The Connecticut Juvenile Justice

Strategic Plan:

Building Toward a Better Future

August 2006

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Strategic Planning Process Facilitated by the Child Welfare League of America for the Department of Children and Families – Bureau of Juvenile Services and the Connecticut Judicial Branch – Court Support Services Division in Collaboration with many Public and Private Stakeholders.

Call to Action

No juvenile justice system in Connecticut is acceptable, no matter how effective or well-developed, if that system anticipates increased numbers of children whose opportunities and life prospects are lessened due to early involvement in that system. Prevention provides the most promising outcomes for children, and has been unanimously endorsed throughout this process as the most effective intervention for potential court or juvenile justice involved children. Meeting the spirit of our conviction—to prevent child and youth involvement in the juvenile justice system—requires each state agency and system partner to embrace this objective and implement programs, strategies, and measurements that support child, youth, and family success.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Bureau of Juvenile Services and the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) recognized the need to engage in a joint strategic planning process to expand interagency management efforts to provide greater coordination and services on behalf of children, youth, and families involved with the juvenile justice system. DCF and CSSD entered the strategic planning process with the primary goal of developing an interagency plan outlining an integrated system for planning, implementation, and evaluation of juvenile justice service delivery in Connecticut. However, during the strategic planning process, and especially during the Community Listening Sessions where over 450 parents, children, and youth shared their experiences, fears, concerns, desires, and needs, DCF and CSSD came to view the scope of the work differently due to honest and invaluable input from our family, provider, community, and state agency partners. The agencies realized this work cannot be done in isolation, but must be done in collaboration with parents, the State Department of Education, local school districts, the police, service providers and with other state agencies. While the plan initially focused on children already involved with the juvenile justice system, we broadened our view to include those children who are not yet involved, but are at-risk for school failure, acting out, and delinquent behavior; and deepened our appreciation for the plight of many African-American and Latino boys and young men who are disenfranchised from the education system and workforce and, as a result, have the poorest outcomes for success. We recognize the needs of those youth who require better opportunities to succeed in school, to successfully transition to the world of work, and who are at-risk or involved with the adult criminal justice system.

Commitment to Action

This strategic plan outlines a commitment to building a system that supports children, youth and families at-risk for system involvement, and that cares for those referred to the court due to status offenses, delinquent behavior, or child protection concerns. Goals and action strategies are designed to decrease the number of children and youth being referred to court; to demonstrate a commitment to eliminate the overrepresentation of children and youth of color in the juvenile justice system; to support interagency prevention strategies; to improve access to services through policy changes, better screening to match needs to services, and the expansion of age-appropriate and gender-specific services; to improve services and outcomes through partnerships with parents and communities and better coordinated interagency planning; to increase the sharing of appropriate information and the knowledge of services of parents, teachers, providers and staff so that all parties are well-informed and work together to best serve the child; and to develop court diversion programs to better respond to disruptive school behavior and running away so that children are provided needed services without unnecessary and sometimes detrimental court involvement.

Through the strategic planning process, the stakeholders of the juvenile justice system have developed a close partnership for building a stronger, more responsive, and more effective system grounded in planning, collaboration, and passion. We are committed to partnering with communities to develop community-based interventions that are gender-specific, age-appropriate, and culturally competent, and that focus on keeping children, youth, and families out of the system. We are committed to building a system that is based on what works; that supports families; uses strengths, natural supports, and community-based interventions to safely keep children and youth in their homes and neighborhoods, whenever possible; and that invests in people.

