

Transforming Youth Justice: A Leadership Development Program

An Overview of the 2021 Leadership Cohort Capstone Projects

March 2021



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- I. Collaboration of DCF and CSSD Systems: A Guide to Improving Communication and Collaboration Between CSSD & DCF Through Family Teaming
- II. Draft Encouraging the Use of the Case Plan for Juvenile Probation Officers
- III. Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice: How can ACES Help with Engagement
- IV. Fatherhood Engagement Plan for the Department of Children and Families Staff
- V. Incorporating Mindfulness Programs and Safe Spaces that are Gender Responsive, Targeted to Black & Brown Girls
- VI. Law Enforcement and Mental Health Agency Partnership
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- VIII. The Impact of Parents Incarcerated on Children
- IX. The Effect of Parental Support on Re-Entry and Re-Integration Success of Juvenile Offenders

“We have not paid enough attention to the later teenage and early adult years as a discrete period of social and behavioral development. If we hope to gain a complete understanding of what works to prevent delinquency from evolving into persistent criminal behavior, we need to look more closely at this critical state of life and develop our sense of effective interventions and categories of appropriate sanctions.”

-Former Assistant Attorney General, Laurie O. Robinson

I. Title: Collaboration of DCF and CSSD Systems: A Guide to Improving Communication and Collaboration Between CSSD & DCF Through Family Teaming

- ▶ Maureen Flanagan, Judicial: Court Support Services Division, Melissa Garden, Dept. of Children and Families (DCF) & Elizabeth Hazelwood, Dept. of Children and Families (DCF)



Issue

Juveniles involved in both Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Systems have poorer recidivism outcomes, education, mental health, and their development of healthy relationships. Because of the lack of resources, and quality connections that often characterize youth served by both of these systems, they frequently experience higher rates of recurrent involvement with state agencies, less quality education, housing, and financial instability. They possess ineffective coping skills, which impact how they deal with others, and poor incidence of receiving mental or physical health care. These factors have negative intergenerational impacts on youth and their families and put a long-term strain on the social service systems put in place to serve them. In a 2017 study, foster care youth were 2.5 times more likely to continue a pattern of chronic recidivism. Those youth were also found to spend lengthier times in detention. (Yang, McCuish, and Corrado, 2017) According to the "National Scientific Council on the Developing Child," whether the burdens come from the hardships of poverty, the challenges of parental substance abuse or serious mental illness, the stresses of war, the threats of recurrent violence or chronic neglect, or a combination of factors, the single most common finding is that children who end up doing well have had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive caregiver, or another adult. Too often, there are multiple systems involved, there is no central "ownership" of the youth's case to drive the joint case planning and collaborative work. Each agency has its own goals, the family is inundated with various case plans, and the multisystem involvement can prove to be more overwhelming than it is helpful for clients.

Concept

The creation and implementation of a practice guide that improves communication and collaboration between CSSD & DCF through the family team are essential to address this issue. Shifting from agency decision-making practices planned and dominated by professionals and focused narrowly on children and parents can deprive children and parents of the support and assistance of their natural supports such as family and kin group. By applying family-centered interventions such as family group conferencing, restorative practices, and wraparound processes, the youth and family's needs can be more fully addressed, reducing recidivism and repeat maltreatment within both systems. Case planning and supervision can be improved by developing joint case plans, reviewed by the family, and submitted to the court in advance of hearings. According to a brief by McKinney (2019), Georgetown Crossover Youth Practice Model (2015) has proven to be an effective model for improving outcomes for youth involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, as well as the communities in which they reside. This practice guide implemented would provide a framework for child welfare and juvenile justice system culture change in multiple jurisdictions, enhancing communication across siloed departments and systems. It will create a holistic view of youths' situations, leading to more effective cross-systems case practice and decision making. This guide will decrease recidivism risks and improve child welfare and juvenile justice indicators related to positive youth development and yield significant jurisdictional cost savings. Successful adoption of the process would require agency leadership to ensure policy development, staff training, and quality assurance efforts. If there is a lack of commitment to the process, it sets both the agencies involved and the families we serve up for failure.

II. Title: Draft Encouraging the Use of the Case Plan for Juvenile Probation Officers

- ▶ Nordia Napier, Judicial: Court Support Services Division



Issue

In the past 10-15 years, juvenile probation officers within the State of Connecticut and other states have adjusted their practices due to juvenile justice reform and will continue to adjust as new reforms take place. However, probation's day-to-day practices often do not help their clients improve their interpersonal development or emotional intelligence. If attempted, probation officers seem to vary in how they encourage their clients to make better decisions and improve their ability to manage conflict. The training probation officers often receive a more general overview of the challenges juveniles face that affect their ability to display positive soft skills and properly introduce these skills to their clients. The current probation order fails to encourage skill development and focuses on compliance with orders often not specific to the probationers' personal criminogenic risk or behavioral needs. The input probation officers provide the Court prior to probation orders being issued often focuses on services clients should participate in rather than skills they should gain at the completion of their probation. More than not, probation officers focus on addressing compliance with Court issued orders that are generic and are not specific to their clients' needs. Given that juvenile justice approaches emphasizing surveillance, compliance, and external control are not effective at reducing reoffending, traditional forms of community supervision have minimal impact on enhancing public safety. (Weber, Umpierre, Bilchik, 2018). Studies show that therapeutic and skill-building programs show promise for improving juvenile justice outcomes. To encourage probation success and limit the potential for technical violations, aligning research and practice in youth probation suggests that officers need to set incremental expectations with youth and focus on promoting positive youth development through a revised case plan.

