



Franklin County's

JPO Times

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JJSES Spotlight: Diversion

The PA Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategies identified diversion as a key building block. Diversion allows lower-risk juveniles from the potentially harmful effects of involvement in the juvenile justice system while being held accountable through informal processes. Diversion can happen at multiple points in the decision making process.

The most common forms of diversion are pre-charge diversion and pre-adjudication diversion. Pre-charge diversion occurs prior to a juvenile being formally charged for a summary offense or

a delinquent act. This occurs when a police officer or department knows of the offense but allows a juvenile to participate in a diversion program instead of formally charging them. Pre-adjudication diversion occurs when a juvenile has been formally charged but before formal processing. Pre-adjudication diversion has many forms, including Youth Aid Panel, Youth Court, Informal Adjustment, and a Consent Decree.

In Franklin County, Youth Aid Panel is used as both a pre-charge diversion and a pre-

adjudication diversion. Referrals to the program have come from local police departments. Pre-adjudication diversion referrals for the panel have come from the magisterial district judges and the juvenile probation department. Youth Court is another pre-charge and pre-adjudication diversion, but is not available in all high schools.

Due to the variety of diversion options available, a juvenile may be eligible for more than one diversion in their lifetime. This decision is based on a variety of factors including the seriousness of the offense and community protection.

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Above from left: Supervisor Brandon Goshorn, PO Eric Hewitt, PO Ben Hardic, Chief Rick Ackerman at graduation for Franklin County's Leadership Development Program. Below: Graduates of the Franklin County Leadership Development Program from the Courts with President Judge Meyers. Read more about the program on page 3.



PO Spotlight: Brian Kaspick

Where are you from?

Clearfield, PA

What degrees do you hold and where from?

I have a Bachelor's in criminal justice from Lycoming College

Why did you choose to work in juvenile justice?

I wouldn't say that I chose juvenile justice. I got my start working in a residential facility right out of college to gain some criminal justice experience. I enjoyed working with youth so I decided I wanted to work in a community based setting and ending up in Juvenile Probation.

What do you enjoy the most about your job?

After 17 years in the field I still enjoy working with youth and hopefully positively impacting them in some way.

Which attribute of yours do you think helps you the most working with youth?

I think my biggest attribute is patience.

What goals would you like to accomplish in the next five years? (professional or personal)

I don't really have any true goals. Personally, I take each day at a time with the mindset of being a

better person and continuing to grow as a professional.

What do you like to do for fun?

Avid sports fan. Enjoy watching my son play multiple sports throughout the year and getting to coach him during baseball season.

Do you have any pets?

A black lab named Tucker.

What is something your coworkers would be surprised to learn about you?

Probably nothing would surprise them

What Does It Mean to be Neurodivergent?

According to the Cleveland Clinic and Forbes, neurodivergent is a non-medical, umbrella term used to describe people whose brain differences affect how their brain works. These differences could be due to medical disorders, learning disabilities, or other conditions such as Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The term neurodivergent has come from the primarily social justice movement, neurodiversity.

Neurodiversity was first used by Australian sociologist, Judy Singer, in 1998 to recognize that everyone's brain develops uniquely. It is based on the idea that people experience and interact with the world in many

different ways. The main values of this movement are there is no "right" way of thinking, learning, and behaving, and differences are not deficits. The Cleveland Clinic has noted some possible strengths of neurodivergents as having a better memory, being able to mentally picture 3D objects better, and being able to solve complex math problems in their head.

There are many ways to become more accepting of a neurodiverse world. The following are some ways identified in an article by Harvard Medical School. Ask a person's preferred way to be addressed. This is important as many disability advocacy organizations prefer person-first language (for

example "a person with autism"), but the majority of the autistic community prefer identity-first language (for example "an autistic person"). Allow small adjustments based on sensory needs, such as the use of fidget toys, extra movement breaks, offer quiet meeting space, and communicate expected loud noises (such as fire drills). Be clear when communicating and avoid the use of implied messages. Also, give clear and concise instructions for tasks by breaking tasks down into small steps. Try to give them an advance notice when things are changing, and provide a reason for the change. Don't assume someone is being rude or deliberately breaking rules, and inform them of etiquette.

Youth Aid Panel Highlights for 2022

Participation in the Youth Aid Panel continued to grow in 2022 with eighty-eight referrals being accepted. While some participants are still in progress, sixty-five juveniles of those juveniles completed the program in 2022. The juveniles who completed the program in 2022, including those who began in 2021 and completed the program until 2022, completed a total of 224 helping hours and performed 659 random acts of kindness.

As a main premise of the youth aid panel is the communities taking care of its own, helping hours are not as stringent as community service, and may include helping neighbors. In addition to performing random acts of kindness, participants are required to answer some questions about each random act of kindness they complete. These questions include how did it make them feel, how do they think it made the person they did

the act of kindness for feel, and did they learn anything from doing this.

The following list is just some of what participants did as helping hours or random acts of kindness:

- Took grandma to grocery store and helped her with groceries
- Made mom's birthday dinner
- Helped a friend find and apply for jobs
- Talked with a friend that was feeling depressed
- Helped coach clean up after practice
- Fixed brother's bike
- Wrote thank you note to sub after class acted up
- Volunteered at library
- Played tooth fairy and left money for younger brother
- Gave flowers to a lady turning 81
- Bought a snack for another kid at school

- Shared lunch with someone who didn't have lunch
- Talked to new kid at school
- Donated food and clothes to homeless people
- Helped find owners of 2 lost dogs
- Talked to a girl that had been arguing with her boyfriend
- Talked to a girl she saw crying and asked if she could help
- Saved baby bird from the road
- Helped shovel out community mailboxes
- Helped with church cleanup day
- Helped a boy pick up his things in hallway at school

Stephanie Black and Harley Smith Leave for New Opportunities

Stephanie Black left the department in December 2022. She has begun to work at the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission as a Juvenile Court Consultant. Stephanie will be responsible for conducting court consultant visits and to provide technical assistance and to advise to juvenile court judges and chief juvenile probation officers.

Harley Smith left the department at the beginning of February 2023. She is working at Over The Rainbow Child Advocacy Center as a forensic interviewer. Harley will be completing interviews in a developmentally sensitive way to obtain information regarding allegations of abuse or violence.

We wish them both success with their new professional endeavors.

Ben Hardic and Eric Hewitt Graduate from the Franklin County Leadership Development Program

The inaugural class of the Franklin County Leadership Development Program graduated on December 20, 2022 and included juvenile probation officers Ben Hardic and Eric Hewitt. The program was developed to cultivate leadership abilities of Franklin County employees to assist them in growing professionally and personally within the county. Participants met monthly for a year and learned about topics critical to leadership success and to work on small group projects, which

examined potential cost-saving opportunities for the county.

Ben and Eric would recommend the program to others considering participating. Eric said "Throughout this program I have learned a lot about myself and acquired vital information in order to be successful in my career. This program has provided insight into each department's unique functions within Franklin County. Most of us were strangers at the beginning of this program, but I feel it's accurate to say we are all departing as friends."