

42nd Annual InterCourt Conference



Session 1A: Diversion Best
Practices

March 12, 2026
Hilton Columbus at
Easton Town Center
Columbus, OH

FACULTY BIOGRAPHIES

BRITTANY NEAL serves as the State Strategic Initiatives Administrator for the Ohio Department of Youth Services (ODYS), where her career is defined by a dedication to juvenile justice reform. She strategically guides and partners with 19 counties in Ohio's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) network to implement strategies that ensure youth, particularly youth of color, are supported within their homes rather than being unnecessarily or inappropriately detained in secure juvenile justice facilities. Prior to her current position, Brittany honed her expertise as a Community Program Analyst at ODYS, where she monitored and evaluated vital state-funded court programs and provided critical technical assistance and training. Her work empowered courts to develop impactful community-based interventions that successfully change youth behavior and significantly reduce recidivism. Brittany's deep understanding of the juvenile justice system is rooted in her extensive county-level experience. She served as a Probation Community Worker at the Summit County Juvenile Court and as a Pre-Sentence Investigator and Juvenile Probation Officer at the Franklin County Juvenile Court. A proud alumna of Kent State University with a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice, Brittany Neal consistently leverages her comprehensive background to advocate for equitable and effective solutions for Ohio's youth.

LISA WILLIAMSON, PhD is the Director of Court Services for the Delaware County Juvenile Court. Lisa has been employed with the Delaware County Juvenile Court since 1994. She has served in many duties within the Court since 1994; Wrap Staff, Intake Officer, Intake Department Head, Interim Chief Probation Officer, and her current role as Director of Court Services. Lisa's current position supervises various departments, including; Probation, Intake/Diversion, School Liaison/Attendance, Mentoring, Victim Services, Family Advocates, and the Assessment Center. Lisa is an advocate for youth, co-facilitator of GIRLS group, champion for Trauma Informed Care, and practitioner of Evidence Based Practices.

She graduated from The Ohio State University in 1993 with a BA in Psychology and received her MPA from Ohio University in 2017. Lisa obtained her Doctor of Criminal Justice degree from Pennsylvania Western University in 2023.

During her tenure at the Court, Lisa is an active member of the Ohio Juvenile Diversion Association; serving as Secretary for two years, and President for four years, Lisa has also served as the Judge's representative on the board of the Perry Multi-County Juvenile Facility (CCF) since 2003 and is the current board President, past Vice President and Secretary.

Diversión Best Practices

Brittany Neal

*State Strategic Initiatives Administrator
Ohio Department of Youth Services*

Dr. Lisa Williamson

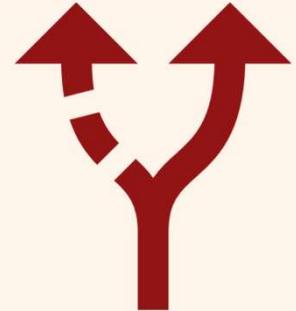
*Director of Court Services
Delaware County Juvenile Court*





Date:
March 12, 2026

BRACKETOLOGY 2026



Forward Thinking in Juvenile Diversion

WHAT IS DIVERSION?

(02)

Definition: *The process by which a charge, complaint, or citation is redirected away from traditional/formal court proceedings and is, instead, handled in an informal manner that does not include a judge or magistrate and is not in a courtroom setting.*

(03)

PRE-INITIAL APPEARANCE DIVERSION



“The redirection of youth to intervention services prior to an initial appearance before a judge or magistrate.

This does not apply to any pre-trial or post-adjudication diversion.”

**As defined by the Supreme Court of Ohio*

WHY CONSIDER DIVERSION?

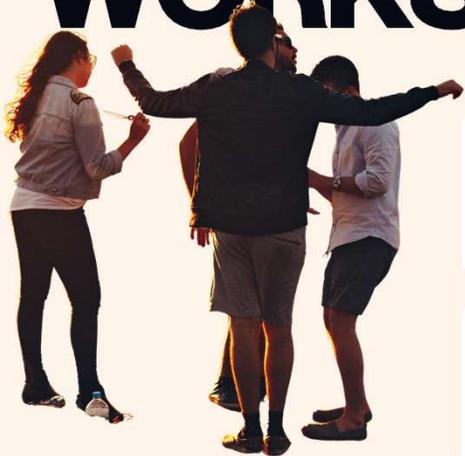
(04)

- The **further a youth goes** in the juvenile justice system, **the harder it is for them to get out** - and they become **more likely to recidivate**.
- Youth **can still be held accountable** for their actions **without formal court involvement** - particularly through **community-based approaches** and **restorative justice**.
- Diversion is **more cost effective** and **saves dollars/community resources** through lower court costs in the short-term, and future legal costs in the long-term from potential rearrests, court appearances, and incarceration.



