



# Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program *Learning Lab*

# Agenda

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1. Program History: How Did We Get Here?
2. Massachusetts Diversion Learning Lab: Goals & Process Overview
3. What's Happening Now (w/ NFI & Family Continuity)

# Program Development History

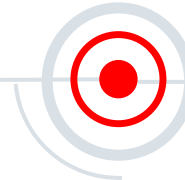
JJPAD Board recommends development of Diversion Learning Lab to pilot state-run (and funded) diversion service model

2018



JJPAD Board created by Legislature,  
asked to study diversion

2019



2021



# CBI Findings from Year 1:

## Use of Diversion in MA

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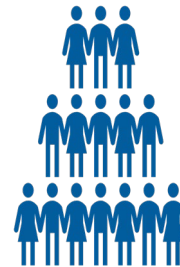
Diversion Works



Diversion Being Used More and More



Wide Variation in How  
Diversion is Used



The Current Structure of our  
Diversion System Likely  
Contributes to Systemic Inequities

# A Substantial Body of Research Shows: Diversion Works

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Rigorous research has found that youth who have participated in diversion programs are **less likely to reoffend** than youth who are formally processed through the juvenile court:

- One meta-analysis of 45 studies showed that diversion was more effective in reducing recidivism than traditional court processing.
- Another meta-analysis of 19 studies specific to police-based diversion showed that youth were less likely to reoffend when they received diversion.

# A Substantial Body of Research Shows: Diversion Works

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A 2021 study that tracked youth arrested for **first-time, moderate severity offenses** (including violent offenses like aggravated assault, burglary, and robbery) for five years following their initial arrest found that youth who were formally processed (rather than diverted):

- were more likely to be rearrested,
- were more likely to be incarcerated,
- reported more exposure to violence (as a witness or victim),
- reported a greater proportion of peers engaging in delinquent acts,
- reported lower rates of school enrollment,
- reported less ability to suppress aggression,
- reported lower perceptions of opportunities,
- and reported slightly lower odds of graduating high school within 5 years.

# CBI Findings from Year 1:

## Use of Diversion in MA

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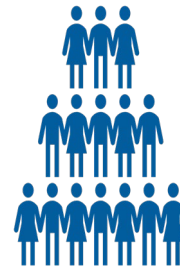
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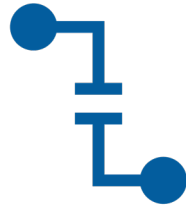


The Current Structure of our  
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# CBI Findings from Year 1:

## Connecting Youth to Community-Based Interventions

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JJ System Practitioners See Distinct  
Gaps in Availability of Community-  
Based Interventions



More Infrastructure Needed to Connect  
Youth with Services and Overcome  
Barriers



# CBI Recommendations from Year 1:

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Improve Communication and Coordination of Diversion Work by **Creating Diversion Coordinator Positions** Across the State



Test and Refine Statewide Diversion Coordination Program Concept by Starting with a **Three-Site Learning Lab**



Improve Quality and Consistency of Diversion Work by **Developing Common Infrastructure, Policies and Procedures** that Diversion Coordinators Follow

# Program Development History

JJPAD Board recommends development of Diversion Learning Lab to pilot state-run (and funded) diversion service model

2018



JJPAD Board created by Legislature,  
asked to study diversion

2019



2020



JJPAD CBI Subcommittee  
creates diversion Model  
Program Guide

2021



# Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program Model Program Guide

**JJPAD**

Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board

## MASSACHUSETTS YOUTH DIVERSION PROGRAM

### Model Program Guide

A Report of the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice  
Policy (JJPAD) Board Community-Based  
Interventions Subcommittee  
March 2021  
<http://www.mass.gov/juvenile-justice-policy-and-data-board>

- Model Program Guide was developed after:
  - 10 CBI Subcommittee meetings (February 2020 – February 2021)
  - 4 Information Sharing Work Group meetings
  - 5 JDAI county presentations & discussions
  - *+ countless hours of prep and review from the Subcommittee*
- Available at:  
<https://www.mass.gov/doc/diversion-model-program-guide/download>

# Program Development History

JJPAD Board recommends development of Diversion Learning Lab to pilot state-run (and funded) diversion service model

The OCA and DYS partner to launch the Diversion Learning Lab

2018



JJPAD Board created by Legislature, asked to study diversion

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2020



JJPAD CBI Subcommittee creates diversion Model Program Guide

2021



# MYDP Goals & Process

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# MYPD: Current Status

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- Spring/Summer 2021: DYS RFP Process
- Contracts Awarded in Fall 2021 to Three Providers:
  - NFI (Lowell/Middlesex County)
  - Family Continuity (Southern Worcester County)
  - Family Services of Merrimack Valley (Lawrence/Essex County)
- October 2021: Project Kickoff
  - Staff Onboarding/Training
  - Outreach to Referrers

# Program Goals

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1. Reduce the likelihood of future offending by youth in the program and increase public safety

2. Support positive youth development

3. Hold youth responsible for their actions

4. Promote and ensure equity in the process

# Who are *Referrers* & Who Should They Refer?

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- **Police, Clerk Magistrates, District Attorneys & Judges** each can refer youth to the Learning Lab in their jurisdiction.
- Youth can be referred for **any juvenile delinquency case the referrer considers appropriate**, *in accordance with any legal limitations or requirements, including M.G.L. c.119 § 54A*
- Referrers are strongly urged to **refer first-time and/or lower-level** offenses, as well any cases where a youth's **unmet needs** may be driving the delinquent behavior (e.g. behavioral health, educational supports, etc.)



# Diversion Process

## Intake process

- **YLS/CMI Screener & MASYI-2** (evidence-based tools – implementation in partnership with Dr. Gina Vincent)
- **Interviews** with youth & parent/caregiver
- Coordinators and youth **build a diversion agreement**

## Ongoing monitoring and active case management

- **Connect** youth with local services based on need
- Work with youth & families to **address challenges and barriers to success**

## Diversion Completion

- Youth who are **making progress/complete agreement requirements** are successful
- Youth who are **not making progress or are re-arrested** are referred back to the original referrer for decision about how to proceed
- **Communication** with original referrer regarding the success of youth

# Continuous Quality Improvement

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- Goal of this project is to **learn** and **refine the model**
  - There will be bumps
  - We will make modifications along the way
  - Key to success: communication, collaboration, collective-problem solving
- **Data collection & on-going CQI** built into process from outset
  - Coordinators track data elements that are reported via dashboards and regularly reviewed
  - Surveys and check-ins with youth, family, referrers and other partners to identify what's working, what isn't, and how to improve
  - JJPAD/OCA as advisory, help problem solve and serve as a sounding board

# Questions?

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