The stakeholders of the Connecticut juvenile justice system engaged in this strategic planning process to define our vision and mission, to articulate our guiding principles, and to present our goals and strategies for the development of a more effective system that diverts children and youth from a life of court involvement. This plan does not hold all the details for achieving the goals, but provides a "best practice strategy" for building a better system and a better future for Connecticut's at-risk children and youth. To realize the mission and vision of the strategic plan and to develop the details needed to execute the plan, the Executive Committee will form a team to oversee its implementation. During the first six months of implementation, the Implementation Team will prioritize the goals, objectives, and action strategies, define the outcome measures for the plan, and develop a budget impact report for the full execution of the plan. Many of the strategies presented in this plan instruct agencies, providers, schools, communities and parents in "best practice" for working together and do not require additional funding. Other recommendations in this plan are unfunded and will require reallocating existing dollars or securing new funds. The Implementation Team will develop the concrete road map for executing the plan to improve the Connecticut juvenile justice system and to achieve better outcomes for the children, youth and families served.

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice System

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 children, youth, and families are deserving of the very best efforts of a collaborative juvenile justice system that identifies and provides resources to 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 will 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 involve parents, family members, and caregivers, as well as children and youth, at every decision making level within the juvenile justice system.
- 3. Elimination of Disparate Responses Based on Race and Ethnicity. 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 in 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 in order 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 intentionally provide programs and services designed specifically for girls, and programs and services designed specifically for boys.
- **9.** Access. We will continually strive to create equal and timely access to services, regardless of where a child lives or a family's financial 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 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.

Goals and Strategies

To realize the mission and vision and to develop the details needed to execute the plan, the Executive Committee will serve as the team to oversee the implementation of the plan. During the first six months after the plan's release, the Implementation Team will prioritize the goals, objectives, and action strategies, define the outcome measures for the plan, and develop a budget impact report for the full execution of the plan. This work will include consideration of both available and requested resources, and any related reallocation of funds.

The goals and strategies presented in this Executive Summary are organized into focus areas—resource development; coordination, collaboration, and information sharing; data analysis; and workforce development—and are also located in the full plan. In the Executive Summary, the goals and strategies are presented in shortened form. In the body of the full plan, they are presented with accompanying objectives that outline the important steps required to achieve each action strategy within each goal.

Resource Development

Goal #1: Reduce the number of children entering the juvenile justice system.

Action Strategy 1A: Support interagency prevention services in order to promote positive youth development and limit court involvement of children, youth, and families (page 19 of the Strategic Plan).

CSSD and DCF should work with community organizations and families to prevent court involvement and support the expansion of non-court-based intervention programs and services. Communities should be engaged in delinquency prevention efforts and resource development. These prevention strategies should intentionally target children and youth of color in activities, which will lead to less institutional and more community-based programs and services for this population.

Comments: DCF and CSSD can work with local advocacy groups, Youth Service Bureaus, Local Education Agencies, Juvenile Review Boards, and other community-based service providers to help children and families access appropriate community-based services that support healthy development and limit court involvement. This work may include the expansion of Juvenile Review Boards, the development of diversion and truancy prevention programs, and the strengthening of recreation and positive youth development activities for children and youth and support services for parents. Supporting interagency prevention is an ongoing action strategy that focuses on coordination and program development, information sharing, and education of agency

staff and local advocates. The foundation for this effort should be established within eighteen months.

Action Strategy 1B: Improve access to services through statutory, regulatory, and policy changes in order to provide early identification and intervention for children, youth, and families in need (page 21 of the Strategic Plan).

DCF and CSSD should address whether statutory and/or policy changes are necessary to ensure the court is not used as a means of accessing services for children, youth and families in need who could be otherwise served without court involvement. This issue is of special concern with children who have a high level of need, but a low level of public safety risk, especially girls and children and youth of color.

Comments: Additional resources may not be needed to achieve this action strategy, however, the multiple steps to review, recommend, and change policies, regulations, and statutes will require significant staff time and at least two years to complete due to the development of potential legislative proposals that may result from this strategy.

Goal #2: Eliminate the overrepresentation of children and youth of color in the justice system.

Action Strategy 2A: Eliminate disproportionate minority contact (DMC) through the establishment of Juvenile Review/Diversion Boards in urban areas in order to divert referrals from the court, and by implementing other statewide efforts to address the systemic causes of Disproportionality (page 21 of the Strategic Plan).