WHY DIVERSION WORKS BEST

(05)



Reduces Recidivism

Better Long-Term Outcomes

Aligned with PYD

Reduces Stigma

PRE-INITIAL APPEARANCE DIVERSION PATHWAYS

(06)



Police Pre-Arrest
Diversion/Deflection



Community & School
Diversion



Diversion through
Resource/Assessment
Centers



Standard Court
Diversion

WAYS **RECLAIM** DOLLARS CAN SUPPORT PRE-INITIAL APPEARANCE DIVERSION

*Note: The items below are not an exhaustive list and only provide examples of the few ways RECLAIM can support diversion practices.



Direct Court Staff



Screening & Assessment Tools



Pro-Social Activities & Tutoring



Parent Support Classes (i.e. Parent Project)



On-Line Courses (i.e. Third Millennium)



Restitution



Restorative Justice Contract Services



Development of Resource & Assessment Centers

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FOR DIVERSION PROGRAMS

- The Ohio Department of Youth Services **does not determine** which offenses are or are not eligible for diversion.
- The Ohio Department of Youth Services **encourages courts** to allow appropriate youth more than one opportunity in diversion.
- RECLAIM dollars **can be used** to support restitution for youth in diversion programs. ODYS does not have a limit on how much can be used towards restitution per youth.
- Diversion **should not mirror** or be an “informal” probation.
- Diversion programs funded with ODYS Grant dollars must follow the **core elements of diversion** in line with evidence-based practices.

DIVERSION CORE ELEMENTS



- Youth do not see a judge or magistrate
- Use of a brief screening
- Individualized Diversion Agreement
- Limited interactions
- Shortened length of stay

DATA FOR RECLAIM FUNDED DIVERSION PROGRAMS ⁽¹⁰⁾

	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Diversion - Successful	80.7%	84.4%	85.2%
Diversion - Outcome Achieved <small>*12 month post-completion recidivism measure</small>	85.2%	84.2%	81.7%

FY 2022 - 2024 COMPARISON

MARSY'S LAW & JUVENILE DIVERSION



- VICTIMS MUST BE NOTIFIED
- VICTIMS MUST BE HEARD
- COURT'S MUST HAVE WRITTEN PROCEDURES DETAILING THEIR PROCESS IN COMPLIANCE WITH MARSY'S LAW

THE FINAL FOUR Tournament of T's

TALENT

TRAUMA INFORMED

TIME

TRANSFORMATIVE



TALENT

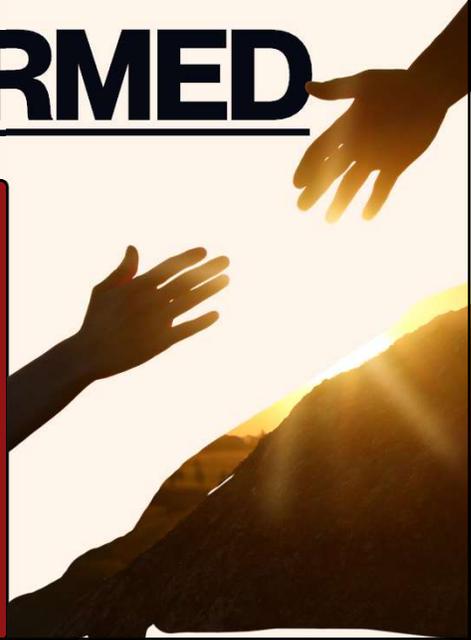
- Motivational Interviewing, Strength-Based
- With Them - By Them - For Them
- Identify - Develop - Release



“If you can’t see a child’s worth, neither can they”

Author Unknown

TRAUMA-INFORMED



- Assessments, Mental Health Collaboration
- Prioritize Physical and Emotional Safety
- Establish Trust and Transparency
- Reduce Potential Triggers

“Nine times out of ten, the story behind the misbehavior won’t make you angry; it will break your heart”

Annette Breaux

TIME

- Quality Time
- Community Time
- Measurable Timed Success
- Least Restrictive Time to Complete Terms



“The more proactive time we spend connecting youth to positive, community resources, yields less reactive time spent removing from the community. This is an equitable investment.”

