



## Connecticut Making Gains on Goals for Juvenile Justice Reform

### BACKGROUND

The State of Connecticut has been in the forefront of Juvenile Justice reform happening nationally. Improvements have been taking place since 2009 when the Raise the Age legislation passed to process youth ages 16 and 17 in the juvenile courts. Even more progress has been achieved since the creation of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) in 2014.

One of the major accomplishments of the JJPOC was their development of goals in order to meet the statutory mandate to improve youth justice in the State of Connecticut. The three strategic goals to guide juvenile justice reform efforts by mid-2018 are:

- Increase diversion of children and youth from juvenile court by 20%;
- Decrease the number of children and youth confined (incarcerated) in state-run facilities by 30%; and
- Decrease the rate of recidivism among juvenile offenders by 10%

### PROGRESS TO DATE

At the 2 year mark, incarceration has been reduced by almost 50%, diversion from the court has increased by nearly 20%; and recidivism is coming down but at a much slower pace. Overall, the report is very encouraging.

JJPOC Work Groups have been established to identify ways to implement the three strategic goals. In addition, the JJPOC also established a Data Sharing Work Group which identifies data collection, merging, and sharing and analysis issues across state agencies in order to improve data capabilities and provide evidence to support effectiveness of reform efforts.

The JJPOC is currently engaged in a strategic planning progress to establish new goals for the coming two years. These goals and the 2018 legislative recommendations will be announced in early 2018.

## DIVERSION – Increase diversion by 20%

Toward the goal of a 20% increase in Diversion, two measures have been established: referrals of delinquents to Juvenile Court and referrals to Juvenile Review Boards. Significant progress is evident: there has been an 18.8% reduction in juvenile delinquency referrals from the 2014 baseline to 2017; Juvenile Review Board referrals are up 10%, although 25 JRB's had not reported their data at the time of this reporting.

The accomplishment of this goal is supported by a number of programmatic initiatives. A Community-based Diversion System Plan is being implemented through the state's Youth Services Bureau system. This is intended to divert status offending youth and youth with delinquency charges for minor offenses from the juvenile

justice system to effective, developmentally appropriate, community-based responses. By creating a process for early identification, assessment and intervention, the individual social/emotional, behavioral, criminal, mental health and academic needs of at-risk youth can be addressed within the context of their family and community.

Dovetailing on the Community-based Diversion System Plan, is a School-based Diversion Plan which should be completed in early 2018. One component of this work is the use of Restorative Justice Practices. These practices are a set of relational, communication approaches used to facilitate meaningful conversations to prevent harm, as well as to restore relationships wherein harm has occurred and conflict exists between people. They have evolved as a tool to improve school climate and educational outcomes, and provide structure for organizing effective group communication, building relationships, sound decision-making and resolving conflicts.

## RECIDIVISM - Decrease recidivism by 10 %

Toward a goal of a 10% decrease, we have not seen strong results to date: recidivism has actually increased for juveniles released from CJTS, slightly decreased for those on probation, and is approaching 10% for those transferred juveniles released from the Manson Youth Institution.

The Recidivism Reduction Work group has given this subject considerable study. They began their work by creating a profile of DCF Committed Youth to gain an understanding of what factors needed to be addressed. They found that most were under age of 16 (78%), were male (78%), 48% African-American, 28% Hispanic, 28% Caucasian, and 4% other. Almost half (42%) resided in four urban centers, 61% had between 6 and 20 prior arrests before DCF commitment, and many assessed as very high and high risk youth.

A legislatively mandated study of recidivism among youth committed to the custody of the Department of Children and Families was completed and presented in October, 2017. Data was also collected on arrests, restraints, and uses of seclusions. One caveat to data collection was the small number of youth in custody. Work group members who have been involved in discussing the recidivism study will reconvene in an attempt to identify relevant research questions that are responsive to those concerns. There will also be annual tracking and analyzing juvenile recidivism rates by the Office of

## Diversion Goal Summary

Goal: 20% Increase

### Juvenile Delinquency Referrals

FY14 Baseline	11,471
Goal (by FY18)	9,178
Progress through FY17	9,316
Percent reduction	-18.8%

- **Status:** On track to meet goal

### Juvenile Review Board Referrals

FY13 Baseline	2,230
Goal (by FY18)	2,676
Progress through FY17	2,452
Percent increase	10%

- **Status:** Slow progress toward goal.
- **Note:** 25 JRBs have not reported referral data as of 10/17/2017

# Recidivism Goal Summary

Goal: 10% Reduction in Re-arrest Rate

Policy and Management to produce reports such as the rearrests rate of children and youth at 6, 12, and 24 months after the end of the delinquency commitment; probation; judicial probation; non-judicial delinquency supervision; risk level; treatment matching; and treatment dosage.

