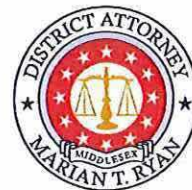




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EXECUTIVE

- ADMINISTRATION
- COMMUNICATIONS
- INTERVENTION & PREVENTION PROGRAMS
- PUBLIC POLICY
- LEGISLATION
- VICTIM WITNESS BUREAU

TRIAL TEAMS

- CAMBRIDGE REGION SUPERIOR COURT
- MALDEN REGION SUPERIOR COURT
- WOBURN DISTRICT COURT

SPECIALTY UNITS

- APPEALS & TRAINING BUREAU
- CYBER PROTECTION PROGRAM
- FAMILY PROTECTION BUREAU
- CHILD PROTECTION UNIT
- DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT
- ELDER/DISABLED UNIT
- SPECIAL INVESTIGATIONS UNIT (SIU)

STATE POLICE DETECTIVES

- COMPUTER FORENSICS
- HOMICIDE
- SIU

REGIONAL OFFICES

- CAMBRIDGE
- FRAMINGHAM
- LOWELL

DISTRICT COURT OFFICES

- AYER
- CAMBRIDGE
- CONCORD
- FRAMINGHAM
- LOWELL
- MALDEN
- MARLBOROUGH
- NEWTON
- SOMERVILLE
- WALTHAM
- WOBURN



December 16, 2025

Office of Senator Michael Rodrigues, Chairman
Senate Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 212
Boston, MA 02133

Office of Representative Aaron Michlewitz, Chairman
House Committee on Ways and Means
State House, Room 243
Boston, MA 02133

RE: FY 2024 Middlesex (Northern) District Attorney's Office
Report to the Senate and House Ways and Means Committees
Regarding the **CY 2024 Community Based Juvenile Justice Program**

Dear Senator Rodrigues and Representative Michlewitz:

Pursuant to Massachusetts General Law Chapter 12, §32 [each] district attorney, "... shall submit an annual report on each program, including statistics and findings, to (the) House and Senate Committees on Ways and Means...."

On behalf of Middlesex District Attorney Marian Ryan's Office, please accept this filing, which serves as a summary of the Community Based Justice (CBJ) program activities for the 2024 calendar year.

The Middlesex District Attorney's Office actively collaborates with numerous local organizations that work daily with youth to intervene in their lives, prevent their involvement in criminal matters, and divert, remediate, and rehabilitate through programming and other services. In 2024, Community Based Justice ("CBJ") meetings were held regionally and remotely. During these meetings we had tailored conversations on trends, supports, and prevention strategies while strengthening collaboration among law enforcement, school leaders, probation and community partners. These discussions equipped districts with actionable guidance tied to current law, diversion options, and coordinated prevention while reinforcing the CBJ model's focus on timely information sharing and multi-agency problem solving across Middlesex County.

Our office also continued the practice of attending regular Community Youth Development Collaborative Meetings in the City of Lowell. The mission of these meetings is to ensure a larger-scale community change aimed at the improvement of youth services. Participants in these Collaborations include the city or town manager, city councilors, town select persons, the police chief and officers, school superintendents and principals, area college representatives, community service care providers, and our employees.

An example of the product of these partnerships is Middlesex District Attorney Ryan's Social Justice Roundtable Initiative. This program, launched as the result of discussions during the Lowell Youth Development Collaborative meetings, is a four-week program during which students meet for one hour each week virtually or in person with staff from the Middlesex District Attorney's Office. Through this program, our staff encourage and help young people talk about social and racial justice issues and empower them to be leaders for change. This program was piloted in Lowell with the assistance of the Lowell Boys and Girls Club in August of 2020. Since then, we have hosted these round tables in other communities and classrooms. Other examples include applications for and the receipt of funding from state and federal grantors to community service providers, and partnerships with private industry donors to contribute funding targeted at community needs.

