

OCA Updates

June 27th, 2022

Presented by the Office of the Child Advocate:
Maria Mossaides, Director
Melissa Threadgill, Director of Strategic Innovation

Agenda

- Juvenile Diversion Learning Lab
- Center on Child Wellbeing & Trauma
- OCA FSS Focus Groups
- Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) Project
- Harmony Montgomery Report + Updates



Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program *Learning Lab*

Development of the Diversion Learning Labs

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

DYS launches with funding in FY22 Budget in partnership with OCA. Three Learning Lab sites are selected in Worcester, Essex, and Middlesex.

2018

2019

2020

2021

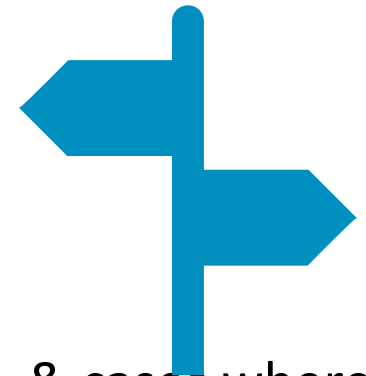
2022

JJPAD Board charged with studying community-based interventions and diversion in Massachusetts

JJPAD Board develops Model Program Guide for a state-level diversion program.

Learning Labs start taking referrals from police, clerks, district attorneys and judges.

MA Youth Diversion Program



- **Designed...**
 - **For youth with first-time and/or lower-level** offenses, & cases where a youth's **unmet needs** may be driving the delinquent behavior
 - To accept **referrals from police, clerks, DAs and judges**
- **Program includes...**
 - Evidence-based intake and assessment process
 - Program requirements and services tailored to individual needs of youth
 - Case management provided by community-based organizations
- **Where we are headed...**
 - Collecting qualitative & quantitative data
 - Learn & refine model with goal of expanding statewide

