

State of Connecticut



Judicial Branch and Department of Children and Families



We are pleased to share the Joint Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan for FY 2013 – FY 2016. This plan is the second between the Judicial Branch and the Department of Children and Families. Starting with the original joint strategic plan published in 2006, the agencies have been working in formal partnership with their sister agencies, service providers, families, advocates, and other stakeholders to guide the vision and mission of the juvenile justice system in Connecticut. While the vision, mission and guiding principles remain the same, the goals have been refined to reflect the progress that has been made over the last decade, and the work still to be done to make Connecticut’s juvenile justice system as effective as possible for children and their families and all the citizens of this state.

Under the last strategic plan, we made incredible strides, including but not limited to:

- Established the family support centers to divert status offenders from formal court processing, and eliminated the use of detention for FWSN violators;
- Expanded efforts to address juvenile’s educational needs by providing educational consultants, educational advocates and special education attorneys to assist staff and families;
- Began to reduce school-based arrests through data collection and reporting, diversion to emergency mobile psychiatric services, and use of school-police memorandum of agreements (MOAs);
- Established the Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs) to raise awareness of juvenile justice issues, including but not limited to, identifying service gaps, and partnering with the state to create change at the community level;
- Reduced reliance on residential treatment and out-of-state facilities allowing for families and children to more effectively engage in treatment together;
- Closed a juvenile detention center;
- Expanded the continuum of evidenced-based community services (e.g., MST, MDFT, MTFC, FFT, BSFT, TF-CBT, Mentoring, MET/CBT, TARGET, ART, IICAPS);
- Raised the age of juvenile jurisdictional to include 16 and 17 year olds and introduced services specifically for older adolescents;
- Reduced disproportionate minority contact (DMC) at multiple points of the juvenile justice system;
- Introduced trauma services and efforts to make practitioners and system stakeholders more trauma-informed;

- Hired Clinical Coordinators and developed a quality assurance program for court-based evaluations to improve the quality of clinical information provided to the Court and treatment providers;
- Bolstered efforts to use validated risk/needs screening and assessment instruments and coaching and quality assurance for staff;
- Increased collaboration between multiple state agencies (e.g., CSSD/DCF, DCF/DSS/CSSD, SDE/DCF/CSSD, DCF/DMHAS/CSSD, DCF/DOL/CSSD);
- Developed an information-sharing guide to assist system practitioners in understanding what information is available for sharing consistent with the law;
- Improved data collection and reporting in order to monitor the system;
- Expanded the use of juvenile review boards and our partnership with the Youth Service Bureaus;
- Increased involvement of family partners through staff development, case management and discharge planning efforts, and collaboration with family advocacy organizations;
- Closed the loop hole in education law and identified responsible parties for education of students in detention;
- Established a minimum age for court referral and standards for juvenile competency;
- Modified the juvenile transfer law to provide for a hearing in juvenile court to determine venue;
- Improved the quality of programming at CJTS and the detention centers; and
- Improved efforts to work with persons with limited English proficiency and provide culturally competent services.

Connecticut has become increasingly recognized at the national level for its collaborative effort to transform the juvenile justice system into a more developmentally appropriate and effective system that helps children and youth grow into law-abiding and productive adults, while maintaining public safety. For example,

- Juvenile court intake decreased 27% from FY 2007-2012;
- Detention admissions reduced from 2,500 to 2,100 for the same time period, even with the inclusion of 16 and 17 years old into the system in January 2010 and July 2012, respectively;
- The wait for court-ordered hospitalization decreased from 45 days in 2001 to 9 days in 2012;
- Juvenile commitments to DCF decreased by 70% from 687 in 1999 to 206 in 2012; and
- The 24-month re-arrest rate declined from 66% in 2007 to 61% in 2012.

