

Report on the Baltimore City Strategic Partnership

INTRODUCTION

In the Report on the Fiscal 2021 State Operating Budget (SB 190) and the State Capital Budget (SB 191) and Related Recommendations - Joint Chairmen's Report, 2020 Session, page 217, the budget committees requested that the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) submit a report detailing the operations of the Baltimore City Strategic Partnership.

Subsequently, in the Report on the Fiscal 2022 State Operating Budget (HB 588) and the State Capital Budget (HB 590) and Related Recommendations – Joint Chairmen’s Report, 2021 Session, page 218, the budget committees requested that DJS submit a report detailing the continued operations of the Baltimore City Strategic Partnership.

RESPONSE

I. Background

Governor Lawrence J. Hogan, Jr. and the Department of Juvenile Services announced the Baltimore City Strategic Partnership in December 2019 with the goal to improve juvenile justice system interventions and supports for young people and their families. The Baltimore City Strategic Partnership engaged Baltimore City juvenile justice system stakeholders including DJS, the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office, the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office, and the Baltimore Police Department (BPD).

The partners began meeting in January 2020 to develop a plan to identify new policies, practices, and programs designed to improve collaboration between justice system stakeholders and achieve positive youth outcomes. Unfortunately, early in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic and health crisis required the partners to focus on supporting continuity of operations in their respective agencies. However, even with the extreme difficulties facing each agency, a commitment remained to move forward in implementing strategies aimed at improving juvenile justice system interventions.

Over the past year, between January 2021 and January 2022, the partners have continued to collaborate and collectively are focusing on diversion, youth engagement, service provision, and public safety/violence prevention strategies. The Baltimore City Strategic Partnership has evolved, and functions through various initiatives and strategies aimed at ensuring each stakeholder has a voice and contributes to improving outcomes for young people and our community. There is no dedicated funding directed to the partnership in the FY 2021 and FY 2022 budgets as DJS has been able to use existing resources to help design and implement strategies.

II. DJS Baltimore City Strategic Partners

DJS works closely with the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office, the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD), the Baltimore City State’s Attorney’s Office, and other system stakeholders to identify and implement innovative approaches designed to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system and achieve shared public safety goals to strengthen our communities. This report focuses on shared strategies and partnerships, and is not inclusive of all DJS efforts to support our Baltimore City community operations.

Case Processing / Diversion Strategies

➤ **Western District, SideStep Pre-Arrest Diversion Program**

SideStep was developed by the residents and community organizations of West Baltimore, in collaboration with justice system partners, to respond to the needs of youth and families in their own community. Instead of arrest and formal referral to the justice system, SideStep offers young people suspected of certain unlawful behaviors a meaningful opportunity to avoid the harms of the justice system. SideStep provides young people with transformative assistance from trusted community-based organizations to improve their lives and help them reach their full potential. Currently in its pilot phase, SideStep¹ aims to demonstrate an effective model for community-based pre-arrest diversion that can be replicated throughout Baltimore City.

With the leadership of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement (MONSE), DJS and the BPD developed policies and protocols to launch the pilot in January 2021. DJS provided the city with \$100,000 to support the program.

➤ **Increase Access to Informal Juvenile Interventions**

The State’s Attorney’s Office and DJS began development of a process to increase access to informal pre-court supervision for young people whose cases would not result in a formal adjudication. This strategy addresses the concern that Baltimore City has a high percentage of young people that have contact with the juvenile justice system, but do not ultimately receive any supports or interventions to foster positive behavior change. Although stalled by the COVID-19 pandemic, the importance of increasing options for informal pre-court supervision was an issue reviewed by the Juvenile Justice Reform Council (JJRC) in 2020 and resulted in proposed legislation in January 2021² and January 2022.³

Specifically, the JJRC recommended the State establish a statutory process to return certain petitions forwarded to the court back to DJS intake for assessment, services, and supervision. The process requires that all the parties, including the child, the child’s counsel, the prosecutor, and the court agree to return the petition to intake for an informal adjustment. If the informal pre-court supervision is successful, the petition will result in a dismissal. If unsuccessful, the petition may move forward through the formal court process. The 2021 legislation did not pass with the informal supervision process provisions and these provisions are included in the JJRC bill introduced during the 2022 session of the Maryland General Assembly.

¹ For more information see the, “Baltimore City Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan,” <https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/MayorScott-ComprehensiveViolencePreventionPlan-1.pdf>

² <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2021RS/bills/hb/hb1187E.pdf>

³ <https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2022RS/bills/hb/hb0459F.pdf>



➤ **Crossover Youth Project**

DJS and the Department of Human Services (DHS) are engaging with the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University to implement the Crossover Youth Practice Model in Baltimore City. The model brings together all juvenile justice system stakeholders, including the courts, state's attorney's, child's counsel, DJS, the local Department of Social Services, and other community and child serving stakeholders to develop protocols and policies to serve and support youth who fluctuate between the juvenile and child welfare systems. The collaborative began meeting in 2021 and implementation will continue through 2022.