Program Goals

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

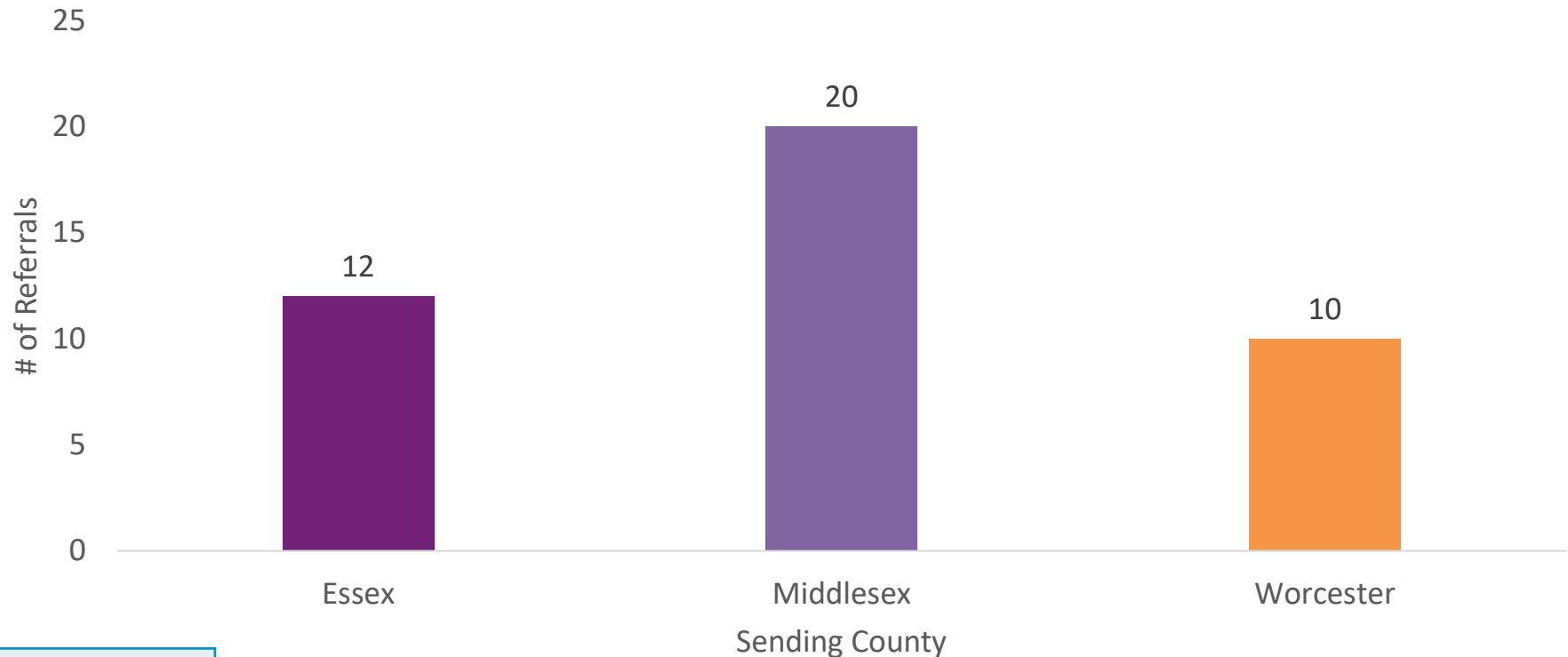
Support positive youth development

Hold youth responsible for their actions

