



Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice Advisory Board

March 3, 2026

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Webex Video Conference and 60 E Van Buren, Suite 1374, Chicago

Meeting Minutes

I. Roll Call & Introduction

Members present: David Olson, Emily Buss, Adolfo Davis, Sabrina Davis, Alison Flaum, Meghan Olson, Devon VanHouten-Maldonado, Jenny Vollen-Katz, Zach Wahl-Alexander, Robert Vickery-IDJJ Acting Director

Absent members: Christine Logan, Luis Saucedo

IDJJ Staff: Omar Jamil-Senior Policy Advisor, Marna Satlak-Chief of Staff, April Curtis-Deputy Director of Programs, Thomas DeBetta-Deputy Director of Community Services, Dominique Newman-Chief of Communications, Brittany Groot-Quality Assurance Research Manager

Guest: None present

II. Approval of Last Minutes

Minutes from December meeting 2025 were approved.

III. DJJ Reports and Updates

A. IDOC Transition Group Update: Robert Vickery, Acting Director

Acting Director Vickery spoke on how IDJJ is serving an increasing number of young people. At least half of them will transition to the Illinois Department of Corrections at some point due to age. Since December, we have pulled together a group of stakeholders to talk to discuss the various aspects of that transition. This group consists of legal advocates from Northwestern, the Office of Independent Ombudsman staff, several community partners who do credible messenger monitoring, and staff from both IDJJ and IDOC. Four work groups have been formed, and they are putting together concrete policy proposals.

The work groups are working on the following focal points:

- What would a credible messenger mentoring program look like where we could match young adults who are on track to transition to IDOC with someone who has gone through that transition themselves?
- What training will IDJJ staff need to be able to effectively provide good information to youth about what this transition will entail?
- Is there anything that DOC can streamline in this transition process? Currently, young adults transitioning must go through the normal DOC reception classification process, which is very different from a relatively programmed rich environment like DJJ.

Healthy kids, strong families, safe communities

- Legal education—what components of the law should we provide to this group—their legal rights, post-convictions and legal processes?

The work groups will reconvene in April, and hopefully, there will be parts of the model that we are ready to implement. Deputy Director April Curtis has been paired with youth who will be transitioning to DOC in the next few months. As an interim step, Deputy Director Curtis will match them up with some credible messenger mentoring, so that we are at least providing this piece of the model.

B. Legislatives Updates – Acting Director Vickery

IDJJ is working with legislators on two pieces of legislation this spring: Senate Bill 3942 with Senator Mary Edly-Allen as the sponsor, and House Bill 5592 with representative Lilian Jiminez. Senate bill 3942 is the piece of legislation that we are adding language into the juvenile Court Act about our responsibility as an agency. If a young person is released based on their target release date and all our normal release policies, but the judge has set a court date after when they would be eligible for a release, then is it IDJJ's responsibility to make reasonable efforts to bring that young person to court?

Other bills IDJJ are supporting are Senate Bill 1676 sponsored by Senate Belt and House Bill 2348, sponsored by House Representative Olickal. These bills were introduced last spring and would provide a prisoner review board hearing prior to the 21st birthday for those youth transferring to IDOC.

C. Community Services Discussion – Thomas DeBetta, Deputy Director of Community Services Division

Deputy Director T. DeBetta gave background on Aftercare/Community Services for IDJJ. Its main objective is to provide supervision and support to the youth that come back to community and transition back home. The division has added two new units in the past few years: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT and RISE. Both are managed by clinical social workers.

- **Family Engagement Unit** was added to address issues that were happening in the homes. A lot of our conversations were trying to connect with the family and making sure the family was involved in. Some of the services provided are family therapy, support for those families that may have housing instability, act as intermediary to mend broken relationships between the youth and the family and organize family advisory meetings.
- **RISE** (Restorative Interventions Support Services and Engagement) which is run by Katrina Wilcher, a social worker who practices restorative justice and repairing harm. She supports youth, families and staff in traumatic experiences and finds different support services or help to navigate difficult times they might be dealing with. Ms. Wilcher also serves on a statewide trafficking response team with other state agencies like DHS, DCFS, HFS and DOC and helps develop different traffic and awareness and response within DJJ.

