Essex / Caledonia (JDO) Summary

2025 YJ Summit Group Discussion Notes

1. Practice Priorities • Expand restorative approaches such as Family Group Conferencing, restorative circles, and diversion before court. • Make planning and meeting processes more youth- and family-centered, with stronger preparation before meetings. • Use independent facilitation or neutral coordination where helpful to strengthen trust and clarity. • Create more early intervention and front-end problem solving before cases escalate. • Increase consistency in how restorative practice is used across settings and partners.	**2. Partnerships & Collaboration** • Build regular interagency or provider meetings to improve communication, coordination, and shared problem-solving. • Clarify roles, expectations, and referral pathways across schools, courts, DCF, BARJ, law enforcement, and community partners. • Ensure the right people are at the table and that families understand who is present and why. • Increase face-to-face relationship building and trust across agencies and with families. • Strengthen wraparound and community-based responses rather than relying only on court-driven processes.
3. Supports & Resources Needed • Provide more training on restorative practice, Family Group Conferencing, youth engagement, and trauma-informed work. • Add supports such as mentors, family advocates, engagement specialists, transportation help, and community-based activities. • Increase mental health, substance use, and behavioral health resources for youth, families, and staff. • Invest in staffing, protected time, and funding so restorative options are practical to implement. • Use data, success stories, and pilot efforts to guide improvement and build buy-in.	**4. Culture & Leadership** • Shift from compliance, blame, and bureaucracy toward relationships, trust, accountability, and repair. • Create more even playing fields across systems and reduce adversarial dynamics. • Support staff through retention efforts, clearer priorities, flexibility, and stronger office culture. • Keep the focus on child, youth, and family outcomes rather than process alone. • Model restorative values through shared leadership, transparency, and ongoing learning across the system.