Concept

A growing body of research suggests that the probation officer-client relationship is important and can impact post supervision outcomes. Increasing the use of developmentally appropriate practices in juvenile probation holds significant potential to improve the efficient use of resources, promote youths' individual skill development, improve family functioning, and reducing recidivism. Helping probation officers view the case plan as an effective supervision tool may increase their focus on helping their clients develop essential skills needed to avoid the involvement of the juvenile and adult court systems'. Administrative staff should remind themselves while developing a plan to review the client's case to verify how often staff reference the plan during the client contact. They need to look at what percentage of staff are not consistent with managing case activities attached to the plan and data regarding the ineffectiveness of not using the case plan. Verifying supervisor support, conducting Staff Focus Groups to obtain client feedback, and deciding what additional data analysis should be implemented in the actions taken to develop a revised plan. To create this plan, training should focus on enhancing probation officers' case management skills and addressing their ability to encourage positive youth development. It is strongly encouraged staff are trained within the same period, not in small cohorts. This is to ensure the new use of the case plan is immediate than over time.

III. Title: Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice: How can ACES Help with Engagement

- ▶ Lindsey Miller, Justice Resource Institute and Carmen Hernandez, Judicial: Court Support Services Division



Issue

In the juvenile justice field, there is a problem of youth and families struggling to engage and benefit from treatment recommendations fully. Too many children and their families disengage or never participate in critical services. Suppose the youth or family unit fails to engage in services; they either continue the cycle of justice involvement or never truly address the underlying issues impacting current functioning. Studies have demonstrated that youth and their families who have participated in evidence-based treatment practices, such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST) or Functional Family Therapy (FFT), have demonstrated significantly lower recidivism rates than youth receiving conventional treatment models and supports. When receiving MST services, youth arrest rates were 25-70% less than youth receiving traditional supports. Youth and families that received treatment through FFT demonstrated rearrest rates of 7 percent compared to 40 percent of youth receiving traditional supports (Mendel, 2011). The highest risk for negative outcomes is associated with having experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences, as Connecticut is highlighted to show that it is one of two states with the lowest prevalence rates nationally for all ACEs.

Concept

The importance and impact of increasing awareness of adverse or traumatic experiences to better one's overall physical and mental health appear to be widely accepted. The ACE questionnaire is an "assessment intended to operate in a relationship-centered context to cultivate family engagement and education, to cultivate healing conversations, and to build awareness, strengths, resources, and support to address any trauma and chronic stress that may exist (Bethell et al., 2017)." The goal focuses on utilizing outcomes obtained during the intake process on the screening of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) to improve parental and caregiver engagement in their child's mental health treatment, thus improving overall engagement and progress. The screening tool will be implemented in the Intensive Diversion Program intake process and utilized by staff providing the psychoeducation portion of treatment to the youth's caregivers. During these psychoeducation sessions, staff would offer assistance with providing the support that would allow caregivers to focus on engagement in their child's treatment. This might include assistance with identifying a mental health treatment provider for the caregiver, child-care options, access to housing supports, and addressing basic needs of the family that might otherwise prevent caregivers from being able to engage and encourage their child's engagement in treatment fully. Though caregivers may struggle to participate in treatment, an Intensive Diversion Program's expected component includes parent or caregiver participation in psychoeducation and family therapy sessions. Despite a parent's or caregiver's potential reluctance to participate, the client and family will continue to receive treatment as planned.

IV. Title: Fatherhood Engagement Plan for the Department of Children and Families Staff

- ▶ Michelle Piper-Mitchell, Dept. of Children and Families (DCF)



Issue

Fatherhood engagement is a critical component to effective-family centered practice in child welfare. There is a lack of ongoing concerted efforts to locate and engage fathers in the case planning process for youth in care to ensure a better outcome by social workers in child welfare, despite recent policy developments and case practice expectations. Many children become involved with the Department who do not have relationships with their father or even know their father's identity. State and Federal policies involving case planning, which include fatherhood engagement, are reviewed regularly via a quality improvement lens through various processes that identified a need for continued improvement with parents' engagement, specifically fathers. There needs to be an identification of barriers preventing fathers' inclusion as a priority in case planning. The system needs to improve engagement with fathers involved with DCF to create positive outcomes, including positive outcomes for reducing children's rates in the care, improved reunification, and timely permanency.