Violence Prevention Strategies

➤ **Establishing an Emerging Adult Unit in Baltimore City**

ROCA, an anti-violence program, provided training/technical assistance to a team of frontline case managers, supervisors, and leadership, including the Deputy Secretary for Community Operations, to develop an emerging adult unit within the DJS community supervision team in Baltimore City. This unit provides supervision and support services to older youth that are considered at high risk and who are not currently engaged or compliant with their treatment service plan. This project recognizes that young people at the greatest risk often move between systems and that cross-training, collaboration, and a commitment to serving older youth are critical factors in improving outcomes and safeguarding public safety.

ROCA received grant funds from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to support this training and program development. Since the 2020 update, ROCA has trained all DJS community staff in ReWire, a Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) approach to supporting youth while on community supervision. Moreover, DJS received a federal grant to support ongoing coaching and training Statewide. The training and community supervision reforms will take place over the next three years. The FY 2023 allowance includes a \$2 million grant for ROCA.

➤ **After Shooting Protocol**

The After-Shooting Protocol is a strategy led by ROCA Baltimore and in partnership with the DJS, BPD, and DPSCS. The team works with local hospitals to connect young people to community-based supports and interventions after a non-fatal shooting event. The process leverages each agency's current outreach protocols, and ensures that all victims are supported to mitigate the risk of future victimization or retaliation.

➤ **Group Violence Reduction Strategy**

DJS is an active participant in the Mayor's Group Violence Reduction Strategy⁴ (GVRS). GVRS is an approach that facilitates direct, sustained engagement with the small number of group-involved individuals through a partnership of community leaders, social service providers, employers, law enforcement, and other system stakeholders. DJS is currently working with partners in the Western District to review incidents of violence and develop community-based interventions for individuals engaging in high-risk behaviors that impact community safety.

➤ **Warrant Apprehension**

DJS and the Baltimore City Police Department Warrant Apprehension Task Force (WATF) developed a set of strategies aimed at intervening with youth who are non-compliant with GPS/Electronic Monitoring, AWOL from placement, and/or have an active warrant. The goals of the strategies are to reduce active warrants,

⁴ For more information see the, "Baltimore City Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan," <https://mayor.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/MayorScott-ComprehensiveViolencePreventionPlan-1.pdf>



reduce youth charged with criminal/juvenile offenses while on warrant status, and to reduce the number of youth shot while on warrant status.

Specifically, DJS and WATF have employed intentional communication and intervention strategies to improve outcomes. The communication strategies involve daily email communication between the agencies to identify all active juvenile warrants and include relevant information regarding high-risk youth to improve the likelihood of successful community contacts and apprehension.

The intervention strategies focus on safe and effective community-based contacts and apprehension. Twice a week, DJS staff alongside the WATF, attempt community contacts to apprehend youth with active warrants. If a youth is apprehended, DJS staff will remain with the youth to process the warrant and/or detention authorization to permit WATF officers to return to their community posts as soon as possible. Moreover, to support immediate action and apprehension of a youth due to a violation of their court order or active warrant, DJS utilizes a dedicated code when calling the 911 operator to ensure the request is escalated as a priority.

➤ **DJS Police Liaison Unit Expansion**

DJS and BPD initiated the DJS Police Liaison Initiative in 2021 to strengthen agency collaboration and to support effective public safety and youth engagement initiatives. In addition to DJS staff serving in the BPD Watch Center, DJS placed case management staff in the Western District and Southern District Intelligence Centers in 2021. DJS will place an additional case manager to serve as a liaison in February 2022 in the South Western Intelligence Center.

The DJS Police Liaison Initiative has resulted in the ability for DJS and BPD to develop quick responses to public safety issues, develop interventions to mitigate public safety risk, implement youth engagement strategies, and operationalize information sharing and coordination.

➤ **Curfew Visits**

DJS and BPD conduct curfew checks for youth on DJS intensive supervision and youth on electronic monitoring displaying challenges with program compliance. The joint curfew checks take place four times a month, and the BPD and DJS officers aim to engage with youth in the community and support positive change to achieve supervision compliance.

Evidence Based Programming

➤ **Increase Baltimore City Evidence Based Services**

The Department of Juvenile Services and the University of Maryland School of Social Work Innovations Institute were awarded a grant to develop a continuum of evidence-based services in Baltimore City. The grant will support developing capacity for evidence-based services for utilization by child serving agencies, including DJS and the Department of Human Services and local social services departments, along with adult parole and probation agencies. DJS and the Innovations Institute will work with community-based organizations to develop a request for proposal (RFP), with the focus of building capacity within existing community-based organizations to deliver evidence-based programming (EBP).