CSSD and DCF should dedicate time and resources to the elimination of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. Objective and comprehensive criteria should be utilized to make decisions regarding risk and need to ensure that children and youth of color are treated fairly and provided equal and appropriate access to quality programs and services.

Comments: The importance and magnitude of this action strategy requires a significant commitment of time and effort from agency staff, advocates, and community members. The establishment of Juvenile Review/Diversion Boards in the urban areas requires planning and continuation of the funding appropriated by Connecticut's governor and legislature in the 2006 session. Implementation of other statewide efforts to address disproportionate minority contact will require the commitment of time and existing resources, and may also require additional funding. This important effort will take at least two years to fully implement, and will remain a focus throughout the five years of the plan.

Goal #3: Improve outcomes for those children and youth already involved in the juvenile justice system through the development and enhancement of programs, policies and procedures.

Action Strategy 3A: Expand the continuum of services through interagency program planning and development to ensure that services are driven by the needs and strengths of children, youth, and their families (page 23 of the Strategic Plan).

DCF and CSSD should expand the continuum of services for court-involved children, youth, and families. Program planning and development should continue to include the review of best practices. Services should be based on developmental needs and the child's, youth's, and family's strengths. Services should also be grounded in research and promising practices that are trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically competent, and gender-responsive.

Comments: This action strategy focuses on ensuring that planned and existing services are designed and implemented based on the strengths of the children, youth and families served by Connecticut's juvenile justice system, and that services meet their needs. The expansion of the continuum of services may require the re-structuring of services, and increased staff education through existing and additional program and training resources. The implementation of this action strategy will take three to five years to achieve.

Action Strategy 3B: Improve the use of screening instruments by Probation and Parole staff, develop support for clinical decision-making by the Court, provide quality assurance for clinical evaluations, and increase access to behavioral health treatment in the community (page 26 of the Strategic Plan).

CSSD and DCF should enhance the use of reliable, standardized, and validated screening instruments and clinical evaluation services to determine the level of risk, need, and appropriate treatment, and should improve access to behavioral health treatment to ensure that children and families are being referred and connected to recommended services that best meet their needs.

Comments: This action strategy focuses on using both existing tools and new screening instruments and procedures to better inform decision-making. It also calls for increased quality assurance for existing clinical evaluations, and increased access to behavioral treatment services in the community. Each component of this action strategy will require planning, training, and monitoring, and each has the potential for increased cost. Because of the comprehensive nature of this action strategy, it will take at least two years to implement.

Action Strategy 3C: Increase the availability of mentors, in-school supports, after school programs, and life skills and vocational training opportunities in the community (page 28 of the Strategic Plan).

In response to the demonstrated desire of families and other stakeholders for increased access to community-based supports, CSSD and DCF should develop strategies to increase the availability of successful, strength-based, non-clinical programs, such as mentoring, in- and after-school programs, educational advocacy, and life skills and job skills to support positive child and youth development.

Comments: It is anticipated that it will take three to five years and additional funding to plan for and establish the services and supports outlined in this action strategy.

Action Strategy 3D: Increase the knowledge of parents, schools, staff, and the courts regarding existing community and agency resources and services through the designation of a resource management coordinator to make such information readily accessible (page 29 of the Strategic Plan).

While Connecticut is a "resource-rich" state, it is challenging to stay informed of all potential services and programs. Organization and education about available resources should be improved to ensure the utilization of the most appropriate option for each child and family.

Comments: The implementation of this action strategy can be accomplished with existing staff and technology resources within the first year. It will require both agencies to designate an existing staff member as a resource management coordinator.

Action Strategy 3E: Increase gender responsive programming for girls (page 30 of the Strategic Plan).

Gender responsive programs are those that intentionally use research and knowledge of female development, socialization, risks, strengths, and needs to affect and guide all aspects of service design and service delivery. Competency in gender specific services, as defined in the "Plan for a Continuum of Community-Based Services for Female Status Offenders and Delinquents" (12/2004), acknowledges that gender, culture, class, race, and ethnicity make a difference. It requires an approach that is relational and strengths-focused, community-based, and family-centered, and addresses substance abuse, the effects of trauma, and behavioral health needs in the lives of girls. Therefore, it is critical that gender-specific services for girls be implemented across the continuum of care, from prevention to aftercare and transitional programming, and that the Connecticut juvenile justice system remains committed to serving girls equitably.

