

Commission on Children and Youth

Annual Report

2020-2021



Montgomery County, Maryland
Commission on Children and Youth

Mission Statement

The Commission on Children and Youth promotes the well-being of Montgomery County’s children, youth, and families so that all young people may realize their full potential and become contributing, productive adults.

The Commission advances its mission by: (1) identifying the needs of young people and their families, and the groups and agencies that serve them; (2) informing and advising the County Executive, the County Council, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Board of Education (BOE), and the community at large; (3) recommending policies, programs, funding, and legislative priorities; and (4) affirming the needs, aspirations, and achievements of all the County’s young people.

Commission Structure

The Commission and its committees meet on the second Wednesday of every month (September to June) from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. The Youth Advisory/Leadership Committee meets from 6:00 to 6:30 p.m. on the same evening. The Commission meetings are open to the public. At this time, the Commission is hosting all meetings virtually.

The scope of issues and priorities the Commission can address is broad and far-reaching. In order to focus its work, the Commission typically holds an annual strategic planning retreat in June and selects priority issues for the year. Subcommittees are formed around the selected priorities. The CCY hosted a virtual planning retreat on June 9, 2021.

In 2020-2021, the Commission elected to prioritize:

- Exploring ways to strengthen relationships between members of the law enforcement community and youth, particularly our youth of color.
- Seeking ways to create a public initiative that would ensure the existence and awareness of equitable, inclusive, accessible, and supportive infrastructures across all County agencies and institutions. This initiative would help to create a stand-alone coordinating entity that allows for a centralized information platform with accessible directories of resources and supports for children and youth of Montgomery County.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page 2:
Mission & Structure

Page 3:
Letter from the
Chair

Page 4:
Membership

Page 5:
Commission
Activities

Page 7:
2021-2022
Commission
Priorities

Letter from the Chair



November 1, 2021

**The Honorable Marc Elrich
Montgomery County Executive**

**The Honorable Tom Hucker, President
Montgomery County Council**

**The Honorable Brenda Wolff, President
Montgomery County Board of Education**

**Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director
Montgomery County Department of Health
and Human Services**

Residents of Montgomery County

Dear Mr. Elrich, Mr. Hucker, Ms. Wolff, Dr. Crowel and Residents of Montgomery County,

This past Commission Year (FY21) was certainly a monumental one, as we shifted gears and conducted all commission business, including engagement opportunities, virtually, as a result of challenges related to the ongoing COVID pandemic. Our priorities centered around continuing our work exploring how to strengthen the relationship between youth and law enforcement, as well as suggestions on how to coordinate services that serve youth and their families in Montgomery County. Throughout the year, we were able to connect with a number of stakeholders and community members to discuss and examine the role of School Resource Officers in our public schools and in which ways negative interactions between law enforcement and young people cannot be predicted by race and/or special education status. We invited students, active School Resource Officers, representatives from the Montgomery County Police Department, as well as current Montgomery Council members, to listen and/or share their experiences with the SRO program to date.

In addition to regular commission business, we had the pleasure of hosting our 14th Annual "Youth Having a Voice Roundtable" event *virtually* on February 23. During this event, we were able to hear from current middle and high school students and they shared their insights and experiences on topics related to this year's commission priorities. We are always grateful for our youth commissioners, facilitate the discussions and engage with our youth participants to share their thoughts freely and in a safe space.

As we gear up for another year of Commission work, we thank you in advance for your support as we work to address the needs of youth and their families in Montgomery County. We also welcome increased opportunities for partnership with other Boards and Commissions as we all work to serve our local community.

Sincerely,

Renae McPherson
Chair

Membership 2020-2021

The Commission on Children and Youth has 27 membership positions including one representative from Montgomery County Public Schools; one representative from an independent school in the County; one representative from the Montgomery County Department of Recreation; and two representatives from the Department of Health and Human Services.

The remaining 22 members are equally divided among individuals with recent experience with agencies providing services to children and youth; youth and young adults; and parents.