Promote and ensure equity in the process

Learning Lab Updates: Referrals as of May 31

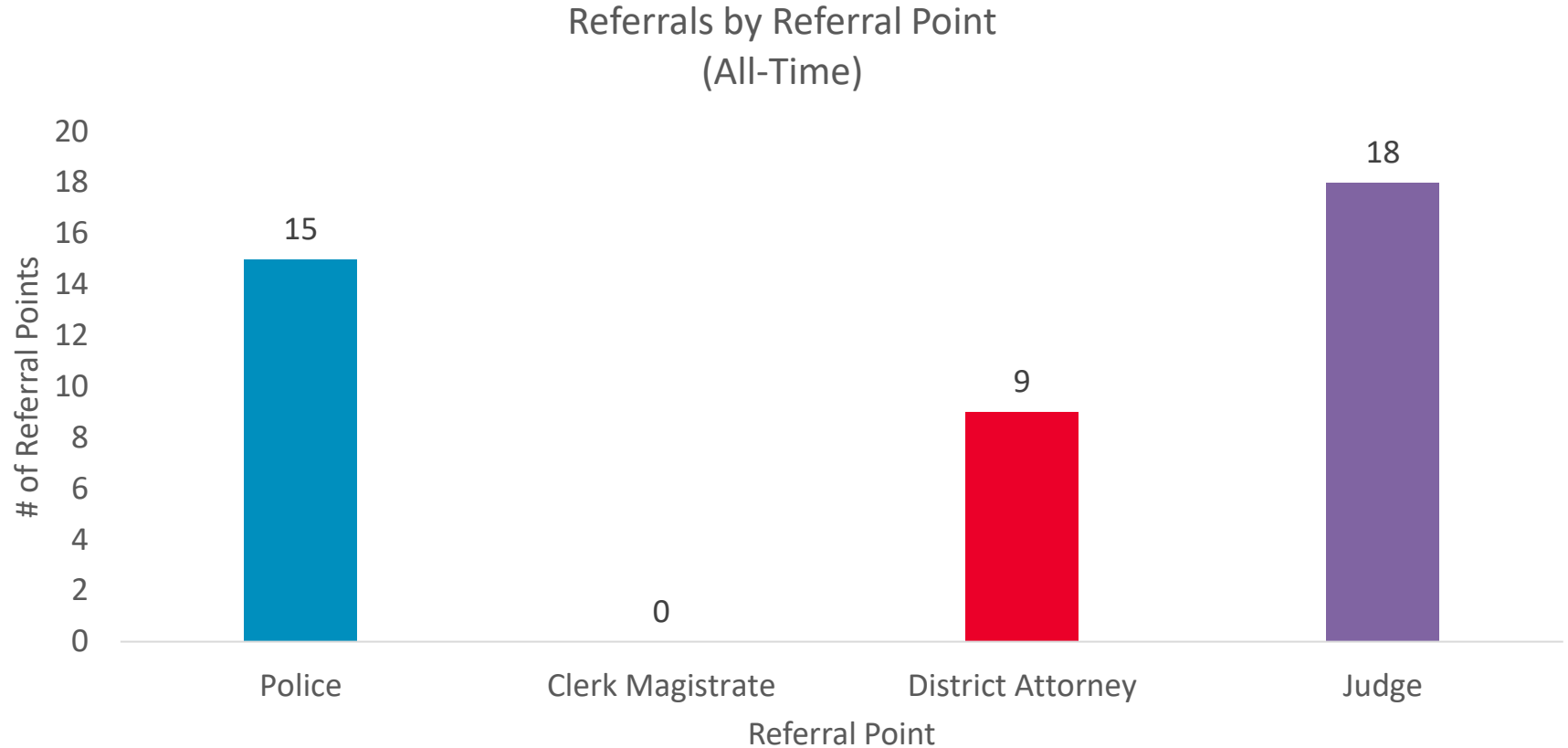
Referrals by Sending County
(All-Time)