While Connecticut has accomplished so much, children, youth, families and citizens still require our best effort to keep children and youth out of the system whenever possible, and to improve the services for those children and youth in the system. This new strategic plan includes the expansion of the elements above, as well as additional strategic initiatives in response to the changing needs of the state, and reflects our increased knowledge about the needs of children and youth, particularly the impact of trauma on development and behavior, and what works to successfully meet those needs. This strategic plan aligns with the mission/vision and goals of the Department of Children and Families and the Judicial Branch overall, as well as with sister state agencies and community partners, as we are all responsible in our respective ways to support and protect the citizens of this state, both young and old.

Special thanks and appreciation must be given to the many individuals who have worked diligently to prepare this ambitious and coordinated strategic plan. These individuals represent the following agencies and groups who participate on Executive Implementation Team (EIT), which oversees the joint strategic plan, and other stakeholders who provided input and feedback for the new plan: the Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs), Connecticut Youth Services Association, Department of Education, Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Department of Labor, Department of Social Services, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Chief State's Attorney, Office of the Child Advocate, Office of Policy and Management and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Council, Office of the Victim Advocate, Children's Behavioral Health Advisory Council, Connecticut Association of Chiefs of Police, Connecticut Association of Public School Superintendents, Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, Center for Children's Advocacy, parents and advocates from African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP) and the Family Advocacy Organization for Children's Mental Health (FAVOR), The Tow Foundation, the Department of Children and Families and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch.

As in our previous plan, we will continue to utilize Results Based Accountability (RBA) as the framework to measure our success. Through RBA, we have realized tremendous gains in nearly all of our process measures and outcomes; most importantly, in declines in court and detention intake, commitments, and recidivism, even with the inclusion of 16 and 17 year olds. Working together we will achieve the goals we have outlined for the next three years. We encourage you to review the new plan and to think about how you can make a contribution. We are confident that together we will continue to protect the community and to provide the best services possible for the children, youth and families at-risk or involved with the juvenile justice system.

Honorable Carol A. Wolven
Chief Administrative Judge for Juvenile Matters
Judicial Branch

Joette Katz
Commissioner
Department of Children and Families

August 2013

Vision

The children, youth and families of Connecticut will live in safe, nurturing communities that provide for their needs, recognize their strengths, and support their success.

Mission

The mission of the Connecticut juvenile justice system is to collaboratively promote and administer prevention, justice and effective treatment in a fair, timely, and appropriate manner with dignity and respect for the individual needs of children, youth and families.

Guiding Principles

The Connecticut juvenile justice system is a collaborative effort that includes families, schools, police, community organizations, service providers, advocates, municipalities and state agencies. Every person and every agency serving children and youth has a duty to ensure that all are treated with fundamental fairness and afforded their constitutional rights. Our strategy for an effective juvenile justice system involves developing a coordinated continuum of services at both the state and local level that is guided by a common set of principles. These principles represent fundamental beliefs that guide the overall operation of the system: its services, policies, and the relationships forged with children, youth and families. All are deserving of the very best efforts of a collaborative juvenile justice system that identifies and provides resources that address needs, and builds on strengths, skills and competencies.

We support the investment of money, staff and other resources in primary prevention efforts to promote the healthy development of our children and youth. As members of a collaborative juvenile justice system, we are committed to preventing system involvement of at-risk children and youth, as well as preventing further contact for those boys and girls already involved. The following principles guide our best efforts to work more effectively on behalf of the children, youth and families of Connecticut.

1. **The Whole Child.** We acknowledge that children and youth are more than their behavior. We are committed to serving the whole child, and to considering the physical, emotional, developmental, cultural, and spiritual aspects that contribute to a child's experience and way of interacting with the world. We acknowledge that a child's gender is fundamental in this experience.
2. **Child- and Family-Informed Collaboration and Partnerships.** We acknowledge that families need to be involved in decision-making and treatment planning. It is our responsibility to build relationships with families, hear their concerns, learn from them, and support their strengths. We will include parents, family members, and caregivers, as well as children and youth, at every decision making level within the juvenile justice system.