The Work group is looking to remove the barriers to quality education that many juveniles in the deep end of the system face as a major solution to the recidivism challenge. Currently there is a fragmented array of providers working to educate youth in custody. In 2015, 91% of youth in DCF custody did not reach the state's math

Adjudicated Youth on Probation		Youth Released from CJTS		Youth Released from DOC	
FY12 Baseline	60%	CY12 Baseline	75%	CY12 Baseline	76%
Goal (by CY16)	54%	Progress through CY15 (YTD)	82.6%	Progress through CY15 (YTD)	70.1%
Progress through CY15 (YTD)	59.2%	Percent increase	9.7%	Percent reduction	-7.8%
Percent reduction	-1.3%				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Status:</b> Slow progress toward goal</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Status:</b> Increase from baseline</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Status:</b> Decrease from baseline and approaching 10% reduction</li> </ul>	

achievement benchmark, and 80% did not measure up in reading.

The Work Group determined that Connecticut needs a meaningful, system-wide quality control mechanism to ensure that youth in the deep end of the justice system have access to educational and economic opportunity, and they are working to address issues that point to the need for a single, consolidated system to educate youth in custody. In a report to be released in 2018, they are diving into how fragmentation is expensive and impairs coordination and responsibility, and that a model to building a quality control system. They are also exploring creating multiple pathways to educational opportunity, cultivating and supporting expert teachers, developing specialized curricula, supporting reentry from detention and coming home to opportunity.

## INCARCERATION - Decrease incarceration by 30%

Toward the goal of a 30% reduction, the progress in reducing the incarceration rate for juveniles is dramatic with important implications nationally. A cut of nearly 50% has already been achieved. Through Raise the Age legislation and various diversionary strategies, the incarceration rate in Connecticut is among the lowest of any other state in the country. This is the result of many committed and caring individuals, organizations and state agencies dedicated to improving the system and keeping as many youth as possible away from interaction with the system. Far surpassing the goal of a 30% reduction, an almost 50% reduction is unprecedented.

One area of focus for the Incarceration Work group is the closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, scheduled for July 2018. The Department of Children

# Incarceration Goal Summary

Goal: 30% Reduction

Juvenile Detention Centers		CT Juvenile Training School	
FY14 Baseline	2,334	FY14 Baseline	222
Goal (by FY18)	1,868	Goal (by FY18)	178
Progress through FY17	1,329	Progress through FY17	113
Percent reduction	-43.1%	Percent reduction	-49.1%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Status:</b> Goal Achieved</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Status:</b> Goal Achieved</li> </ul>	

and Families issued a Request for Proposal for private agencies to provide secure residential placement. Since the issuance of the RFP, the legislature has determined to transfer the juvenile justice functions from DCF to the Judicial Branch effective July 1, 2018. The Incarceration Work Group and the relevant agencies are working together to make this transition as smooth as possible.

## SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Many indicators are approaching or have exceeded the goals set in

June 2015. Important and successful legislative changes have taken place. Due to the success toward its original goals, the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee has during the summer and fall of 2017, worked on a strategic planning process that will identify new, additional goals for further exploration. As mentioned earlier, further analysis is needed on recidivism rates to inform work group recommendations. The new strategic planning process will include a focus on creating a continuum needed for youth in the deepest end of the system.

The final report of the new three year goals for the JJPOC will be completed and presented in early 2018 with a plan to include program-level outcomes.

# Incarceration Goal Summary

Goal: 30% Reduction

## Males Admitted to MYI

FY14 Baseline	146
Goal (by FY18)	102
Progress through FY17	103
Percent reduction	-29.5%

- **Status:** On Track to achieve goal

## Females Admitted to York

**Status:** Annual admissions to York Correctional have remained below 10 for the past four years

## SOURCES

Charts and data in this brief were part of a presentation to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee in October, 2017. The full presentation can be viewed on our website, [newhaven.edu/towoyouth/JJPOC](http://newhaven.edu/towoyouth/JJPOC).

*The Tow Youth Justice Institute is a university, state and private partnership established to lead the way in juvenile justice reform through collaborative planning, training, research and advocacy.*

*Please visit our website at [newhaven.edu/towoyouth](http://newhaven.edu/towoyouth) and follow us on social media @towoyouth or call 203-932-7361 with questions or for more information.*