Total Number of
Referrals

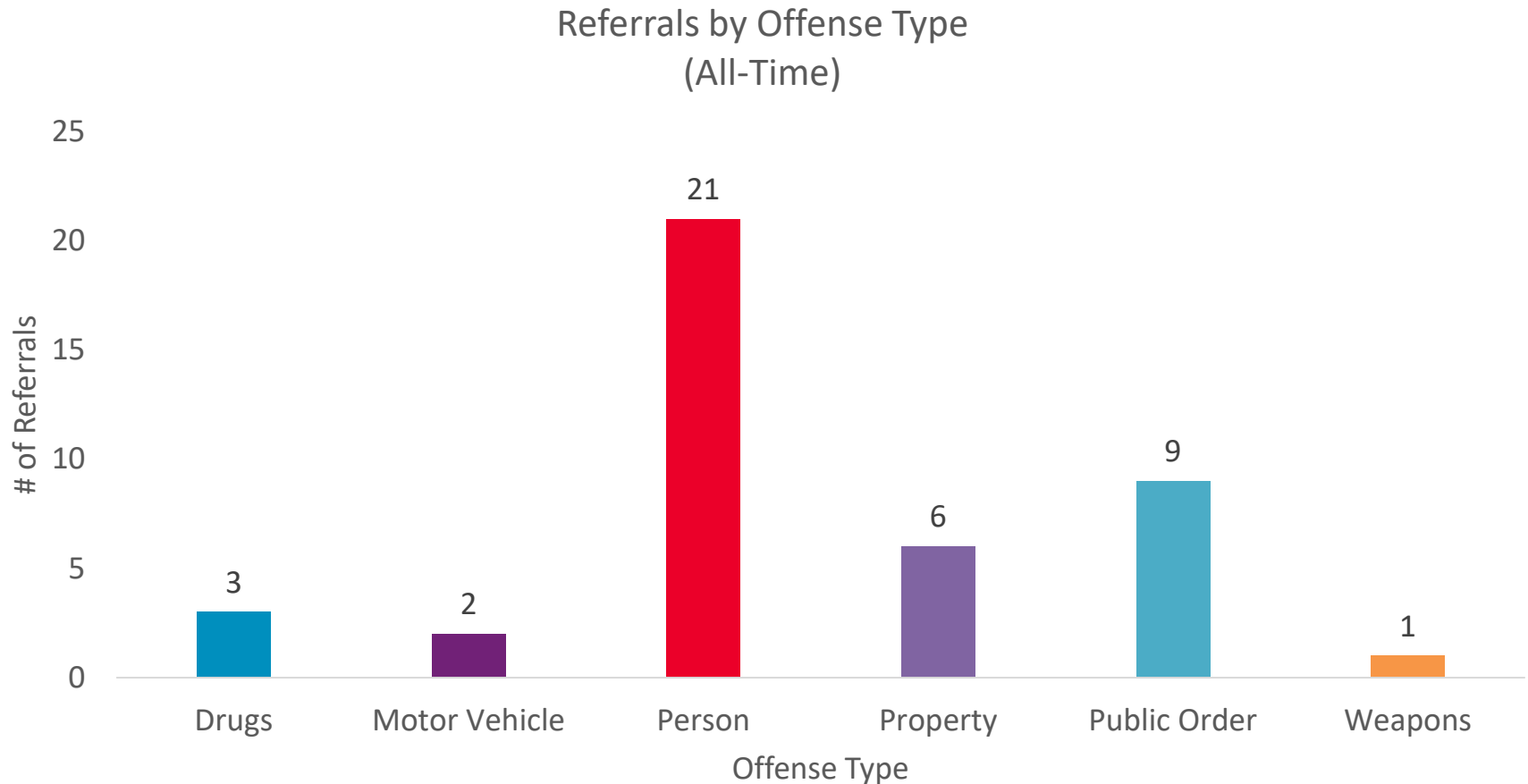
42

Learning Lab Updates: Referrals



Total Number of Referrals
42

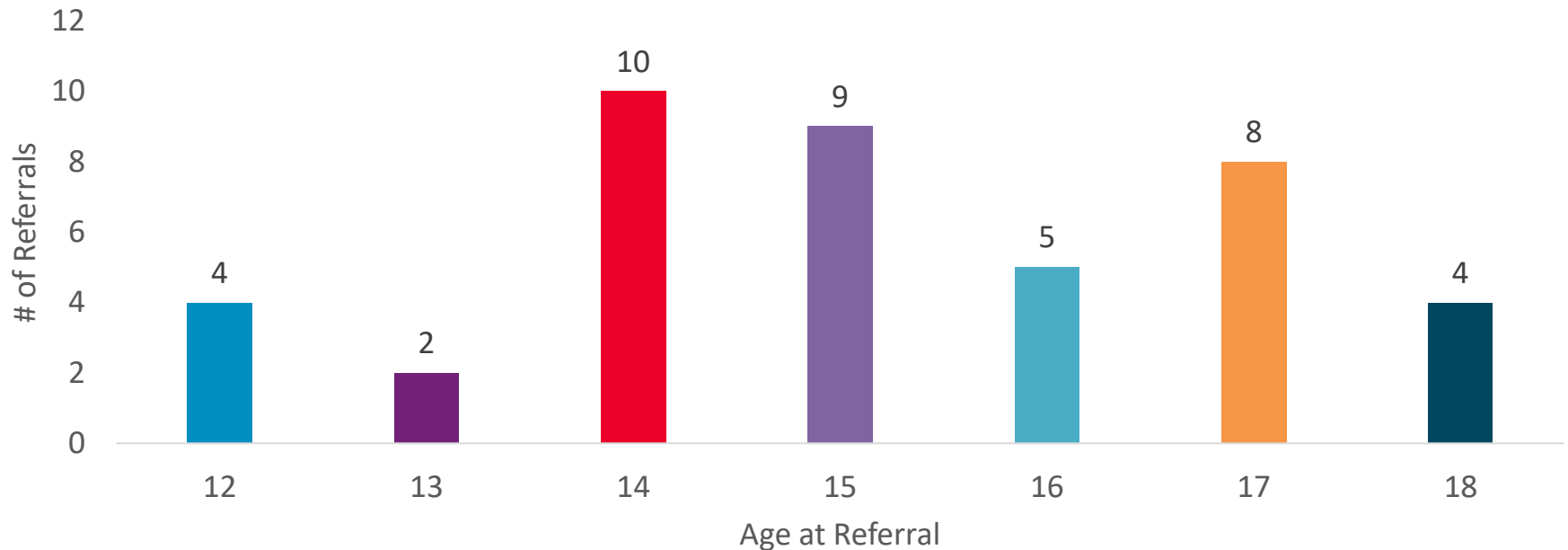
Learning Lab Updates: Referrals



Total Number of Referrals
42

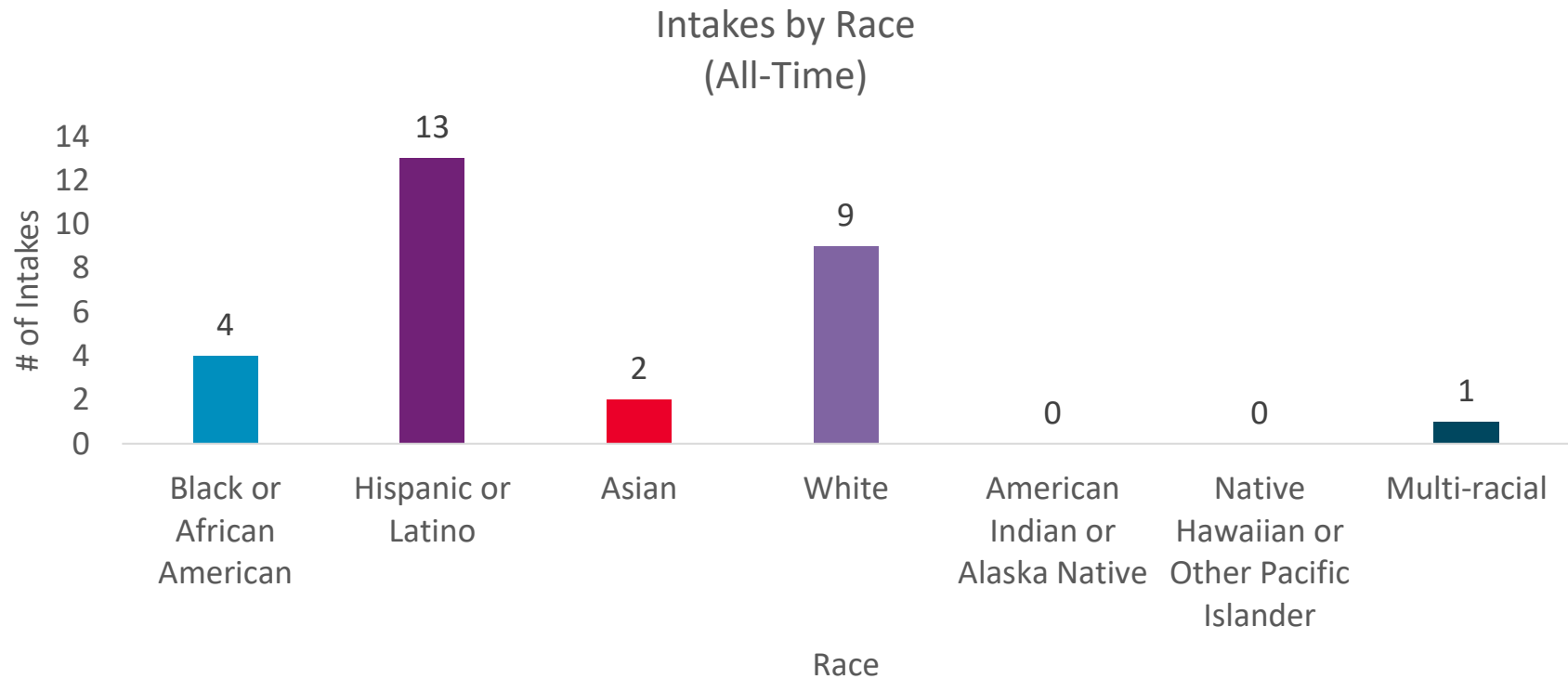
Learning Lab Updates: Referral Demographics

Referrals by Age at Referral
(All-Time)



Total Number of Referrals
42

Learning Lab Updates: Intake Demographics

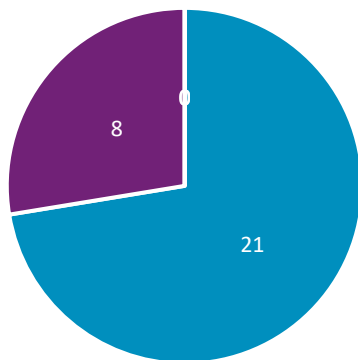


Total Number of
Intakes

29

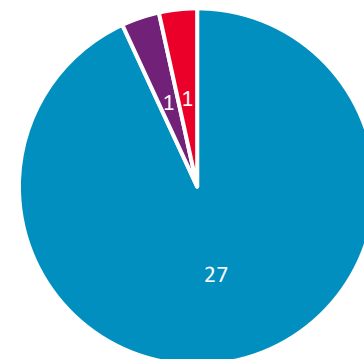
Learning Lab Updates: Intake Demographics, continued

