



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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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



November 18, 2024

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 2022 Middlesex (Northern) District Attorney's Office
 Report to the Senate and House Ways and Means Committees
 Regarding the CY 2023 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 2023 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 2023, Community Based Justice ("CBJ") meetings were held regionally and remotely. 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.

Examples of the product of such collaborations have been applications for and the receipt of funding from state and federal grantors to community service providers, partnerships with private industry donors to contribute funding targeted at community needs, and reliance upon the analysis and expertise of professors and graduate students within local universities and colleges to interpret crime statistic data and generate models for social improvement.

District Attorney Ryan recognizes that it is imperative that we help teach educators how to recognize signs of cyber-bullying, offer support 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.

Throughout her tenure, District Attorney Ryan has demonstrated through programming and partnerships that she is fervently dedicated to promoting civic engagement for our youth and emphasizing to them that their voice matters. She recognizes the challenges presented to young people as they navigate how to be responsible and informed citizens. To that end, in 2022, District Attorney Ryan forged a strategic partnership with the California based and Stanford University affiliated Digital Inquiry Group ("DIG") to launch an initiative program for Middlesex County students called the "Digital Citizenship Academy." DIG is a non-profit organization that strives to equip young people with tangible skills to sort fact from fiction online. DIG developed a Civic Online Reasoning curriculum based on peer-reviewed research to teach students critical skills to spot misinformation and evaluate online sources. The goal of District Attorney Marian Ryan's "Digital Citizenship Academy" is to bring this program to young people across the county with the goal of ensuring that students neither come to believe nor disseminate any false or misleading claims and are well-prepared to navigate our interconnected world. In the fall of 2022, DIG's Executive Director Joel Breakstone trained District Attorney Ryan and volunteer Assistant District Attorneys how to teach the curriculum. District Attorney Ryan and her staff have trained over four hundred students so far.

Another initiative designed to bolster the ability of youth and young adults to find their and use their voices is 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 youth 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.

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. This past year the task force held several meetings addressing incidents of hate and bias in schools. In conjunction with those issues identified in schools participating in CBJ, the task force convened meetings covering state and federal programming supporting community based projects, staff development and school initiatives focused on decreasing incidents of hate and bias, forums defining free speech and hate crimes and programming designed to address racial and ethnic disparities.

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.

In 2013, District Attorney Ryan engaged the Administrative Office of the Trial Courts as well as local healthcare and service providers to work toward the establishment of a **Drug Court** session in the Lowell District Court. District Attorney Ryan worked with the Presiding Justices of the Lowell District Court and the Lynn District Court Drug Court session to provide Lowell District Court partners an opportunity to view a successful Drug Court in action.

In June of 2014, the Lowell District Drug Court was launched. The drug court session is held every Tuesday at 2:00 p.m. in the Fourth Session of the Lowell District Court. Prior to the session commencing each week, the Lowell Drug Court Team, including judges, defense attorneys, assistant district attorneys, probation officers, police officers, counselors, clinical case managers, and court clinicians, meet at 1:00 p.m. to prepare for the upcoming session. To graduate from the Lowell Drug Court, participants must complete four phases, which span over a time frame of approximately 18 months.

Empowering Girls Conference

As the only female 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.

On January 23, 2023, **Valerie Biden Owens** joined us as the keynote speaker at the Conference. Over 400 girls were in attendance from across Massachusetts. During her speech Owens energized participants and engaged the crowd. Some the highlights of the event are captured here: https://www.instagram.com/p/CpEUktqMXo8/?img_index=1. The theme of the conference was "*Inspiring Engaged and Civic Minded Leaders.*" Additional speakers included Professor Dehlia Umunna, Harvard Law Professor and Director of the Harvard Criminal Justice Institute; Joanna Lydgate, Founder and CEO of the States United Democracy Center; Diana Hwang, Founder and Executive Director of Asian American Women's Political Initiative; and Lisa Fortenberry, Executive Vice President, Camp Harbor View.

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 includes More Than Words, Communities for Restorative Justice, Bridging the Gap, Massachusetts Youth Diversion Program and the Lowell High School SCORE Mediation 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 write a reflective essay (or, alternatively, provide feedback in a way in which they are comfortable) about their experience in the diversion program. If a young person satisfies all of 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 for diversion consideration 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 options for diversion conditions. On an on-going basis, the Diversion Team trains in-house to insure 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 2023, these training and outreach efforts included the following:

- March 2023 – presented on our program to the MGH/ARMS (Addiction Recovery Management Service) Program
- April 2023 – presented together with Brian Frane, Justice of the Juvenile Court, on diversion and juvenile justice issues to students at Boston College Law School
- May 2023 -- trained members of the Middlesex DA Victim Witness Bureau on Diversion Program eligibility and assisting alleged victims in understanding the Diversion process.
- Summer 2023 -- trained members of the Middlesex DA summer intern class on Diversion Program eligibility
- September 2023 -- trained members of the new ADA class on Diversion Program eligibility
- November 2023 – presented on our program to attendees of the Fire Education class run by the Cambridge Police Department and Belmont Fire Department
- November 2023 – attended Diversion/Juvenile Justice summit and discussed our programming with representatives of District Attorneys' offices from across Massachusetts

Recognizing that in order to truly understand the effectiveness of our work, we must be able to track results and share that information. As a result, we have made data collection a priority. More information 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. In 2023, we partnered with the Greater Framingham Community Church to expand the use of restorative practices in providing supports to community members. We have also partnered with the Middlesex Community College Law Center's Restorative Justice Program to find opportunities to increase our use of Restorative Justice in Lowell and the surrounding areas.

Pre-Arrestion Drug Diversion and Treatment Program

On November 30, 2016, we announced the launch of the first pre-arrestion adult drug diversion and treatment program in Middlesex County. This 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 arrestion, 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 the Lowell House, Inc. A standard treatment program is 16 weeks. If a participant successfully completes the program, any criminal charges are dismissed prior to arrestion.

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 are able to 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, it is the ultimate goal of the program 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. In these initiatives, we partner with Eliot Human Services which provides counseling and treatment.

Opioid Task Forces

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, District Attorney Ryan continued 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 through 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 to 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 to 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 April, Dr. Sharon Levy, the Director of the Adolescent Substance Use and Addiction Program at Boston Children's Hospital and Associate Professor of Pediatrics at Harvard Medical School presented on adolescent development and the impact of substance use on the developing brain and her research on adolescent screening.

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 including court-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 into 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 or not 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 need to be able deal with instances of bullying 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.

Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) Training

Some residents of Middlesex County have frequent contact with certain populations who might be at risk for suicide. These people are often referred to as gatekeepers. This training is designed to teach them to recognize the warning signs, clues, and suicidal communications of people in trouble so they can try to prevent a possible tragedy.

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 2023 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