detention center, which is considered a relatively low number compared to usual capacity. She also noted that DJJ operates a detention satellite facility on the Broad River Road Campus (BRCC), which now accommodates all youth previously housed at the Alvin S. Glenn Detention Center. Currently, there are 17 youth housed at that facility.

Christine also provided an update on the Greenville Detention Center, stating that efforts are still underway to finalize the lease agreement with Greenville County. At this time, Greenville County is only accepting local youth from within the county, and discussions are ongoing to explore options that would allow the facility to serve youth from the broader Upstate region.

Regarding front-end budget priorities, DJJ is seeking additional funding to support after-school centers and intends to increase stipends for those programs. The agency is also

working to enhance its juvenile arbitration program and is requesting approximately \$3 million to establish a day center, possibly in a new location within South Carolina.

She also shared an update on DJJ's existing day reporting center, known as The Pines, which is located in front of the Broad River Road Campus. She was pleased to report that as of last week, the center celebrated its first GED graduate. She emphasized that DJJ's overall goal is to focus on front-end interventions rather than incarceration, as increasing preventive measures will ultimately reduce the need for discussions about back-end detention solutions.

Lastly, she noted that DJJ's IT infrastructure is outdated and in need of improvements. The department is actively working to modernize its systems to provide better services and support staff efficiency.

- c. **Other Agency Updates:** DSS representative Steven Ferrufino provided updates regarding leadership changes within the agency. He stated that Director Leach's last day was in January 2025. Former General Counsel Anthony Catone has since been appointed as the new director. Additionally, Dawn Barton has stepped into the role of Deputy Director for Child Welfare.

Ferrufino also shared updates on service expansions. DSS has been working on increasing access to intensive in-home services across the state for children in DSS custody and other custodial cases. A grant was recently awarded to a provider to expand capacity for families receiving treatment in South Carolina, with Richland County serving as the primary target area and Greenville County focusing on the Upstate region. The agency is also looking to extend services to surrounding counties.

He introduced "Intercept," an intervention program that involves in-home visits with families on a daily basis. The program is supervised by clinical staff and is designed to provide continuous support and supervision to families in need.

Amanda Whittle, representing the Department of Children's Advocacy (DCA), provided updates on recent changes within the agency. She explained that DCA was initially tasked with expanding its existing programs, which included the Continuum of Care, the Guardian ad Litem Program, and the Foster Care Review Division. To support systemic improvements, the agency has also developed additional capacity to receive and respond to complaints regarding nine different child-serving agencies.

Amanda reported that DCA currently has a staff of 17 people who respond to complaints via phone and online, as well as handle critical incident responses. In its first year, the agency received 30 critical incident notifications. That number has since grown to 2,894 within a single year, despite not all agencies reporting incidents.

To address these growing demands, DCA has established a Systems Improvement Division, which is now organizationally aligned with the Guardian ad Litem Program, Continuum of Care, and Foster Care Review. Within this division, the agency has also

created an Investigations Unit and a Critical Investigations Unit. The System Improvement Director is Melissa **Pentenato**, the Investigations Unit Director is Lauree Davis, and the Critical Investigations Unit Director is Wanda Baker.

Amanda announced that Deputy Director Kayla Capps, who has been with the agency since December 2019, will be leaving her position on March 14, 2025. She also shared that she has submitted her own resignation to the Governor's Office, as she will be transitioning into a new role as a Family Court Judge. Her last day at DCA will be April 21, 2025.

IV. Old Business: None

- V. New Business:** Chairman Holler discussed the council membership and the status of members who are no longer able to attend meetings. He stated that there are several individuals who have been inactive and need to be replaced. Jerode Oliver noted that Charles Jackson, who represented the Organizational Delinquency Nonprofit sector, has requested to be removed from the council. Additionally, Oakley Dickson, who represented Private Nonprofit Youth Development, has stepped down. Kenneth Rodgers, who represents Mental Health, has not yet confirmed whether he wishes to continue serving on the council. Other vacancies include representatives for Recreation and Youth Services.

A motion was made to officially remove Charles Jackson, Oakley Dickson, and Kenneth Rodgers from their responsibilities as council members. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Jerode Oliver stated that he would send an email listing the current vacancies so that council members can recommend potential replacements. Chairman Holler encouraged members to submit their recommendations via email, and votes will also be conducted electronically. Hon. David Guyton added that if no other recommendations are submitted, he would like to reach out to Whitney Payne, a juvenile solicitor for the Sixth Circuit in York County, to see if she is interested in filling a vacant position.

- VI. Subcommittee Reports:** Chairman John Holler provided an update on the Government Relations Committee, stating that a Zoom meeting was recently held. He emphasized the importance of reactivating the subcommittee to ensure that information is effectively communicated among agency heads and stakeholders. Strengthening these connections will allow the council to present a unified voice on key juvenile justice matters.

Brittany Cain provided an update on the Juvenile Justice Reform Act, noting that Senator Tamika Isaac Divine has reintroduced the bill. One significant aspect of this legislation includes provisions to prohibit the detention of status offenders, which could support efforts to bring the state into compliance with the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) requirement. Joi Brunson suggested that the Government Relations Committee draft a formal letter on behalf of the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Council (GJJAC) to express support for bills that align with the council's mission and objectives. This letter would be reviewed and approved by GJJAC before submission. Chairman Holler agreed that this would be a beneficial course of

action. He stated that if there is consensus on a particular piece of legislation, the council should stand behind it. To facilitate this effort, he plans to send emails to Mayor Cornelius Huff, committee members, and agency heads to discuss the matter further and determine the best course of action.

- VII. Presentation- 15th Circuit Juvenile Change Program:** Tara Pellerin, Director of Diversion Programs for the 15th Circuit, which includes Horry and Georgetown counties, provided an overview of the circuit's four-tier juvenile diversion programs. The first level of diversion is the Change Program, designed for first-time offenders and considered the lowest level of intervention. This program has experienced significant growth since 2023. The second level is the Arbitration Program, which serves as a mid-level intervention. It provides longer-term monitoring for juveniles who have had prior legal issues, cases involving victims, or those who require additional support. The third level is the Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP), which is the highest level of diversion. Participants remain in the program for a minimum of three months, although most stay longer. Many juveniles in this program have high restitution requirements, and failed drug tests are the most common reason for extended participation. The fourth and final program is an Alcohol Education Program, focusing on youth involved in alcohol-related offenses.

The 15th Circuit is committed to diverting youth from entering DJJ custody. In 2024, the diversion programs served 593 juveniles in Horry County. In Georgetown County, 51 juveniles participated in the Change Program, and 50 took part in the Juvenile Diversion Program, totaling 101 participants. Since Georgetown County does not have an Arbitration Program, the combined total across both counties was 694 juveniles successfully diverted from the court system. Juveniles are referred to these programs by family court solicitors, and participation is entirely voluntary.

Tara also outlined the requirements for the Change Program, which includes a 2.5-hour Life Skills Education Course. The program depends heavily on community partners to provide additional support services. Some of the key supplemental programs available to participants include Anger Management Classes, individual referrals for mental health services or private counseling, and The Messengers Program, which has been particularly popular among youth. Additionally, the EPIC Program focuses on defensive driving and life skills, specifically for juveniles who have been charged with DUI offenses.

She concluded her presentation by sharing program statistics from the Change Program. In total, 256 juveniles successfully completed the program. However, 38 participants were terminated, most often due to failed drug tests or lack of parental support. Another 46 participants were rejected, typically because they chose not to participate.

- VIII. Meeting Adjourn:** With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned.