

**AGENDA**  
**JTDC ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**Wednesday, May 20, 2026**  
**LOCATION: 69 W. WASHINGTON, Conference Rm. F, 22nd fl.**  
**TIME: 12 NOON TO 2 P.M.**

If you plan on attending, please RSVP by Friday May 15 to [meadepalidofsky@gmail.com](mailto:meadepalidofsky@gmail.com).  
Please arrive by 11:45 A.M, in order that we can start promptly.

**AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Introductions
3. Approval of March 4, 2026 Board minutes
4. Chief Justice Beach's vision and priorities for Juvenile Justice reform
  - a. Judge Kathryn M. Vahey, Deputy Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Justice Division
  - b. Sara Hemmeter, Director of Juvenile Services
5. Update on status of Saura Center
  - a. Nicholas Brown, Program Director, SAFETY initiative programs, at Heartland Human Care Services
6. New Business
7. Adjourn

**Next JTDC Advisory Board Meeting: Wednesday, September 9, 12 to 2 p.m. Conf. Rm. F,  
County Building 69 W. Washington, 22nd fl.**

Join the meeting through Microsoft Teams by clicking the link below

**Microsoft Teams meeting**

**Join:** <https://teams.microsoft.com/meet/240319990369738?p=SmEGvYpK7sxQBAwbha>

Meeting ID: 240 319 990 369 738

Passcode: 7zW3SB3a

**Please Note:** If you are unable to access the Teams link, please open the Microsoft Teams app on your device and enter

Meeting ID: 240 319 990 369 738

Passcode: 7zW3SB3a

**SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES:**

**HONORABLE KATHRYN M. VAHEY** is the Deputy Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Justice Division. She was elected to the Circuit Court in 2018 and re-elected in 2024. She received a B.A. in elementary education from Canisius University in 1992 and an M.A. in Spanish and Iberian studies at Middlebury College in Madrid Spain in 1993. She spent a year working as a caseworker at St. Vincent Services in Brooklyn, New York before completing a J.D. at Loyola University Chicago School of Law in 1998.

After graduating from Law School, Judge Vahey began her legal career as an assistant Public Defender with the Law Office of the Cook County Public Defender where her assignments included the Felony Trial Court, as well as the Problem-Solving Courts, including the Drug Treatment Court and the Veteran Treatment Court. She continued in that capacity until her election to the bench.

**SARA HEMMETER** was appointed as the first Director of Juvenile Services; a newly established leadership role designed to transform and strengthen the county's juvenile justice system. Director Hemmeter will oversee both juvenile detention and probation, ensuring alignment across departments and advancing a unified, evidence-based approach.

Director Hemmeter, originally from Markham, brings more than 20 years of experience in juvenile justice, child welfare, and legal advocacy, with a career dedicated to system reform and improved outcomes for at-risk youth.

Director Hemmeter will lead efforts to align juvenile probation and detention practices under a unified strategy focused on improving outcomes for youth that come in contact with Cook County's Juvenile Justice System. Her priorities will include reducing reliance on detention while maintaining public safety, strengthening programming and conditions within detention, expanding community-based and evidence-based services, and advancing trauma-informed, data-driven approaches to policy and practice.

She earned her Juris Doctor from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Texas at Austin.

Director Hemmeter will begin her role on Monday May 18, 2026.