Intakes by Gender Identity
(All-Time)



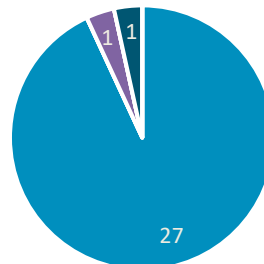
- Boy/Man
- Girl/Woman
- Non-binary
- Not Listed
- No Additional Identity

Intakes by Primary Language
(All-Time)



- English
- Spanish
- Khmer/Cambodian

Intakes by Sexual Orientation
(All-Time)



- Straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Pansexual
- Queer
- Questioning
- Not Listed

Total Number of
Intakes

29

Early Successes & Challenges

- As of May 31st, three successful diversion “graduates” and more in pipeline
- Outreach & partnerships with referrers
 - Slower/more time-intensive than anticipated
 - BUT: moving in right direction, mostly positive response
- COVID:
 - Initially: slowed referrals during Omicron wave
 - Ongoing: impact on timelines post-referral
- Barriers to engagement with youth/families
 - Resistance to participation/trust-building
 - Family overwhelmed
 - Language barriers

Next Steps

- Funding for expansion was included in both House/Senate version of FY23 budget.
- DYS will be putting out RFR for next round of diversion sites in next few weeks
- Looking for applicants to come with letters of support from potential referrers (start having those conversations now!)
- Continued outreach to referrers in existing sites
- Ongoing CQI to ensure intake, case planning and ongoing case management practices are high quality and that we are learning from early successes & challenges

The Center on Child Wellbeing and Trauma

Launched in October 2021

- Developed based on 2020 Recommendations from the Childhood Trauma Task Force
- Established thanks to funding in the FY22 State budget
 - \$1 million to support Center
 - \$300,000 specifically earmarked for Worcester County projects
- Funded and overseen by the Office of the Child Advocate
- Operationalized by the Commonwealth Medicine division of UMass Chan Medical School



www.childwellbeingandtrauma.org

Goals And Objectives of the Center

A Racial Equity lens directs, imbues, and enhances all goals



1. Resources and Information

All child-serving professionals have access to the best practice trauma and healing/prevention resources and information.



2. Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities will provide and enhance trauma-informed and responsive skills and tools.



3. Assessment and Coaching

All agencies that interact with children will benefit from an assessment and coaching process to become more trauma-informed and responsive.

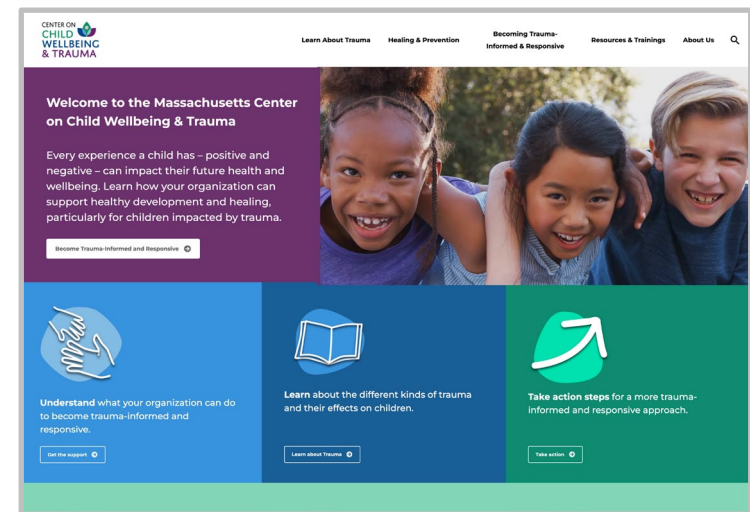


Goals are driven and refined by stakeholder engagement and feedback

Year 1 Accomplishment: Resources and Information

Resources and Information

- **Learn about Trauma**
 - Types of Trauma
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
- **Healing and Prevention**
 - Positive Childhood Experiences
- **Becoming Trauma-Informed and Responsive**
 - Guiding Principles
 - Action Steps
- **Highlighted Resources and Toolkits**
 - Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators
 - Racial Trauma and Equity Training



www.childwellbeingandtrauma.org

Year 1 Accomplishments: Assessment & Coaching

Assessment and Coaching

- Seven **Family Resource Centers** have recently completed initial assessment & coaching process → moving toward sustainability support process
- **DCF-funded congregate care providers:**
 - Initial cohort launched in spring
 - Second cohort in early stages of launch now
 - Additional cohort(s) planned for fall (and beyond)
- 12 **schools/districts**, impacting 45,000 school children