Comments: The creation of a certification system for gender-responsive programming for girls can be accomplished with existing staff and resources. The development of such a system has already begun through the interagency work of the DCF and CSSD Directors of Girls Services. The enhancement and expansion of programs and gender-specific assessments for court-involved girls will require additional funding. These initiatives can be implemented on an ongoing basis, based on re-allocation of existing program resources and the availability of new resources, and

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¹ Benedict (2004) adapted from Maniglia (2000).

will take three to five years to fully accomplish. We believe that approaches and services that prove effective for girls will also increase our knowledge and ability to implement effective trauma-informed services for boys.

Action Strategy 3F: Address programmatic needs of 16- and 17-year-old youth by ensuring access to age-specific services (page 31 of the Strategic Plan).

In response to the need for age-specific and developmentally-appropriate services for 16- and 17-year-old youth referred to court as Youth in Crisis or on criminal matters, CSSD and DCF should develop strategies to provide services specific to the needs of this age group.

Comments: This action strategy will rely on interagency planning and the development and funding of a network of services designed for this underserved population. This work may be supported by legislation to raise the age of juvenile justice jurisdiction, and requires studying the needs of 16- and 17-year-olds and how to appropriately serve them in the juvenile justice system. Additional resources and funding will be necessary to provide appropriate services to this population. We anticipate that full implementation of this action strategy will take three to five years to complete, if funded.

Coordination, Collaboration, and Information Sharing

Goal #1: Partner with parents in service planning and collaboration in order to improve decision making and create better outcomes for children, youth, and families.

Action Strategy 1A: Increase the involvement of parents, families, and parent advocacy groups at the individual case, agency, and system levels (page 32 of the Strategic Plan).

Services and treatment are often provided in isolation from the family. CSSD and DCF recognize that positive parental and family involvement is essential for the success of children in the juvenile justice system. Families should be engaged in all levels of planning and parent advocacy groups should be made partners in delinquency prevention and resource development.

Comments: This action strategy requires DCF and CSSD to ensure intentional involvement of parents, other family members, and parent advocacy groups in program and system development,

and in service planning for individual children and their families. Some strategies, including the provision of translators, transportation, child care, and other engagement activities require additional resources. The implementation of this action strategy may begin immediately, but will take two years and additional resources to fully achieve.

Goal #2: Partner with education professionals to develop strategies for the appropriate exchange of information and the handling of problematic behaviors so that children have access to a full range of services to support their success in school.

Action Strategy 2A: Develop policies and procedures to facilitate the appropriate exchange of information between schools and juvenile justice agencies (page 33 of the Strategic Plan).

In order to ensure that both schools and juvenile justice system agencies provide children with the full range of available supports and services, DCF and CSSD should work with the State Department of Education and the local education agencies to improve information sharing and the coordination of services for children involved with the juvenile justice system.

Comments: This action strategy speaks directly to CSSD and DCF working collaboratively with the State Department of Education and local education agencies to improve information sharing and the coordination of services. The engagement of education professionals on a local basis may be accomplished in the first year. The additional objectives and requisite training will take additional time to accomplish on a statewide basis. The implementation of this action strategy will take three to five years to achieve.

Action Strategy 2B: Partner with local education agencies to develop alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as educational advocates and alternative education programs that serve the child, the school, and the community (page 34 of the Strategic Plan).

Parents, advocates, attorneys, judges, providers, staff, and educators have consistently expressed throughout the planning process their concern that schools are a significant referral resource to the juvenile justice system. DCF, CSSD, the State Department of Education and local education agencies should work together to develop alternative strategies to court referral to address disruptive behaviors.

Comments: This action strategy will rely on the development of working relationships, policies, program services, and alternative education programming, and will require funding. It is anticipated that for full implementation, this strategy will take three to five years to achieve.

Goal #3: Assess the system response to Family with Service Needs (FWSN)-referred children and their families, and ensure effective protocols and programming to increase interagency coordination and access to services.

Action Strategy 3A: Review and modify as needed the implementation of the FWSN protocol (page 35 of the Strategic Plan).

Statewide implementation of the FWSN Protocol should be supported through training and education efforts. Local planning and coordination should occur to ensure that FWSN services meet the needs of families. Efforts to reduce FWSN referrals of at-risk girls should be an intentional focus of this strategy.

Comments: The review of the FWSN Protocol and system response can be accomplished within the first year of implementation without additional resources, staff, or funding. Although the FWSN Protocol, as written, assumes better use of existing services, additional services may be necessary for the protocol to be fully effective.

Action Strategy 3B: Implement a FWSN Diversion Demonstration Program that diverts FWSN referrals from the court to the community for intervention services (page 35 of the Strategic Plan).

Public Act 05-250, effective October 1, 2007, will prohibit the detention of status offenders who violate court orders. The best way to prevent a child from escalating in their involvement with the court is to provide early and effective intervention.

Comments: DCF and CSSD are working to develop a one-day symposium to consider nationally noted, effective practices and services for status offenders. This symposium will include a session for agencies and stakeholders to discuss the incorporation of these best practices into planning for an enhanced system response to Families with Service Needs in Connecticut. The symposium will also serve as a kick-off for an increased FWSN planning effort in Connecticut, which also incorporates the work called for in Action Strategy 3A (review and modify the implementation of the FWSN Protocol). New funds will be needed to develop a FWSN Diversion Demonstration Program to divert FWSN referrals from the court to community-based service providers. A budget proposal will be developed and submitted this fall for consideration by the Legislature for the 2007-2009 biennium budget.

Goal # 4: Ensure that statutes, agency policy, regulations, and procedures support a coordinated juvenile justice system.

Action Strategy 4A: Submit legislative proposals and review and develop as necessary policies and procedures that support coordination and collaboration in service delivery (page 36 of the Strategic Plan).

The establishment of a coordinated juvenile justice system begins with an infrastructure of statutes, policies, and procedures. The work begun in the joint strategic planning process should be continued and supported by both agencies in order to ensure that juvenile justice system partners are working together to meet the needs of children and families.

Comments: The objectives under this action strategy can largely be met without the commitment of additional funding. Instead, the strategy requires the continued commitment of stakeholder time and effort to review, revise, develop, and promote as necessary the policies, statutes, and regulations that will improve system functioning and timely access to services. These efforts can begin immediately upon acceptance of the plan. The majority of strategies can be accomplished in the short-term, however, it will take three years to fully accomplish this objective.

Action Strategy 4B: Identify a demonstration venue to test changes to policy and procedure prior to statewide implementation (page 37 of the Strategic Plan).

A Demonstration Venue is a selected catchment area in which new programs, protocols, and procedures developed through the strategic planning process can first be implemented and evaluated. Such a venue can help to effectively identify successful collaboration, protocols, and procedural change and can address potential challenges to promoting improvement in the juvenile justice system as a whole. In particular, strategies employed through a demonstration venue should be geared toward reducing the number of children entering the court system, eliminating overrepresentation of children and youth of color, and implementing appropriate strategies for identifying at-risk girls and boys.

Comments: The effort to establish a demonstration venue can begin upon acceptance of the plan and will likely continue over the next three to five years. The majority of objectives can be met without the need for additional fiscal resources; however, the possibility of seeking technical assistance or the implementation of model programming may require resources as implementation continues.

Goal #5: Ensure that all parties within the juvenile justice system are educated on confidentiality, information sharing restrictions, and available and sharable data in order to increase knowledge, understanding, and effective working relationships between stakeholders.

Action Strategy 5A: Clarify agency policy and train staff regularly on information sharing (page 37 of the Strategic Plan).

CSSD and DCF should clarify policies and procedures in order to support the necessary and appropriate sharing of information, as determined by law, in order to promote informed decision-making on behalf of clients and families.

Comments: Initial efforts to review and clarify agency policy can be accomplished in the short-term without requiring additional resources. To effectively meet this goal, however, training and informational resources for staff must be developed. The implementation of this action strategy will be a focus of the first two years of the plan.

Goal #6: Develop and implement a uniform release form to facilitate the exchange of necessary and appropriate information between agencies/providers.

Action Strategy 6A: Develop a uniform release of information form to facilitate the exchange of necessary and appropriate information between agencies/providers (page 38 of the Strategic Plan).

DCF and CSSD should create a uniform authorization for release of information form in order to reduce the challenges for families that result from each public agency using a different authorization for release of information form to obtain or share client specific information.

Comments: The development of a uniform release of information form may be done without the commitment of additional fiscal resources. Training and the development of information for parents and staff may require modest funding. Efforts related to this important strategy can begin upon acceptance of the plan and may take two to three years to achieve.

Goal #7: Information should pass seamlessly and promptly among parties involved with a child or family in the juvenile justice system. Parties should be made aware of the child's or family's involvement with other agencies, to the extent permitted by law, in order to facilitate coordinated and collaborative efforts.

Action Strategy 7A: Develop statutory recommendations, policies, and procedures for appropriate information sharing between agencies in order to facilitate coordinated and collaborative decision making and service delivery (page 39 of the Strategic Plan).

Agencies and other participants in a child or family's case are not always notified of previous involvement with other agencies. Such notification and the sharing of information that is legally available about a child's or family's history can assist involved professionals in making informed decisions on behalf of their clients.

Comments: This strategy will not require funding, but significant interagency collaboration and planning. Information sharing between agencies is extremely important in order to deliver appropriate and timely services. At the same time it is also critical to ensure confidentiality, and to follow legal regulations and agency policy. This action strategy will focus on the development of recommendations for changes to legal requirements regarding information-sharing, the review and possible revisions of agency policy, and the development of procedures for appropriate information sharing between agencies. This action strategy will take three to five years to achieve.

Action Strategy 7B: Develop the technological capacity for DCF and CSSD staff to share case specific information electronically, as allowed by law (page 40 of the Strategic Plan).

The current interface between CMIS and CONDOIT allows for the sharing of information from CSSD to DCF regarding committed delinquents. This technology should be expanded to increase information sharing as allowed by law.

Comments: This action strategy will require staff time and additional resources to expand the current technology capacity for interagency information sharing. Full implementation is expected to take three to five years.

Action Strategy 7C: Pilot a joint case management protocol and procedures for more effective coordination of services between DCF and CSSD (page 42 of the Strategic Plan).

The FWSN Protocol and the Hartford *Emily J.* Project serve as models for joint case management procedures between DCF and CSSD. The formalization of interagency procedures clarifies roles and responsibilities and reduces problems created by lack of communication and interagency planning. The expansion of joint case management protocols and procedures for all cases of mutual interest will benefit the children, families, and staff involved.

Comments: The implementation of this action strategy may require minimal additional funding for staff training, and can be operational within one year of the plan's acceptance.

Data Analysis

Goal #1: Develop a data-driven infrastructure that uses research to inform policy management and service delivery.

Action Strategy 1A: Enhance the analytical capacity of agencies to use data to inform program development and determine the impact of initiatives on targeted outcomes (page 42 of the Strategic Plan).

In order to ensure the most successful outcomes for children and families, it is necessary to promote the use of research, data collection, and analysis. CSSD and DCF should expand capacity to better understand the state of the juvenile justice system and the children and families served.

Comments: This action strategy requires agencies to understand and utilize existing data and management information systems, and to share that information with other agencies as appropriate, to best address needs for new program development and to evaluate the effectiveness of new and existing initiatives. Additional training, technical assistance, and funding will be needed to increase staff competency and data analysis capabilities, and will take three years to achieve.

