



**Justice Center**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

**IMPROVING OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH IN  
CONNECTICUT  
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND NEXT  
STEPS**

**SEPTEMBER 2, 2020**

Josh Weber, Program Director

# About the Council of State Governments Justice Center



**Justice Center**

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

National nonprofit, nonpartisan, membership association of state government officials that engages members of all three branches of state government. Provides practical, nonpartisan research-driven strategies and tools to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

# Connecticut established a task force chaired by Rep. Walker and Secretary McCaw to oversee and guide the initiative.

**Rep. Toni Walker**, Co-chair, Appropriations Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

**Melissa McCaw**, Secretary, Office of Policy and Management

Abby Anderson, Executive Director, CT Juvenile Justice Alliance

Erica Bromley, Juvenile Justice Liaison, Connecticut Youth Services Association

Francis Carino, Supervisory Juvenile Prosecutor, Office of the Chief State's Attorney

Judge Bernadette Conway, Chief Administrative Judge, Juvenile Matters

John Frassinelli, State Department of Education

Deborah Fuller, Director, Family and Juvenile Services, Court Support Services Division, Judicial Branch

Eulalia Garcia, Deputy Warden, Manson Youth Institution, Department of Corrections

Hector Glynn, Senior Vice President, The Village for Children and Families

Dr. Derrick Gordon, Director, Research, Policy and Program on Male Development, The Consultation Center, Yale University

Brian Hill, Director of Human Resources, Judicial Branch

Senator George Logan, Human Services Committee, Connecticut General Assembly

Eleanor Michael, Policy Development Coordinator, Office of Policy and Management

Ken Mysogland, Bureau Chief, External Affairs, Department of Children and Families

Marc Pelka, Undersecretary for Criminal Justice, Office of Policy and Management

Rep. Robyn Porter, Appropriations & Judiciary Committees, Connecticut General Assembly

Christine Rapillo, Chief Public Defender, Connecticut Office of Chief Public Defender

Janeen Reid, Executive Director, Full Circle Youth Empowerment

Gary Roberge, Executive Director, Court Support Services Division, Judicial Branch

Fred Spagnolo, Chief of Police, Waterbury Police Department

Martha Stone, Executive Director, Center for Children's Advocacy

# Data provided by state agencies informed the system assessment.

Data	Source
CSSD Detention Admissions	
CSSD Probation Cases	Center for Analytics—University of New Haven
CSSD Unified Criminal History	
Juvenile Review Boards	
Youth Service Bureaus	Connecticut State Department of Education
Survey Data	Bridgeport and Hartford Detention Facilities Pretrial Staff (n = 102)

# CSG Justice Center staff conducted multiple site visits to Connecticut, and spoke with over 100 stakeholders.

Probation Supervisors  
and Officers

Youth

Law Enforcement

YSBs/JRBs

Superintendents/Principals

Community-  
based/Residential  
Providers

Public Defenders/  
Prosecutors

Judges

Advocates

Agency Leadership and  
Staff (DCF, SDE, CSSD,  
DOC)

**CSG staff also visited detention, REGIONS, and DOC facilities to meet with youth, facility leadership, custody staff, mental health and education providers:**

- Bridgeport Juvenile Detention Center
- Hartford Juvenile Detention Center
- Journey House
- Manson Youth Institution
- Boys and Girls Village
- Connecticut Junior Republic

# Systems Assessment: Key Takeaways

1

Delinquent referrals to juvenile court have declined 26% since 2014, but many youth who commit low level offenses, and disproportionately youth of color, still receive some form of system supervision. Service delivery for these youth varies considerably across the state.

2

Admissions to pretrial detention have declined 51% since 2014, but disproportionality for Black and Hispanic youth has increased. Detention use is primarily driven by Warrants and Take Into Custody orders.

3

Service completion rates are low and rearrest rates for youth who participate in services are generally above 50 percent. More efforts are needed to identify the reasons for such challenges and ensure youth and families are engaged in services and receive services matched to their needs.

4

Focus group participants expressed significant concerns with placing youth in short term detention facilities for extended periods of time and effectively meeting their needs given that the facilities were designed only for short-term stays.

5

Most stakeholders do not believe that DOC facilities are the most appropriate place for youth, as these facilities need training, critical assessments and services, and revised policies to meet youths' needs.

# Systems Assessment: Recommendations Approved by the IOYouth Taskforce

1. Decriminalize in statute specific adolescent behaviors; divert all low risk youth from any form of system supervision; and establish a pilot/landscape analysis process to explore the viability of strengthening the YSB/JRBs statewide to serve as a more robust, research-based diversion service system.
2. Establish family engagement/safety planning protocols to limit the automatic detention of youth on warrants/take into custody orders, and base initial detention decision from the detention screening tool.
3. Strengthen youth and family engagement policies and practices and procurement/contracting/case management partnerships with providers to improve service engagement and successful completion rates.
4. Develop an equity dashboard that monitors/compares system involvement for youth of different races/ethnicities in specific ways, based on current system disparities.
5. Eliminate the housing of youth disposed to secure treatment in state-run, short-term detention facilities, and engage in a planning process designed to facilitate the phased transfer of responsibility for youth from the DOC to CSSD through legislation enacted during the 2021 session.

# IO Youth Recommendations Implementation: Next Steps

- A. Establish an IO Youth Implementation Committee, as a sub-committee of the JJPOC, co-chaired by leadership from all three branches of government and comprised primarily of the agencies/entities responsible for implementing the approved recommendations.
  - i. Develop agency and broad Committee action plans (September)
  - ii. Hold first meeting of the Implementation Committee (October)
  - iii. Advance action plans under oversight of the Implementation Committee, through leadership of identified responsible parties, in consultation/collaboration with key stakeholders, and supported by technical assistance from the CSG Justice Center (ongoing)
  - iv. Provide updates on implementation progress and challenges to the JJPOC (ongoing)