An in-depth 6- to 12-month process

Year 1 Accomplishments: Professional Learning Communities

Launched Training and Learning Communities With:

- **200+ school-based professionals** from across the state
- Staff at **DHCD-funded family shelters**
- DTA staff **who work with teen parents**
- Leaders from 60 different Greater Worcester **community-based organizations** coming together to advance racial equity and trauma-informed practice across community services
- A community of **educators in the Marlboro Public Schools** piloting a racial trauma and equity train-the-trainer model
- Racial trauma and equity training for the Social-Emotional Learning team for **Worcester Public Schools**



Year 1 Sites

Interventions Across the Commonwealth



Current Plans for Year 2

- Anticipating \$3.5 million in funding for FY23 (significant increase from FY22)
- Significantly expanding staff capacity
- Continued assessment/coaching work with new cohorts of FRCs, congregate care providers, schools
- Ongoing and deepened work with DHCD (family shelters) and DTA
- Expanding partnerships to state agencies/providers in additional sectors
- Launch of Coaching Academy on Resilience and Trauma to support community-based efforts
- And more TBD

OCA FSS Focus Groups

- To supplement and support DCF's ongoing efforts to gain input on the FSS program design, and to help ensure that the program design meets the needs of families, in December 2021 the OCA contracted with DMA Health Strategies to conduct a series of focus groups with **individuals who have lived and/or professional experience with the child welfare system more generally, and family support & stabilization services more specifically.**
- The goal of the focus groups was to better understand the experience of families receiving these services, including what is working for them, what isn't, and what they would like to see change in the future.

Participant Overview

In total, **80 individuals** participated in **10 focus groups** from January to March 2022.

Participant Type	Language	Number of Participants
CAFL Social Workers	English	13
Caregivers: Fathers Group	English	9
Caregivers	Cape Verdean Creole	4
Caregivers (2 groups and a one-on-one interview)	English	7
Caregivers (2 groups)	Spanish	6
FRC: Family Partners	English	17
FRC: Clinicians	English	16
Caregiver Advocates	English	8

OCA FSS Focus Groups: Key Findings

- Focus group participants feel that DCF typically determines needs and puts services into place without consulting families and providers, and without considering family schedules and needs, including linguistic capacity.
- In general, family plans are not individualized, can be overly complicated, and often do not address root causes, such as mental health and substance use.
- Fathers do not receive the same level of attention and support as mothers.

OCA FSS Focus Groups: Key Findings

- Not all families who are eligible for S&S services receive them; more can be done to increase equitable access to these services.
- The duration of the program services is too short, particularly given long waitlists for some services, and cases often close without a warm handoff to continuing services if needed.
- S&S services should be put in place earlier more often, with the goal of preventing home removal.

OCA FSS Focus Groups: Key Findings

Services and supports families would like to see more of include:

- Increased access to family partners and peer support
- Providers that speak their language and understand their family's culture, particular for immigrant families
- Support for basic needs (help with housing, food, transportation, and childcare)
- Trauma-informed services
- Services for youth
- Services targeted toward fathers
- Increased access to mental health and substance use services

JJPAD 2021/22 Project: Child Requiring Assistance System

Why Study CRA System?

- CHINS to CRA reform in 2012 made substantial changes
- Some successes from reform, but challenges and gaps remain
- Identified by stakeholders as critical “pain point” in system

Project Goal:

- Issue report with recommendations for ways to improve system to better serve children & families

CRA Project Research Process



CRA Project Next Steps

- JJPAD currently in process of distilling research into key findings
- Will be discussing potential recommendations this summer
- Goal is to issue report sometime this fall