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3. **Elimination of Disproportionate Minority Contact.** We do not accept that the overrepresentation of minority children and youth in the justice system is beyond our control. We are committed to eliminating the disparity of response that emerges based on race and ethnicity.
4. **Diversity.** We are committed to understanding and respecting the diverse and unique characteristics of the children, youth and families we serve. The juvenile justice system will operate with dignity and respect for all people.
5. **Community Safety.** We acknowledge that some children, youth and families are particularly vulnerable due to living in poverty and high crime neighborhoods. We are committed to promoting prevention and community safety through the development of ongoing partnerships with municipalities, community organizations and neighborhood groups to strengthen the communities in which children, youth and families live. At the same time, we will support children and youth in learning about responsibility and accountability for their actions.
6. **Repairing the Effects of Harm.** We acknowledge that traumatic experiences and the effects of poverty have a significant impact on children, youth and families. We understand the differences in how girls and boys experience and cope with trauma. We will create a trauma-informed juvenile justice system with policies, practices, and programs that acknowledge the unique risks, strengths, differences and developmental needs of children, youth and families.
7. **Education.** We will ensure that court-involved children and youth receive an appropriate education within their communities, whenever possible. For those children who are placed outside their communities, we will facilitate an effective re-entry to local education systems prior to their return.
8. **Coordinated Continuum of Services.** We are committed to interagency collaboration and partnership to develop a continuum of appropriate and effective services, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment. We will focus on identifying the strengths of children, youth and families; serving their needs at the earliest point in time and in the least restrictive environment; and providing outreach and services in their home communities. We will provide programs targeted to individual needs.
9. **Access.** We will continually strive to create equal and timely access to services regardless of where a child lives or a family's means, so that all children and youth have the opportunity to become productive members of society.
10. **Evidence-Based and Promising Practices.** We will use research-based principles and promising practices to effectively intervene with children, youth and families, and to concentrate on the reduction of recidivism for those children and youth already in the system. We will invest in services that show positive outcomes, particularly the reduction of delinquent behaviors, and will evaluate programs for effectiveness.

Strategic Goals

Goal # 1 – State agencies and community partners will support public safety by working together to reduce recidivism.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Increase public awareness of the negative impact of school-based arrests on student and school outcomes, and provide support to improve student and school safety.
 - a. Work with the LISTs to engage police and school districts to reduce arrests.
 - b. Convene the 10 school districts with the highest arrest rates and offer support.
 - c. Expand the use of School-Police MOAs, the School-based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) model, and other related initiatives.
2. Implement training and policy to reduce arrests of children and youth in congregate care settings (e.g., residential, group home, shelter, hospital).
 - a. Provide behavior management training for congregate care staff and assist them in implementing effective programs.
 - b. Revise congregate care policies for contacting police, and require providers to implement a graduated response approach for children and youth with mental health concerns and challenging behaviors.
 - c. Juvenile Probation Supervisors will return referrals of congregate care arrests that do not warrant court intervention.
 - d. Provide the EIT with a quarterly congregate care arrest report to monitor the progress on efforts to reduce arrests.
 - e. In collaboration with key stakeholders, review the quality of programming in the congregate care continuum.
 - f. Review the efficiency and effectiveness of the placement process, and the appropriateness of matches and availability of resources to meet specific and individual needs.
3. Identify and intervene with children and youth affiliated with or at-risk of gang involvement.
4. Evaluate the current discharge planning process and improve as necessary to successfully transition children and youth.