Youth Representatives

Alexander Kern
Ijeoma Okoro

Parent Representatives

Dr. Leslie Copeland-Tune	Luciana Crotti-Espinoza
Lynne Harris	Stephanie Nesmith
Julie Reiley	Andrea Shore
Pamela Taylor	

Private Agency Representatives

Kirsten Andersen	YMCA Youth & Family Services
Stephanie Clark	Leaders Institute
Shane' Tate	Montgomery County Collaboration
Council for Children, Youth and Families	

Public Agency Representatives

Jeanett Peralta	Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Jerome Jackson	Montgomery County Department of Recreation
Rena McPherson	Montgomery County Public Schools

Commission Staff

Erin Stillwell	Program Manager, Department of Health and Human Services
----------------	--

Commission Activities

2020-21
GUEST SPEAKERS AND
TESTIMONY

Guest Speaker Highlights

Officer Joseph
Lowery and Captain
Stacey Flynn
January 2021

Councilmember
Sidney Katz
February 2021

Dr. Annette
Campbell Anderson
March 2021

Eva Cocozzella and
Dianne Woods
April 2021

Guest Speakers

On January 13, 2021 the Commission welcomed Officer Joseph Lowery, School Resource Officer Program, Montgomery County Police Department, and Captain Stacey A. Flynn, Community Engagement Division, Montgomery County Police Department as guest speakers. Officer Lowery and Captain Flynn shared an overview of the MCPD School Resource Officer (SRO) Program. Officer Lowery and Captain Flynn also addressed the efforts being made to provide SROs with the necessary training to help facilitate positive working relationships with schools and students.

On February 10, 2021, the Commission had the honor of having Councilmember Sidney Katz and Mary Gies, staff from Councilmember Katz' Office, attend the meeting. Councilmember Katz was interested in learning about the current work of the "Strengthening Youth and Law Enforcement" subcommittee as it related to the School Resource Officer Program in Montgomery County.

On March 10, 2021, Dr. Annette Campbell Anderson, Deputy Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for Safe and Healthy Schools presented on the eSchool+ Initiative. The Initiative was formed to provide resources and tools schools could utilize when considering how to ethically reopen during the pandemic.

On April 21, 2021, the Commission hosted Eva Cocozzella, Behavioral Health Resource Specialist for the Watkins Mill Cluster and Dianne Woods, Program Manager and Care Coordinator for the Watkins Mill Cluster. Ms. Cocozzella and Ms. Woods shared information on the services provided by the "Cluster" projects as well as provided insights on gaps in services to those families living in the Watkins Mill area.

Commission Activities-Continued

2020-21
GUEST SPEAKERS AND
TESTIMONY

Commission
Activities Highlights

Policy Priority
Presentation, HHS
Committee of the
County Council
November 2020

14th Annual Youth
Having a Voice
Roundtable
February 2021

Commission Activities

On November 18, 2020, the Commission participated in the County Council HHS Committee virtual roundtable discussion and communicated the top two policy priorities for the 2020-2021 commission year.

14th Annual Youth Having a Voice Roundtable

The Commission hosted its 14th Annual Youth Having a Voice Roundtable on February 23, 2021. A diverse group of students from area middle and high schools gathered “virtually” for an evening of open conversations about important issues impacting youth today.

The virtual conversation focused on topics such as the quality of interactions between youth and law enforcement, focusing specifically on interactions with school resource officers (SRO). Students were asked to share their own experiences and/or interactions with SRO in their schools. Some of the students felt as if SROs “targeted minorities” in the schools and did not trust the presences of law enforcement in school. Participants shared that if SROs had the opportunity to build relationships with students in the school there might be an opportunity for better communication. A majority of the participants shared concerns about feeling safe in their schools, (specifically around the fear of a school shooting) but felt that their school security team was able to keep them safe.

Policy Priorities for the Commission on Children and Youth 2021-2022

Priority 1: Accessible Youth Spaces

The Commission on Children and Youth seeks to explore various safe and accessible spaces that can serve county youth outside of the school day. These spaces ideally would be locations where young people can connect with their peers, and have access to social-emotional, recreational, and academic support. Considerations will include, but not limited to, geographical locations of spaces in underserved areas, services/programs for all ages of youth, and access for young people with disabilities.

Priority 2: Youth Employment Opportunities

One of the aims of the CCY is to promote the well-being of our county's children and youth, so that they have access to successful futures. A way to support this, is by examining the ways in which current Montgomery County programs provide equitable access to ALL of our youth, so that they may explore various career pathways in a supportive setting. The CCY will consider the ways in which young people are able to currently seek employment, while developing workplace skills that they can take with them into adulthood. Additionally, the CCY will explore in which ways county programs can partner with the private sector to gain practical skills and networking

Marc Elrich, County Executive
Dr. Raymond Crowel, Director of Health and Human Services
JoAnn Barnes, Chief, Children Youth and Family Services



Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services
Children, Youth and Families Services
Commission on Children and Youth

For more information about the Commission on Children and Youth, please visit:
www.montgomerycountymd.gov/ccy

Language translation and alternative formats of this report are available upon request.
For additional information on the Commission, please call or write at the address and telephone numbers listed above.

Montgomery County does not discriminate on the basis of disability in employment or in the admission/access to its programs and services.