Workforce Development and Training

Goal #1: Strengthen and support DCF and CSSD staff and their contracted providers in order to improve the delivery and effectiveness of services.

Action Strategy 1A: Increase the number of bilingual, bicultural, and multicultural staff in state and private agencies (page 43 of the Strategic Plan).

DCF, CSSD, and contracted providers should recruit culturally competent and experienced workers in order to establish and maintain an integrated multicultural service delivery system.

Comments: While it is anticipated that this action strategy can be achieved through existing hiring, recruitment efforts, and promotional opportunities, it will take three to five years to achieve.

Action Strategy 1B: Increase the cultural competency and gender-responsiveness of current staff (page 44 of the Strategic Plan).

CSSD and DCF are committed to providing staff that are culturally competent and have knowledge of gender-specific needs and resources. Therefore, the agencies should enhance training provided to current staff in order to meet the multicultural and gender-specific needs of children, youth and families.

Comments: Current DCF and CSSD staff and contractors, including training academy staff and consultants, have the capacity to provide the training, consultation, and support necessary to achieve this strategy over the next five years. To develop these competencies more quickly, additional resources and national expertise will be needed to supplement current training and consulting efforts.

Action Strategy 1C: Develop relationships with local universities and communities to increase the pool of qualified candidates for hiring (page 44 of the Strategic Plan).

DCF and CSSD should develop relationships with local universities and communities to increase the pool of qualified candidates with the knowledge and skills to work effectively with juvenile justice populations including girls, children age 12 and younger, and families in crisis.

Comments: The development of relationships with local higher education institutions and communities can be initiated with existing staff and resources. This action strategy will take one to two years to implement.

Action Strategy 1D: Develop and implement cross-training to build relationships and understanding between agency and provider staff, and to create efficiencies (page 45 of the Strategic Plan).

In order to function as an effective and coordinated system, juvenile justice agencies must promote an understanding of each other's mandates, goals, and limitations, and work together to build relationships across agency lines. DCF and CSSD should work together to improve training for state and contractor staff, and provide opportunities for relationship building.

Comments: This action strategy can be accomplished within the first two years of the plan by building relationships between the existing CSSD, DCF, and provider training academies and parent advocacy agencies; by jointly establishing training priorities and curricula; and by granting each agency's staff access to trainings facilitated by all participating agencies. Parents and youth will be invited to participate in providing and taking part in training being offered.

Action Strategy 1E: Provide additional legal support to DCF and CSSD staff to assist them in the interpretation of statute and the application of policy, and to represent them in court proceedings as necessary (page 46 of the Strategic Plan).

In order to build a more informed and confident staff, DCF and CSSD should seek additional legal support for parole, area office, and probation staff.

Comments: This action strategy will take planning and attorney positions to meet the needs of field staff. It will take three to five years to secure additional staff attorney positions.

Summary

The overarching themes, goals and action strategies identified in the Executive Summary are described in more detail, and with specific objectives, in the full version of the plan. The Strategic Plan represents an exciting and important joint venture between DCF, CSSD, and a wide range of stakeholders. While the plan does not provide all the answers to the current challenges faced by all involved in the juvenile justice system, it does map out a strategic course for the next five years; a course that we believe will provide the necessary system collaboration and integration to support children, youth and families, to address community safety, and to design and implement effective prevention, early intervention, treatment, and support services for court-involved children, youth, and their families.

Other critical works that will inform the implementation of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan include the following documents:

- Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System: 2003-2004 Annual Report and Recommendations,
- A Reassessment of Minority Overrepresentation in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System, Spectrum Associates (June 2001),
- Plan for a Continuum of Community-Based Services for Female Status Offenders and Delinquents (December 2004),
- Emily J. Settlement Agreement (June 2005),
- A System of Services for Girls in Connecticut, Marty Beyer, Ph.D. (December 2005), and
- Voice, Choice and Hope: Juvenile Justice Consensus Document (January 2006).

Stakeholders

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