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Goal #2 – State agencies and community partners will divert children and youth from court involvement through early intervention efforts.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Implement a memorandum of agreement for interagency case handling of young children (ages 7 to 13) referred to court.
2. Expand efforts to identify behavioral health concerns at school and refer families to appropriate community providers in lieu of arrest, including but not limited to, the expansion of the School-based Diversion Initiative, the Pediatric-Psychiatric Co-Management model, and School-based Health Centers.
3. Expand efforts to train school staff, police officers, juvenile justice personnel and contractors in behavioral health concerns, including autism, and how to effectively deal with adolescents and the effects of trauma.
4. Encourage police officers to use their discretion by expanding the availability of Juvenile Review Boards.
5. Implement a Juvenile Review Board Statewide Coordinator position to provide technical assistance, training, policy development and data collection and analysis.
6. Encourage communities to use restorative justice and mediation approaches to address student conflict and minor delinquent behavior in the community (e.g., disorderly conduct, breach of peace, assault 3rd, vandalism, criminal mischief).
7. Support the implementation of evidence-based services at child guidance clinics and youth service bureaus (e.g., TF-CBT, MATCH, FFT, BSFT).
8. Expand access to the Family Support Centers in order to divert all FWSN referred children and youth from court involvement.
9. Encourage the LISTs to work with schools and parents to implement effective truancy reduction strategies.
10. Expand the availability of evidence-based adolescent substance abuse treatment services and peer supports.

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Goal #3 – Children and youth will be cared for in safe environments while receiving services through the system.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Convene a stakeholder workgroup to review the types and quality of gender-responsive out-of-home programming currently available to girls and boys, and improve and/or expand access to quality and appropriate services, as needed.
2. Expand efforts to increase community awareness and identification of the effects of trauma on behavior, and develop programming to effectively identify and meet these needs prior to court involvement and subsequent to referral.
3. Implement the provisions of the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

Goal #4 – Children and youth involved with the juvenile justice system will have access to developmentally appropriate, culturally competent, and linguistically appropriate services to meet their mental health, substance abuse, educational, vocational, life skill and gender needs.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Expand access to mental health services, trauma treatment, substance abuse treatment, vocational training, and respite beds through coordinated planning and procurement.
2. Ensure that the services needed by older adolescents are being developed and made available. Continue to evaluate the need and effectiveness of services for this new population in the juvenile justice system.
3. Develop interagency protocols to ensure that the needs of young adults (ages 18-20) involved in the juvenile justice system are successfully linked to services through DMHAS and DDS as needed (e.g., hospitalization, congregate care, supportive housing, community-based services and supports).
4. Work with local education agencies and parents to provide appropriate educational services for youth with excessive absenteeism, low academic achievement, suspension/expulsion, alternative placements, or special education needs.
5. Expand the availability of educational advocacy and consultation to juvenile justice system staff and families.
6. Ensure that educational and vocational needs are included as key elements in case planning and management.

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7. Ensure that children and youth have timely and supportive reentry to school upon exit from congregate care settings.
8. Provide youth with developmentally appropriate transitional and aftercare services as they step down to less restrictive settings or reintegrate into their communities from congregate care settings.
9. Expand workforce development efforts to provide culturally competent and linguistically appropriate staff and services.
10. Disaggregate service utilization and outcome data by age groups, gender and race/ethnicity for review on a regular basis.
11. Convene a multi-stakeholder workgroup to discuss the needs of adolescents ages 14-17 who have been transferred to the adult system.

Goal #5 – State agencies and community partners will work together to eliminate the overrepresentation and disparate treatment of children and youth of color in the juvenile justice system.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Develop a coordinated plan to reduce DMC through training, education, memorandum of agreement, and local strategy development and implementation support. Report the relative rate index (RRI) annually for the 8 decision points in the juvenile justice system.
2. Review the impact of Violations of Probation and Suspended Detention Orders on DMC and develop strategies to reduce violations.
3. Implement a policy of graduated responses and case teaming to ensure that adolescents on parole and in congregate care receive services in the least restrictive setting as determined by a DCF multidisciplinary team.
4. Expand the use of the Identification of Disproportionate Reporting Management Tool (IDIR) to monitor disparate treatment in congregate care settings.
5. Participate in the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) public awareness campaign regarding Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), including the practitioner survey, biennial reporting, and the 4th Assessment Study sponsored by the JJAC.
6. Service utilization and outcome data will be disaggregated by race/ethnicity and reviewed on a regular basis.

