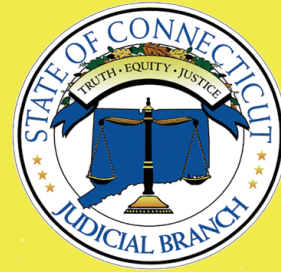


CSSD Chronicle

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Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) System and the Family Support Program: Building Stronger and Safer Bonds with Connecticut's Court-Involved Youth

What is TCI? In the 1980s, under a grant from the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect, Cornell University developed the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) system, an alternative method for residential child care organizations to reduce their reliance on high-risk response practices such as physical restraint and isolation. According to Cornell University literature, the objective of the TCI program is to provide care workers with the skills and knowledge to help youth change poor emotional habits, destructive responses, and maladaptive behavior patterns in stressful situations.

CSSD has been successfully utilizing the TCI model in juvenile residential settings since January 2009, after Cornell University trainers came to Connecticut to educate select CSSD detention staff and contractors on its use. The model has since been the cornerstone of Juvenile Residential Services risk reduction efforts and has been a successful tool to reduce recidivism as well as provide a safer environment for juvenile detainees and residential staff.



CSSD Juvenile Residential Services staff, and contracted providers, join TCI trainers Zelma Smith and Andrea Turnbull at the April TCI re-training seminar.

Re-training the Trainers In February 2011, Cornell University trainers Zelma Smith, LMSW and Andrea Turnbull, M.A., LMHC, QS instructed fourteen of the original CSSD and contracted facility staff on the 6th edition of TCI. The seminar, held over two days, focused on the revisions made to the four modules of the TCI program since its original debut. Highlights of the new TCI edition presented to staff included:

- **Crisis Prevention** – Information was provided on how most crises can be prevented by building relationships and rapport with juveniles, establishing routines and activities that meet the juvenile's needs, and providing a safe and predictable environment.
- **Crisis as an Opportunity** – Information was provided on the effects of trauma on a juvenile's behavior along with introspective activities to help staff understand how their own values, feelings, attitudes, perceptions, training, and beliefs about juveniles affects their professional response in a crisis situation.
- **De-Escalating the Crisis** – A new emotional "first aid" activity for juveniles who have difficulty managing their level of stress in a pre-crisis situation was introduced to staff. They were instructed in ways to listen to the juvenile, help the juvenile regain focus, and remind the juvenile of expectations. This type of support can be enough to help the juvenile in the moment and prevent a crisis.
- **Managing the Crisis** – Information and training was provided to staff on co-regulation strategies. As caregivers start helping children learn ways to manage their emotions during high stress situations, youth can develop

self-regulation skills on their own to de-escalate and prevent future destructive responses to crises.

According to CSSD Program Manager Patricia Nunez, the CSSD and contracted facility staff were fully engaged in the re-training sessions, asked a lot of questions, and shared real examples of TCI's effectiveness when dealing with children in crisis. "The use of physical restraints and child isolation for out-of-control behavior has dramatically declined in our residential facilities since the introduction of TCI," said Nunez. "We have fully embraced TCI and its principles because we know it works."

CSSD personnel who attended the TCI 6th edition seminar by Smith and Turnbull are now holding in-service classes for the rest of juvenile detention staff. The full day classes, which began at the end of April, will be conducted through October.

New family support program Research has shown that court-involved juveniles with poor family connections and communication are at risk to recidivate. Constructive parent engagement in the lives of juveniles is a primary key to juvenile well-being, positive growth, and recovery. In addition, positive parent presence, behaviors, and relationships with juveniles have been linked to decreased rates of future court involvement and incarceration.

With this research in mind, a new risk-reduction initiative for court-involved youth was introduced by CSSD in early April to facilitate increased family contact with juveniles in detention. The "Family Support Program: Encouraging Advocacy, Communication and Resilience" was developed by Yale Behavioral Health and is being piloted in New Haven Detention.

Currently, parents are contacted at the time of the juvenile's admission to notify them of the admission and obtain information and permission to treat their child. Classification and Program Officers also make weekly contact with parents to update them on their child's progress. Weekly parent groups and monthly family events are scheduled at the facilities to encourage family involvement and maintain communication among family members. At the end of the child's stay, discharge plans are sent home to the parent.

CSSD's new model builds on current practice by adding two additional components: Individual Motivational Interviewing focused on the family during intake and during the child's stay; and an Outcome and Evaluation Component where families work with detention and probation staff to document their goals and action plans once the child is released from detention. The model recognizes the challenges involved in designing contact services for family members of detained youth. These include short (and unpredictable) lengths of stay for the juveniles) and limited ability of the parent to visit the detention centers because of lack of transportation, child care needs, and/or job schedules. Therefore, the model is flexible and allows the use of telephonic and video conferencing, along with in-person contact. "The success of the family engagement pilot is predicated on the collaborative efforts of everyone involved," said Jeff Davis, Manager of Juvenile Residential Services. "We hope to impact the parent-child relationship by strengthening communication channels."

Jack Fitzgerald, former Superintendent of New Haven Detention Center, is also supportive of the program. "Parents have a series of emotions to overcome when their child is first placed in Juvenile Detention," said Fitzgerald. "The family engagement intervention allows them to quickly work with professionals to identify a personal plan of involvement that will hopefully impact not only their juvenile's detention stay but their future interaction in their child's life."

Following a successful roll-out in New Haven, CSSD plans to implement the Family Support Program statewide. "My vision is to see family visits increase at all the detention centers," said Karl Alston, Deputy Director for Juvenile Residential Services, "as well as a reduction in recidivism rates."

For more information on the Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) system, or the Family Support Program, contact Patricia Nunez at 860-721-2129 or Patricia.Nunez@jud.ct.gov.

*The **CSSD Chronicle** is a regular publication of information and news about the Court Support Services Division. Questions or comments on this edition, or suggestions for future articles, can be directed to Linda.Grzeika@jud.ct.gov*