



Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice Advisory Board

December 9, 2025

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, Robert Vickery, Emily Buss, Adolfo Davis, Sabrina Davis, Alison Flaum, Jenny Vollen-Katz, Devon VanHouten-Maldonado, Zach Wahl-Alexander,

Absent members: Meghan Olson, Christine Logan, Luis Saucedo

IDJJ Staff: Omar Jamil-Senior Policy Advisor, Marna Satlak-Chief of Staff

II. Approval of Last Minutes

Minutes from September 2025 were approved.

III. DJJ Reports

A. Monarch Youth Center Updates: Robert Vickery, Director of Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice

Youth are residing and receiving services at Monarch. The first two transfers from Harrisburg to Monarch arrived in mid-November and we have added one additional youth, for a total of three. Additional transfers and new intakes are planned for the rest of this month, bringing the total to ten youth. There is adequate staffing to run one of the two housing units. New staff with offers are ready to start in January in a training academy class and will be fully trained and ready to start working by the end of February. At that point, Monarch will be able to open the second housing unit and move upwards of 15 youth. We are on track to reaching the 30-youth capacity by the end of this fiscal year.

Two programming providers are scheduled to start in January. One of them is Project Flex, a program that Zach Wahl is affiliated with. The other is a Decatur-based mentoring and restorative justice partner called Next Gen. They have been engaged with DJJ Aftercare Youth for a couple of years and are looking forward to providing programming at this facility as well.

The educational staff onboard so far include a few teachers, a principal and a school counselor. Sufficient educators will be onboard by the first week of January and we will start offering classes to high schoolers. The first three youth that transferred in were graduates because we did not have all the educational staff hired yet. In January, the facility will start serving some high school youth.

Any questions about Monarch?



Jenny Vollen-Katz: *Currently, you have high school graduates based on educational staff. Can you give us a sense of the characteristics, including the mental health status or need, of the youth that you hope to have in Monarch?*

Director Vickery: All three are graduates, and the next two transfers from Harrisburg are also graduates. In mid-December, we will have a young man who is an 8th grader, sentenced as an adult; and a young man who is a 7th grader, sentenced as an adult. Their ages are 16 and 17.

Later in the month, we will have two 8th graders and a 9th grader. They are sentenced in juvenile courts, with shorter length of stay. Two graduates and a 9th grader are tentatively scheduled for the first week of January.

Monarch will have some newer intakes after they arrive at Harrisburg R&C. The goal is to have youth with their primary experience all at Monarch instead of the traditional DJJ experience plus Monarch.

The three who are there now are mental health level one, so lower. Next week, a level one and a level two—slightly higher mental health need. By the end of the month, three more level ones, another level two, and a level three. We are planning to take the youth with higher mentally healthy youth.

Emily Buss: *For those who identified as longer stays, are they there for the duration of their childhood and up to 21? Or is it something short of that?*

David Olson: *Or are they going to IDOC?*

Director Vickery: One has a 2041 MSR date, so he will be in custody moving to DOC pending some sort of clemency or appeal. The other ones have 2027, 2028 and 2029 dates, but without their dates of birth, I do not know if they will move to DOC.

Zach Wahl: *Do you have a plan or how do you plan to house youth based on like affiliations or are they going to be housed in one building? If so, how are you going to make those distinctions?*

Director Vickery: I am always an optimist and think that if we continue to do trauma-informed care and continue to have a very warm, good friendly environment, a lot of the opposition can be worked through mediations, through good structure. The facility has two separate housing units that are built into the facility. There are plenty of ways to have one group of kids out in one area and another group in a different part of the outdoor space or in the main building.

Alison Flaum: *What are the arrangements for family visits since these seven people are close to their home now?*

Director Vickery: Across all our facilities, including Monarch, visits are allowed 365 days a year between 08:00 A.M. and 08:00 p.m. Families are asked to schedule their visits at least 48 hours in advance and during non-school hours. Monarch has a beautiful indoor visiting space and an outdoor patio that families can use.



Sabrina Davis: *I have been working with Pere Marquette and was told today that they were a 90-day step down for the young people they were getting and now more young people with felonies are being transferred there. Could you just explain what the change is so that I just know what to anticipate moving forward?*

Director Vickery: Historically, Pere Marquette functioned more like a transitional program, lengths of stay are relatively short. A third of our population are sentenced as adults, and we need to serve all these legal categories of youth at all facilities, including Pere Marquette. There is no fence or security apparatus at this facility, therefore, our staff review/vet those youth individually to make sure that it is a safe environment for them, but it is not based on them getting out in 30 or 60 days.

With the transformation plans, our goal is to start moving all juvenile youth out of Harrisburg, hopefully by the end of the fiscal year or early FY 27. Harrisburg facility will be dedicated to emerging adults who are currently in DOC custody. This will require all our facilities to serve a slightly different profile of young people.

B. Legislatives Updates – Director Vickery

DJJ submitted four or five legislative ideas to the governor's office, and they approved two of them. The first one is providing the opportunity for supervised release for youth sentence as adults by providing a PRB hearing before their 21st birthday. This is legislation that we attempted to advocate for last year. We will be seeking a sponsor and try to pursue this again in the spring. The second one is a clarification of our release authority that when there is a court date after our release process, it will be our responsibility to facilitate the youth appearing in court. It is a little ambiguous right now; are the judges overstepping our release authority or not?

C. Youth Population Discussion – Director Vickery

Today we have 215 youth in custody and have reached up to 225. My projection for all the facility transitioning later this fiscal year is to have under 200 youth, which is feasible. If we are over 200, it is going to be challenging. We will continue to do everything we can to make appropriate decisions. The average daily population in FY 25 was 180 kids; we are up 15-20% already this fiscal year.

D. Topics For Next Year

David Olson suggested to the advisory board that they begin a dialogue around topics that they want to identify, learn about and have in-depth discussions about. The advisory board would present a summary statement of their discussions/findings to DJJ at the end of the year. A few topics mentioned were adult sentences, helping to push through legislation, improving the transition from DJJ to DOC, and DJJ Transformation.

New Business – No new business

Public Participation – No public participation or speakers

Adjournment: 3:19 pm