Recognizing that consistent communication with local leaders is critical to meaningful collaboration, on January 24, 2024, we hosted our annual Superintendent and Police and Fire Chiefs Breakfast at Minuteman High School in Lexington. The breakfast brings together school superintendents, police chiefs and fire chiefs to foster collaboration and communication, provide information and updates and discuss our initiatives. Speakers included Commissioner Ed Davis, President and CEO of The Edward Davis Company, a business strategy and security services firm, who talked about the pervasive issue of swatting hoaxes and managing the immediate response, the communications, and the aftermath to keep students, faculty, staff and the public safe in communities and in our schools; Dr. Robert Sege, Director of the Center for Community-Engaged Medicine at the Institute for Clinical Research and Health Policy studies at Tufts Medical Center, who discussed his research on effective systems and approaches that directly address the social determinants of health and the importance of positive experiences as a means of easing toxic stress and helping youth grow more resilient; and FBI Special Agent Sarah Wheeldon who talked about the available resources of her office for schools, law enforcement, parents and the community and the work she does to connect students to behavioral services.

District Attorney Ryan recognizes that it is imperative that we help teach educators how to recognize signs of cyber-bullying and connect them to community resources. The adults working in school settings need to be able to address instances of bullying to reduce harm as much as possible. As a result, District Attorney Ryan partners with the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center of Bridgewater University to host an annual workshop for administrators, teachers and other school personnel. During the training, educators learn research-based techniques to prevent and address bullying, including cyberbullying. The Center also provides free and low-cost bullying prevention research and resources to schools.

Confronting issues of systemic racism and bias across Middlesex County remains at the forefront of our work. In 2020, the Middlesex District Attorney's Office launched the Anti-Hate, Anti-Bias Task Force which brings leaders and community members together to critically examine, prevent and respond to incidents of hate and bias across our county. The goal of each meeting is to bring awareness to participants of trends, current research and data regarding hate crimes and to think strategically and collaboratively about preventative measures to decrease conflicts and civil rights violations across Middlesex County. The Task Force includes lawmakers, mayors, faith leaders, educators, youth leaders, community advocates and law enforcement.

Although not all hateful acts rise to the level of criminal misconduct, it is our responsibility to those who are harmed by these hateful actions to have their voices heard by our office. To accomplish that, we have created a user-friendly form to capture Community Interaction Reports Motivated by Hate/Bias. The form can be filled out by community members, schools, organizations and law enforcement. This form can be found on our website in English and Spanish and has been distributed widely throughout Middlesex County. As we collect these reports, we are keeping track of where these incidents are happening and to whom. Most importantly, we are using this data to inform how we can create proactive interventions in the community to prevent these incidents from rising to the level of a hate crime.

Allyship and Leadership Conference

On October 1, 2024, District Attorney Marian Ryan held a "Leadership and Allyship in Sports Forum" for high school student athletes from across Middlesex County at UMass Lowell. The event brought together over 200 student athletes to hear from talented speakers and athletes about the importance of fostering skills of leadership and allyship as they prepare to finish high school and move to the next chapter of their lives.

Over the past several years, there has been an increase in incidents involving hate, bias, and violence at sporting events and in locker rooms in Middlesex County. By speaking to student athletes, who already participate in programs that focus on teamwork, discipline, and leadership, we aimed to proactively prevent these incidents by further inspiring students to protect not only their teammates but all classmates and lead by example. The voices of athletes are being amplified like never before, and the goal of the forum was to empower the students to be a voice of change in their own schools and to promote inclusion on teams and in classrooms by creating spaces free from hatred or bias.

UMass Lowell Chancellor Julie Chen delivered welcoming remarks. Speakers included Congresswoman Lori Trahan; Dr. Jonathan Jenkins, clinical psychologist and certified mental performance consultant at Massachusetts General Hospital; Steven Burton, Sports Director at WBZ-TV; Kayla Burton, Host at NBC Sports Boston; Pete Kendall, retired NFL player; and Becca Pizzi, record-holding marathon runner. More about this event can be found at this link: <https://www.middlesexda.com/youth-initiatives/pages/leadership-allyship-sports>

Empowering Girls Conference

As the only woman serving in the role of District Attorney of the 11 elected District Attorneys in Massachusetts, District Attorney Ryan serves as an influential voice for young women and provides programming that fosters leadership and mentorship opportunities. The signature event of that mission is District Attorney Ryan's Empowering Girls Conference, an annual forum that brings inspiring women leaders to Middlesex County to speak, connect with the group in an engaging way and impart practical advice on how to be an engaged citizen.