DJS released an RFP in January 2022 to solicit proposals from Baltimore City community-based organizations to provide Multi-Systemic Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy Emerging Adult interventions. The procurement process is active and DJS hopes to identify a provider before June 2022.

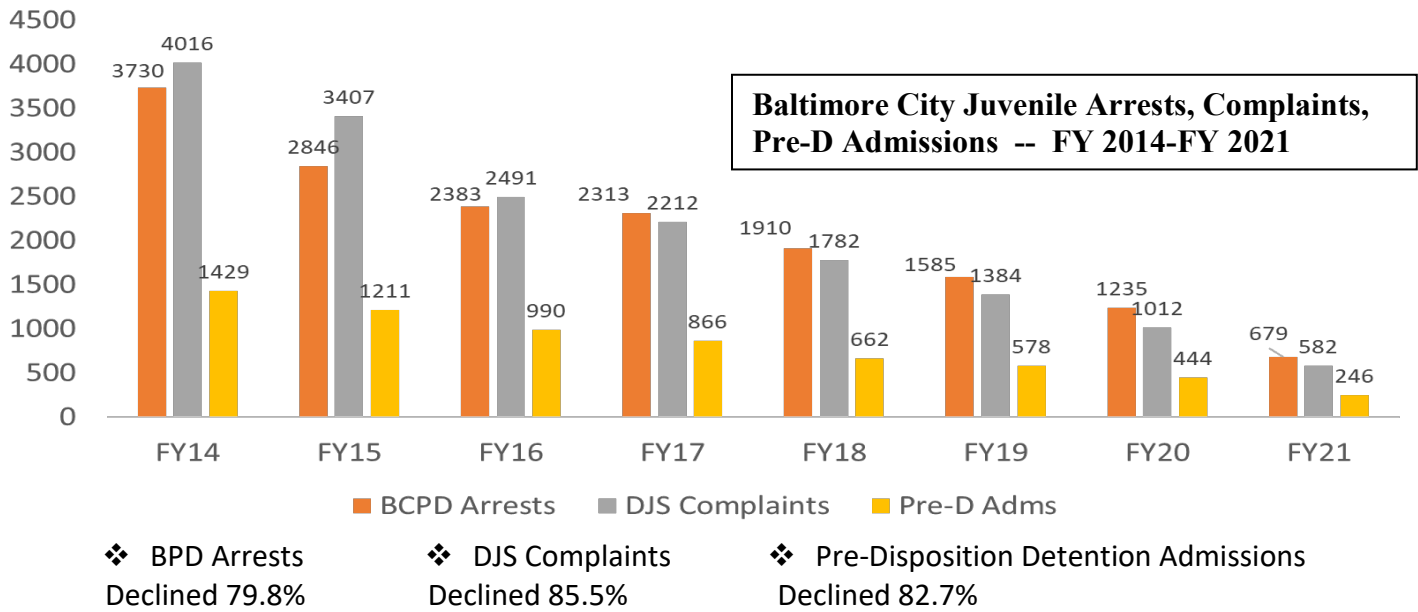
Youth Engagement

DJS and BPD are jointly developing and implementing a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) to support the reform, equity, and inclusion work of the Baltimore City Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). The YAC will serve as an advisory arm of the Baltimore City JDAI Stakeholder Group to ensure youth voice and full engagement in the works of system reform and community advocacy, to include professional mentoring and advocacy training. DJS is disbursing JDAI reform funds in the amount of \$12,900 to support the mission and purpose of the YAC; which aligns with BPD's Consent Decree mandate to divert youth away from the detention/correctional environment and employ preventative strategies and resources to reduce arrest, decrease reliance on detention, and provide supportive services in the youths' home communities.

III. Baltimore City Data

The chart below illustrates the decline in BPD Arrests, DJS complaints, and pre-disposition detention admissions (Pre-D Adms). Additionally, over calendar year 2021 DJS saw a 39% decrease in the number of active warrants (from a high of 49 in February 2021 to 30 in December 2021).

Arrests, Complaints, and Detention Utilization, FY 2014 - FY 2021



IV. Conclusion

DJS is encouraged and grateful for the intentional focus on collaboration, partnership, and joint efforts to support young people and community safety. Without all the partners, including the Mayor's Office and the Baltimore City Police Department, the range of interventions would not be possible. DJS leadership is meeting at least weekly with both the Mayor's Office and BPD to monitor the implementation of existing efforts, and to ensure quick responses to ever-changing public safety needs. DJS is committed to actively engaging in the shared goals of Baltimore City agencies to support our young people and strengthen our community.

