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Juvenile Court Advisory Subcommittee Meeting

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Agency: [Cuyahoga County Council](#)

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Summary

- Chair Ronald Adrine said he wants the subcommittee to be effective and productive within the scope of its charge.
- Cuyahoga County needs additional support from federal agencies regarding gun trafficking, said Subcommittee Member Marvin Cross.

Follow-Up Questions

- Are some juvenile court bindover decisions discretionary?
- Has County Council's Public Safety and Justice Affairs Committee held town hall meetings previously?

Notes

The meeting was called to order on time by the subcommittee chair. The [agenda](#) was followed as posted. All subcommittee members were present.

Subcommittee members:

- Chair Ronald Adrine, retired Cleveland Municipal Court administrative judge
- Vice Chair Jennifer Blumhagen Yarham, executive director at youth mental health nonprofit Applewood Centers Inc.
- Robert McClelland, former Common Pleas Court judge
- Bridget Gibbons, a deputy administrator at the county's juvenile court
- Marvin Cross, a former Cleveland police commander who now works as a security consultant

Public Comment - The chair allowed additional comments from attendees during the meeting also.

There was one person registered for public comment. Juvenile Court Magistrate Mark

Stanton spoke to the subcommittee about the media reports that the youth accused of serious crimes in Cuyahoga County are not receiving adequate legal representation. Stanton said that since May 2, “69.4% of all cases that have been charged have been assigned to the [Public Defender](#).”

He explained that the judges are concerned about the reports and have been meeting to ensure that cases are assigned equitably to qualified attorneys. Stanton said “qualified” means attorneys are following the rules of the superintendent of the Ohio Supreme Court, adding that the court removes those who aren’t from its assigned counsel list until they are in compliance.

He said that attorneys must have completed the six hours of continuing legal education (CLE) for juvenile court to be eligible. Stanton said that some cases need to be assigned to attorneys with experience and compassion for youth due to the severity of the case. He said that judges are being accused of giving cases to their friends. Stanton insisted that cases are being assigned with consideration of the experience of the attorneys and the best outcome for the youth.

A discussion happened about the [Continuing Legal Education \(CLE\) - Supreme Court of Ohio](#) requirements with respect to the Superintendent of the Ohio Supreme Court, Ohio Administrative Code and specific CLE courses for Juvenile Court attorneys. McClelland clarified that an attorney could be deemed unqualified if they have not taken specific courses for juvenile court. Stanton confirmed that and said an attorney being technically unqualified according to state requirements doesn’t mean they’re unqualified from a competence standpoint.

Judge Adrine asked Stanton to submit his comments in writing to the subcommittee. Stanton agreed.

[Editor’s note: More than 1,200 children accused of serious crimes in Cuyahoga County since 2020 were defended by court-appointed attorneys who did not meet the state’s qualification requirements, according to [reporting by The Marshall Project - Cleveland](#).]

Cross asked Stanton about the issue of transferring youth to adult court – also called “[youth bindovers](#).” Stanton replied that a bindover decision is mandated by code. He said that most counties in Ohio rarely have a bindover case. He shared a discussion held with a judge a month ago in Delaware County who said that he was considering the first bindover case in 14 years. Stanton said that the youth transferred to adult court in Cuyahoga County meet the requirement for [Youth in Adult Court - Supreme Court of](#)

[Ohio.](#)

[Editor's note: Although there are state-mandated bindovers, prosecutors may also ask judges to consider bindovers if a child is accused of a felony -- a process called discretionary bindovers. From 2017-2022, Cuyahoga County [prosecutors have filed an average of 94 mandatory bindovers and 159 discretionary bindovers per year.](#)]

Cross said that assistance from the [Federal Bureau of Investigation \(FBI\) | USAGov](#) is needed to stop the influx of guns to the county.

Adrine led a discussion with the subcommittee members regarding how they could be most useful to the Cuyahoga County Public Safety & Justice Affairs Committee. He sought a “wish list” of requests from the Juvenile Court judges to help define the direction of the subcommittee.

The following topics were discussed as pressing:

- Gun violence - Gibbons said the solution to gun violence “is not a court solution but a countywide solution.”
- Recidivism - Gibbons responded to Adrine that most programs have metrics as required by grant award requirements.
- Successful national models - Gibbons said [Catalyze Justice](#) was an organizational partner to consult with to learn about national efforts in reducing gun violence. Compliments were given for the [Diversion Center - Cuyahoga County](#).
- Funding sources and program budget issues
- Program supports - Caseloads of probation officers and recruitment help for clinicians to staff trauma-informed care programs to offer holistic treatment for youth and families. Gibbons said of families: “If their kid is coming into our court, they’re in crisis.”
- Community outreach - suggestions for surveys, town hall meetings. Subcommittee members expressed interest in hearing from judges, service providers and kids and families involved in the Juvenile Court. Yarham requested that consideration be given to venue spaces to encourage public participation.
- A county to county case comparison of youth bind-over statistics
- Governor's Report - Will there be a youth state detention facility in Cuyahoga County? [State report proposes major juvenile justice reforms, including ...](#)

Adrine requested that a meeting be scheduled with all juvenile court judges present at the Juvenile Court building as the next meeting of the subcommittee. Meeting notices will be provided for the public online.

The meeting adjourned at 5:03 p.m.

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