Our spring Empowering Girls Conference was held on May 1, 2024, at Newton City Hall. Over 300 students across Massachusetts attended the conference and heard from keynote speaker Lauren Protentis, the Director of President Biden's National Security Council. The theme of the conference was the importance of sharing our personal stories, following the Hopi Tribe proverb, "[t]hose who tell the stories rule the world." We discussed that in sharing our stories we make personal connections with each other. These connections serve as sources of support and have the potential to lead to future opportunities. We gave the students tools to draft their story and empowered them to be confident and proud to share it.

Other speakers included Trenni Casey, Sports Anchor and Reporter at NBC Sports; Anna Palmer, Co- Founder of the National Women's Soccer League Boston and General Partner at Flybridge Capital; Amaka Ubaka, News Anchor at 7NEWS Today in New England; Dehlia Umunna, Harvard Law School Professor of Law and Faculty Deputy Director of the Harvard Criminal Justice Institute; Sophia Hall, Deputy Litigation Director at Lawyers for Civil Rights; Commander Billie Farrell of the USS Constitution; and Sheilah Shaw Horton, Dean of Students at Wellesley College. Some of the highlights of the event are captured here:

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<https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6hDyalut9a/?igsh=MXdwaXB6Yjk4aXJmMw==>.

Middlesex Juvenile and Young Adult Diversion Program

The Middlesex Juvenile and Young Adult Diversion Program is a creative and progressive program, which offers an alternative to formal prosecution for certain eligible young offenders. The program seeks to address root causes of youthful criminal behavior and encourage participants to work towards making better choices while also minimizing any life-altering consequences. Our diversion program is a pre-arraignment model designed to prevent young people from having, or further extending, a criminal record. Diversion provides an opportunity to participate in programming and/or counseling in lieu of prosecution. Partnering programs include Communities for Restorative Justice, the Community Dispute Settlement Center, Bridging the Gap, the Lowell High School SCORE Mediation Program, Cambridge PD/Belmont FD Fire Education, and Baystate Community Services' Good Decisions Program.

Under this model, prior to arraignment, ADAs in the juvenile and district courts identify and refer diversion-eligible cases to the Diversion Team for initial review. The police may also refer a case directly prior to a complaint issuing. The Diversion Team reviews each case referred and seeks input from all relevant parties, including the police and any victims. With this input, eligibility to participate in the program and terms are determined.

Once accepted into the program, the young person; their counsel, if any; and in the case of a person under 18, a parent or guardian, attend a confidential intake meeting to formulate an individualized diversion contract. Potential diversion conditions are case-tailored, but typically youth are given the opportunity to complete a life skill or other educational program, engage in counseling, participate in restorative justice, or explore and address substance use issues. Additionally, diversion participants may engage in community service and write letters of apology, where appropriate. Each participant is also asked to share feedback about their experience in the diversion program. If a young person satisfies all the requirements of diversion, there are no further proceedings in the court system.

Despite increasing resource demands, we consider diversion a critical component of our overall prevention efforts. The diversion program is also sustained by the on-going efforts of the Director of District Courts, multiple juvenile and district court ADAs and administrative staff. District Attorney Ryan is committed to inclusive diversion options for youth. This has been borne out not only by the expansion in age for those eligible for diversion to 26, but also by the expansion of the scope of cases that are diversion eligible. A juvenile or young adult is still eligible to be considered for diversion despite having a prior criminal record, making diversion available to those who have already had contact with the courts while preventing the further extension of criminal records.

The Diversion Team continually seeks to collaborate with existing and new community partners that offer services such as mental health counseling, life skills programming, help with substance use disorders, and youth employment training to generate locally accessible and free or low-cost options for diversion conditions. On an on-going basis, the Diversion Team conducts comprehensive training to ensure that ADAs and other Middlesex DA staff are fully aware of the program's work and engages in outside training to educate schools, police, potential community partners and other youth-involved agencies about the opportunities offered by the diversion program.