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7. Review court referral and case processing data and access to services by court location and area office on a regular basis in order to promote greater consistency in resources and outcomes across the state.
8. Study the prevalence of cross-over youth and the factors, policies and procedures that contribute to juvenile justice involvement.

Goal #6 – State agencies and community partners will engage parents and youth in the juvenile justice system and the decision-making process.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Develop and provide forums to educate families on the functioning of the juvenile justice system, available resources, and how to successfully partner with system professionals.
2. Implement a staff and provider family engagement training and coaching plan.
3. Implement strategies to address cultural and language barriers.
4. Promote family visitation and participation in treatment planning and case conferences for children and youth in out-of-home settings by assisting with transportation, child care, and translation needs.
5. Support family participation at LIST meetings and other juvenile justice planning and policy venues through access to parent leadership training and stipends for participation.
6. Develop a youth leadership training program and provide meaningful opportunities to include the youth voice in policy and planning.
7. Implement means to collect family and youth feedback on the system, and make this feedback available to managers and supervisors on a regular basis.

Goal #7 – State agencies and community partners will collaborate to provide effective and efficient delivery of services to children, youth and families.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Continue efforts to decrease the length of wait in detention for inpatient evaluation and congregate care placements.
2. Develop policy and protocols, based on the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform Cross-Over Youth Practice Model, for information sharing and joint case planning and management for children and youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

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3. Develop a data reporting system to understand the prevalence of cross-over youth by region, including but not limited to, the number of child welfare youth in detention, efforts to coordinate case planning and management, and progress made to reduce numbers and improve outcomes.
4. Develop memoranda of understanding to share data on joint populations and assess joint outcomes including recidivism.
5. Increase awareness of information-sharing rules and develop a strategy to educate staff, contracted providers and other stakeholders.
6. Establish regular cross-agency trainings and forums to promote better understanding and working relationships across agencies, stakeholder groups and systems.

Goal #8 – State agencies will support advances in information technology to improve data resources and information sharing between state agencies and community partners/stakeholders.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Provide timely and accurate data to the LISTs and other stakeholders.
2. Develop a RBA report on the juvenile justice system summarizing the activity in the system, advances made, challenges ahead, and focus for the next year to submit to the EIT on an annual basis. Data points will include:
 - * Disproportionate minority contact
 - * Diversion
 - * Transfers to the adult system
 - * Risk and need levels of the court-referred population
 - * Education profile of the court-referred population
 - * Cross-over youth prevalence
 - * CSSD and DCF service utilization including unmet demand
 - * Recidivism rates for probation, parole, CJTS, juvenile review boards, and family support centers
3. Develop additional outcome measures to complement reports on recidivism reduction.
4. Establish an efficient system for the collection and transfer of allowed client information among state agencies and between state and community agencies.

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Goal #9 – Strengthen the LISTs to meet strategic goals at the regional and local levels.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Support the LISTs through infrastructure building, training, data sharing and technical assistance.
2. Support increased family participation in the LISTs.
3. Increase community awareness of the LISTs through marketing efforts and making information available via the web.
4. Encourage LISTs to collaborate with other stakeholder groups involved in children and youth issues (e.g., Community Collaboratives, Early Childhood Councils, Regional Action Councils, Prevention Councils).
5. Promote prosocial events at the community level.

Goal # 10 – Maximize funding available to support and evaluate the juvenile justice system.

Strategic Initiatives:

1. Expand opportunities to maximize federal reimbursement through a review of the services contracted by CSSD.
2. Conduct cost/benefit analyses of programs.
3. Reinvest dollars saved through reductions in congregate care and hospitalization.
4. Partner with the Office of Healthcare Advocate to ensure that the state is the payor of last resort.
5. Foster a collaborative relationship between the LISTs and the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC).
6. Engage private funders (e.g., community foundations and private philanthropy) to maximize possible funding sources to support key initiatives.