Another update for Community Services division is the changing of DJJ's intake process. A mobile intake process was piloted with over time at three detention centers (Lake, Winnebago and Kane County). Last year's negotiations with Labor representatives were finalized to make those changes permanent and DJJ received approval from CMS to do a reorganization. Several existing facility-based intake positions are

transitioning to the community services division. It is anticipated that by end of summer the agency will be doing all its intakes at detention before youth are transported to IDJJ where they will get an initial assessment, program placement and be able to go directly to that placement, instead of the 7–14-day reception and reclassification process. Members of the St. Charles RNC team have moved to Community Divisions and will pick up LaSalle and Will Counties. Two mobile intakes positions are being created for Cook County and will pick up all the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (JTDC) intakes.

D. Data Reports: Length of Stay in Community – Brittany Groot, Quality Assurance Research Manger

Brittany Groot presented on youth on Aftercare/Community Services and the dramatic population change over the past 10 years. In the early 2000s, DJJ had over 2000 youths that were monitored within the community mostly through parole. Starting in 2015 into fiscal year 2016, Aftercare introduced limits on how long the youth were supervised within the community and there has been a dramatic decrease in population since then. Today, there are 318 youth being monitored in the community. Aftercare terms can range from 6-12 months or 18 months, with a small percentage of about 5% that would have different term lengths based on the type of juvenile sentence the youth have. In 2025, youth spent an average of 9.1 months on Aftercare, less than the twelve months they should have. This is because a youth either terminated early or goes back into the facility on a violation. Also, there is a fixed limit on the length of stay as it used to be until the 21st birthday.

Data was presented from FY 2022 to 2025 that measures what happens to the youth on Aftercare and what programming they are receiving and the outcomes. In educational engagement, the graph shows the percentage of youth actively getting a high school diploma or GED while on Aftercare and the percentage who do not enroll while on Aftercare. and mental health treatment.

The graph shows what percentage of youth are employed at discharge of Aftercare. There has been a decline in youth employed as 2022 showed a little over 50% and to slightly above 35% in FY 2025. The decrease may be (but not necessarily) due to the increase in youth enrolling in school, being a part of day reporting centers, mental health treatment and substance abuse treatments.

Mental health treatment over the past four years has gone from 80 % to 100% of youth leaving DJJ facility with mental health treatment conditions and an increase in the percentage of youth completing their mental health treatment well in the community, from under 40 % to under 50 %.

Substance abuse programming graph shows that IDJJ went from slightly over 70 % to just under 90 % of our youth having a condition and completed some sort of substance abuse programming. Outcomes of youth on aftercare are measured when they are leaving and when they are discharged from Aftercare.

The graph shows three justice related outcomes: youth being placed on suspended status (youth charged with adult charges while on aftercare), youth being arrested or reported being arrested while on their aftercare term, and youth being adjudicated or convicted while on their aftercare term. There has been decrease in the last four years of youth being placed on suspended status. Youth being arrested while on aftercare term has slight decrease but has seen an increase this past year and youth convicted is about the same as it was in 2022 at under 30%



E. Topics for 2026

One of the topics to focus on this year is juveniles tried as adults and identify specifics for IDJJ to look more in depth and things board members can contribute or work on. Chair David Olson will circle back with Director Vickery and Brittany Groot with specific data questions. Another topic of discussion is staffing levels throughout DJJ by facilities, by region of the state, by positions and updates on vacant positions.

F. Discussions on Alternate Meeting Times

Omar Jamil and David Olson will work together to create a poll for the advisory board members to see accessible dates and times for alternative meetings.

New Business – No new business

Public Participation – No public participation or speakers

Adjournment: 3:38 pm