In 2024, these training and outreach efforts included the following:

- March 2024 – Presented, together with CPCS attorneys working in the CPCS Emerging Adults Pilot Program, to the Lowell Area Middlesex Bar Advocates on diversion options for young adults.
- April 2024 – Presented together with Brian France, Justice of the Juvenile Court, on diversion and juvenile justice issues to students at Boston College Law School.

- May 2024 – Presented with the Lowell Police Department to families connected to the Wayside Youth and Family Services Network.
- September 2024 – Trained members of the new ADA class on Diversion program eligibility.
- December 2024 – Presented on Young Adult Diversion to the District Court Region IV Bench-Bar meeting.

Recognizing that to truly understand the effectiveness of our work we must be able to track results and share that information, we have made data collection a priority. More information is available on our website at www.middlesexda.com.

Restorative Justice

District Attorney Ryan has been a leader in expanding the use of Restorative Justice programming across Middlesex County and across the Commonwealth. She championed the legislation that established the use of Restorative Justice in the courts and has worked to increase the use of Restorative Justice as a tool in resolving a wide range of cases. Our Office is committed to utilizing Restorative Justice partnerships to further the goals of intervening in the lives of at-risk youth to prevent crime, to reduce juvenile delinquency, and to provide youth with opportunities for positive change, driven by the belief that Restorative Justice is a process that seeks to truly repair the harm caused by crime. We have diligently forged Restorative Justice partnerships across the county to further these goals. Through our partnership with Communities for Restorative Justice (C4RJ), we collaborate to identify and offer opportunities for Restorative Justice for both cases that are not arraigned and handled by our diversion team and cases that are arraigned and handled by our trial teams.

Pre-Arraignment Drug Diversion and Treatment Program

The Middlesex District Attorney's Office Pre- Arraignment Drug Diversion and Treatment program is intended to provide critical intervention to individuals with substance use disorders at the earliest point in their intersection with the criminal system. Prior to arraignment, an Assistant District Attorney identifies and refers an eligible participant to one of the organizations with whom we partner to provide substance use disorder treatment, including Riverbend, formerly the Lowell House, Inc. A standard treatment program lasts 16 weeks. If a participant successfully completes the program, any criminal charges are dismissed prior to arraignment.

This model reflects our collaborative approach to addressing substance misuse in our communities. By bringing multiple organizations to the table to help identify participants for this program, we can connect a larger number of individuals with treatment programs. The goal of the program is to provide a psycho-educational experience related to alcohol and drug use and its effect on a participant's life. By raising awareness and influencing behavioral changes, the ultimate goal of the program is to lower participants risk for any future substance-related problems, including related criminal activity.

In addition to our pre-arraignment drug diversion program, we have also established pre-arraignment mental health diversion and veteran diversion programs, in accordance with *An Act relative to criminal justice reform*, signed by Governor Charles Baker on April 13, 2018. For these initiatives, we partner with Eliot Human Services, which provides counseling and treatment.

Opioid Task Forces

District Attorney Ryan continues to host monthly meetings of the Opioid Task Force. As referenced in prior reports, District Attorney Ryan started these meetings in 2012, motivated by information that underscored a disturbing trend of opioid use disorder and broader misuse of prescription medication. She worked with community partners to establish Opioid Task Forces throughout Middlesex County, meeting in conference rooms of local community hospitals throughout Middlesex. The meetings unite community stakeholders to address opioid use disorder with the goals of mobilizing resources and developing a comprehensive approach to address this public health crisis. The meetings have also expanded a focus on the intersection of behavioral health and substance use disorder and the implications for our communities: financial, social, and personal. Task Force members include law enforcement, fire and EMS, the medical community, local community service providers, community public health, and school leaders.