E.T. Parker, III

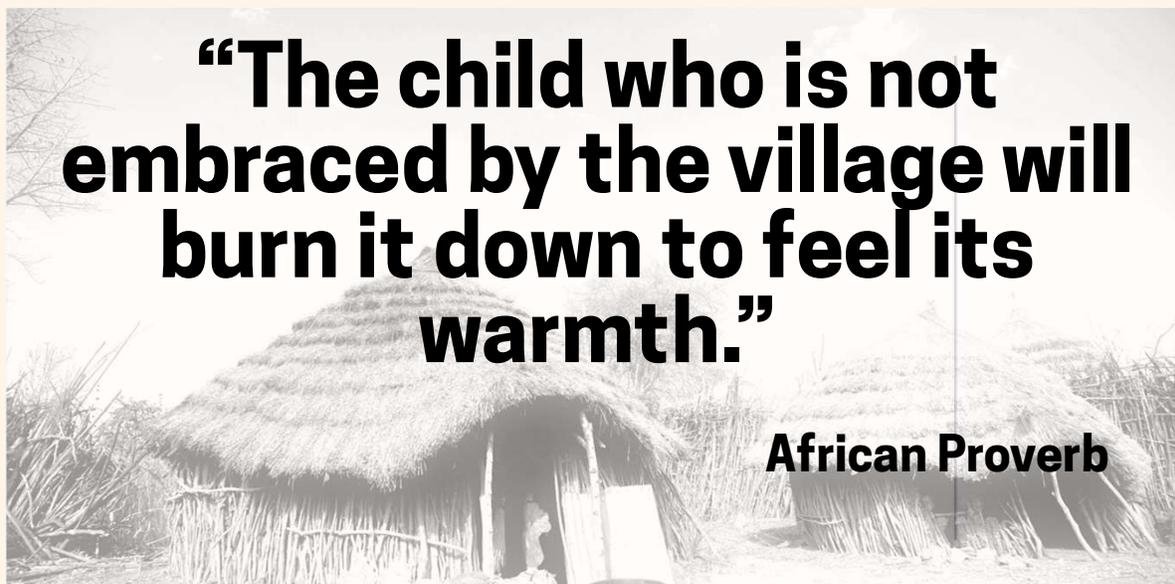
TRANSFORMATIVE

- Restorative Justice
- Empathy
- Prepare Bracket Busters



“The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.”

African Proverb



THANK YOU



Contact Us!

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BRACKETOLOGY 2026

Forward Thinking Best Practices in Juvenile Justice

Reverend Eddie Tyes Parker, III

Juvenile Justice Consultant

Opening Tip-Off

Welcome to Bracketology 2026 — where strategy meets championship-level intentionality. Like March Madness, juvenile justice success requires strong fundamentals, disciplined execution, teamwork, measurable outcomes, and belief in every contender. Our youth are not long shots — they are future champions.

The Final Four Framework

Tournament of T's: Talent • Trauma-Informed • Time • Transformative

1. Talent

Motivational Interviewing • Strength-Based Practices • With Them–By Them–For Them • Identify–Develop–Release. 2026 Best Practice: Embed youth voice in program design, expand culturally responsive mentorship pipelines, and use ethical data-informed assessments to unlock strengths.

“If you can't see a child's worth, neither can they.” — Author Unknown

2. Trauma-Informed

Comprehensive Assessments • Mental Health Collaboration • Safety • Trust • Trigger Reduction. 2026 Best Practice: Expand cross-system collaboration among courts, schools, and behavioral health providers while maintaining confidentiality and trauma-responsive environments.

“Nine times out of ten, the story behind the misbehavior won’t make you angry; it will break your heart.” — Annette Breaux

3. Time

Quality Time • Community Time • Measurable Timed Success • Least Restrictive Completion. 2026 Best Practice: Reduce unnecessary detention, expand diversion pathways, and measure long-term stability over short-term compliance.

“The more proactive time we spend connecting youth to positive community resources yields less reactive time removing them from the community. This is an equitable investment.” — E. T. Parker, III

4. Transformative

Restorative Justice • Empathy • Prepare Bracket Busters. 2026 Best Practice: Expand restorative circles, community-based alternatives, family engagement strategies, and youth leadership councils.

“The child who is not embraced by the village will burn it down to feel its warmth.” — African Proverb

Closing Championship Charge

Championship systems do not focus solely on winning cases — they focus on winning futures. When we seed opportunity, coach with compassion, measure impact, and invest in transformation, we create a justice system where every young person has a pathway to victory.