Since March of 2020, we have hosted virtual, county-wide Opioid Task Force meetings each month, bringing together between 50-85 Task Force members at each meeting. In addition to providing an update on the latest real-time data on overdose deaths in Middlesex County, District Attorney Ryan brings in guest presenters to speak about timely issues, the latest research to inform our proactive response, and community resources that exist through Middlesex County. Each Opioid Task Force meeting aims to foster continued collaboration across the 54 cities and towns of Middlesex County to ensure the sharing of information, the maximization of resources and the identification of areas for legislative action, community-based programs and integrated public policy. For example, at the conclusion of every meeting, District Attorney Ryan emphasizes the importance of spreading awareness about the increased need for Narcan which she has made widely available for cities, towns and schools. The speakers at these meetings cover a wide array of crucial topics including the availability of adequate resources for all community members and efforts to combat adverse health outcomes. In 2024, topics covered at these meetings included an overview of Boston Medical Center's Center for Addiction Treatment for Adolescents and Young Adults who Use Substances (CATALYST), addiction recovery programming at colleges and universities, and substance-exposed newborns. District Attorney Ryan is also committed to ensuring that all Middlesex County community members are trained to administer Narcan. On October 30, 2024, District Attorney Ryan hosted a Narcan training for 25 Middlesex school nurses. Dr. Dan Muse, an emergency medicine physician at Signature Healthcare Brockton Hospital led the training.

Adaptive Water Safety Training

According to a 2017 study in the American Journal of Public Health, children with autism are 160 times more likely to drown than neurotypical children. Tragically, over the last few summers in Massachusetts, there have been several cases where children with autism have drowned in bodies of water near their homes. In response, on August 14, 2024, we partnered with Swim Angelfish and the Massachusetts State Police Underwater Recovery Unit to host a free Adaptive Water Safety Day at the Massachusetts State Police Headquarters in Framingham. The event was designed for children with autism, anxiety, sensory needs, motor challenges, and other special needs who may struggle with impulsiveness and attraction to water or fear and avoidance of water. The event's goals were to introduce life-saving skills and practice using the rescue tube and life jackets and introduce a ritual of asking permission before entering any body of water.

Programing Update

Child Health and Safety Initiatives

Summer Safety Jeopardy

When school is out for the summer, kids face different safety issues as they spend more time outside and near water. District Attorney Ryan's summer safety program teaches children, grades K-5, about the best ways to stay safe during the summer. She addresses safety related to water, bicycles, fireworks, windows, and cars. Afterwards, students play a game of Jeopardy to review the material.

Give-Kids-A-Smile

Children suffering from poor oral health often behave inappropriately in school. District Attorney Ryan partners with Middlesex Community College and Regis College to provide free oral health care to underserved children in an effort to solve this issue. Elementary-age children receive dental exams and sealants from dental hygiene students. The goal of the program is to keep students focused on academics, instead of pain or inadequate eating or sleeping.

Smart Choices Program

As children get older, they encounter complex situations and must make independent decisions. During the Smart Choices program, District Attorney Ryan leads students, grades 6-9, in an exercise designed to help young people think critically about their decision-making and to encourage them to make healthy choices. Students are provided with various scenarios involving cyberbullying, sexting, and substance use. Students analyze how they would handle each situation, which leads to an engaging discussion of the possible consequences of their choices.

Cyber Education Training

Sexting is a widespread issue, but its consequences are not always understood. To solve this, the District Attorney's Office, in collaboration with the Middlesex Children's Advocacy Center, continues to offer youth an online cyber education training focused on sexting and the law. During the training, students learn about Massachusetts child pornography laws, the consequences of sexting, and strategies to use when asked for sexually explicit pictures.

Book and Clothing Drive for More than Words

To foster our ongoing commitment to partnership with organizations that serve system involved youth we again engaged our staff to donate used books and clothing to benefit More Than Words, a nonprofit social enterprise that empowers system-involved youth to take charge of their lives by taking charge of a business.

Therapy Dog Program

In October of 2022, Bear, our office Comfort Dog, achieved a therapy dog certification through the Alliance of Therapy Dogs. Since that time, he has been available to work in his official capacity to assist victims of crime and juveniles who interact with the criminal system. Bear also responds to schools following critical incidents including the death of a student.

Relationship Safety Initiatives

Cut It Out Middlesex

Salon professionals are uniquely suited to identifying early signs of abuse because they can easily observe physical injuries on their clients' heads, faces, and arms and often serve as confidants. Based on the national Cut It Out training program, Cut It Out Middlesex teaches students from vocational high schools how to spot signs of domestic violence and how to safely refer clients to local service providers. A representative from the local police department and a community-based domestic violence advocate also discuss resources available within the community.

Healthy Heart Matters

As teens enter romantic relationships, they need to understand the distinctions between healthy and unhealthy relationships to protect themselves against abuse. District Attorney Ryan, with the help of Middlesex County high school students, launched a mobile application called *Healthy Heart Matters* to help young people identify when a relationship may be unhealthy or potentially abusive. Users are given scenarios and must evaluate whether the behavior described is cause for concern. The app also provides tips and resources about healthy dating.

Racial Justice Initiatives

Hate/Bias Reporting Form

Following an increase of hateful and biased incidents in Middlesex County, the District Attorney's Office launched an online form for community members to report incidents motivated by hate and/or bias. With the form in place, the District Attorney's Anti-Hate Anti-Bias Task Force will be able to respond more quickly to reported incidents and recognize trends to inform their other work.

Social Justice Roundtables

Young people provide an important perspective on equity and racial justice issues, and the District Attorney's Office is committed to encouraging young people to engage in these important conversations. Director of Racial Justice Initiatives Antonia Thompson leads discussions approximately 1 hour a week for 4 weeks with groups of young people. These conversations are designed to empower young people to examine social issues, including racial justice, and lead as advocates for change in their community.

Child-Focused Adult Programs

Social Host Liability

Teens may want to host social gatherings, especially around prom and graduation. However, especially when these gatherings involve underage drinking, parents may run into trouble with the law. In this presentation, District Attorney Ryan educates parents about the social host law and the potential liabilities associated with hosting social gatherings with minors, particularly when teens engage in underage drinking.

Train-the-Trainer Training

Bullying, especially cyber-bullying, affects many children. The adults working in school settings must be equipped with the skills to respond to instances of bullying in order to reduce harm as much as possible. The District Attorney's Office partners with the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center of Bridgewater University to host this workshop for administrators, teachers and other school personnel. During the training, educators learn research-based techniques to prevent and address bullying, including cyberbullying. The Center also provides free and low-cost bullying prevention research and resources to schools.

Mandated Reporter Training

Many professionals in Middlesex County are designated as mandated reporters. The District Attorney's Office, in collaboration with the Middlesex Children's Advocacy Center, continues to offer an online mandated reporter training to help mandated reporters complete their training easily. This program is designed to help mandated reporters who work in Middlesex County understand their legal obligations, recognize possible signs and symptoms of child abuse and neglect, know how to respond to a child who discloses abuse, know how to file a 51A Report, and understand what happens after a 51A Report is filed.

Child Protection Efforts and Initiatives

During the 2024 calendar year, we have also engaged in the following efforts and initiatives with respect to child protection:

Child Fatality Review Meetings

We consistently staff and conduct Child Fatality Review Team meetings. Local Child Fatality Review Teams are charged with collecting and reviewing information on individual cases in an effort to understand the causes and incidence of child fatalities and near fatalities in the county. The teams are not looking to assign blame for a child's death. Rather, they are trying to identify factors that may have contributed to the child's death or near death so as to prevent future, similar incidents. The Local Teams advise the State Team by making recommendations for changes in law, policy or practice, which may prevent future child deaths and near deaths.

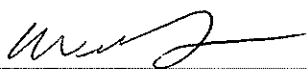
The TRACE Program

The TRACE (Team Response Against Child Exploitation) Program is a multidisciplinary team response to commercial exploitation of children ("CSEC") in Middlesex County. TRACE's mission is to improve information sharing and build stronger collaboration within and between agencies so we can respond more effectively to CSEC cases, develop community understanding and identification of CSEC-involved youth and enhance efforts to identify and hold exploiters accountable.

Thank you for allowing us to share this update on our programming and other intervention and prevention initiatives. This report demonstrates our Office's commitment and dedication to improving and expanding these important programs in this county.

If you have any questions regarding this program or our Office generally, please contact me directly at 781-897-8456.

Sincerely,



William Green, Chief Fiscal Officer

cc: District Attorney Marian Ryan
Steve Loughlin, First Assistant District Attorney, MDAO
Alice Casey, ADA, MDAO