Concept

The concept envisioned is developing a survey to present to social work staff to identify engagement barriers with locating and engaging fathers. This will be followed by creating a focus group to include social workers, supervisors, and quality improvement staff (including administrative review staff) to review the survey data and discuss/formulate ideas to target the identified barriers and implement solutions. There will be a focus on staff training and coordination with the Academy for Workforce Development to develop/ coordinate staff training regarding fatherhood engagement. Training includes identifying goals and strategies to improve families and children's outcomes, reflecting on how personal experience affects practice, and an overview of the Department's policies/expectations for engaging parents/ fathers. This training aims to find barriers to engaging fathers in family-focused work and strategies to overcome those struggles, assisting fathers with reconnecting with their child who lacks interest and supervision development focuses on fatherhood engagement. Coordination will be done with local fatherhood programs and the Region 1 Fatherhood Engagement Leadership Team (FELT) committee to provide resources and information regarding fatherhood services. Fatherhood engagement should be incorporated into case reviews (create a quick response checklist) regularly during the child(ren) coming into care at the 90-day mark and to continue during case reviews every 90 days after that until the child achieves permanency.

V. Title: Incorporating Mindfulness Programs and Safe Spaces that are Gender Responsive, Targeted to Black & Brown Girls

- ▶ Tanya Gordon, Empower Hour Girls Program



Issue

According to the American Civil Liberties Union (2017), the school-to-prison pipeline is a disturbing national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Black girls make up 20% of the nation's female population, yet they make up 54% of the out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. They are usually punished for being viewed as aggressive, assertive, insubordinate, dress code violations, and hairstyles. The young ladies are generally suspended because they are being subjected to bias by their teachers, and the teachers are either unwilling to deal with their behaviors or lack cultural competency. Most of these young ladies have experienced unaddressed traumas such as an incarcerated parent, molestation, poverty, or abuse. After enduring horrific experiences that cause them to act out in anger, they are labeled immoral and intolerable instead of being viewed as young ladies who have experienced trauma. According to the 2018/2019 Report on Student Discipline in Connecticut Public Schools (2020), disparities remain in suspension rates between Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino students and their white counterparts. While one out of every 25 white students received at least one suspension, one out of every seven Black/African American students, and one out of every 10 Hispanic/Latino students experienced the same sanction. Incorporating restorative practices helps develop the community while focusing on managing tensions, repairing harm, and promoting communication and healing.

Concept

Creating a safe space in a school that will serve as an alternative to in-school suspension will ensure the student will receive therapeutic support, restorative justice practices, and an opportunity to remediate their behavior. Teachers in the school where this program is located will receive a one-day trauma emergency response training, so they are equipped to recognize the signs of trauma and make appropriate referrals. This one-day training will be provided by Brown Girls Counseling, LLC. and Dr. Keniesha Deer. This training will also include a component that incorporates restorative circles in the classroom. Teachers will be armed with the tools to identify trauma and refer while still maintaining the classroom controls and being viewed as support. Once the young lady is referred to the program, she will take the ACES test to determine the level of the trauma she is dealing with to be evaluated and receive appropriate care. The CARER's will consist of an onsite case manager/mentor, therapist (individual and group), a community organization (where she will participate in service and receive a stipend), and alternative therapeutic providers such as a yoga or physical fitness instructor, performing arts instructor. They will be building their self-confidence while benefitting their communities and developing skills such as project management that they will one day use in the workforce. We will emphasize healing, the necessity of education and provide perspective while building a framework for success.

VI. Title: Law Enforcement and Mental Health Agency Partnership

- ▶ Michael Fumiatti, New Haven Police Dept. and Victoria Prestileo, Wheeler Clinic



Issue

Within policing and mental health, juvenile behaviors and arrest rates are a common area of focus. While there are great partnerships between agencies and police departments, there is a lack of collaboration around ways to decrease behavioral health concerns/criminal activities in the communities between law enforcement and mental health in New Haven. The lack of collaboration is no fault to either entity and is contributed to the lack of connections and motivations that appear to be already functioning. Currently, the New Haven Police Department utilizes the Yale Child Study for children/adolescents when experienced trauma from an incident occurred or if a parent discloses that this is a contributing factor. However, adolescents with behavioral health concerns are not receiving mental health services unless trauma is identified. While the systems function to provide mental health services in the New Haven area around security and stability with maintaining a safe and law-abiding society, the two entities are not working together to address the underlying program. Currently, the New Haven Police Department offers the following training: crisis intervention, mental health first aid & instructor course, verbal judo, and FBI hostage negotiator. The goal is to develop a micro-level analysis and implementation of law enforcement awareness for juvenile behavioral health programs in the city of New Haven to allow a more in-depth focus of two smaller entities' ways to success.

Concept

The partnership would allow an increase in meetings to address potential cases, immediate mental health response rather than police interjections, and an increase in awareness of services provided for juveniles in the community. A meeting will be set up with a representative between the New Haven Police Department and Wheeler Clinic's MST, IIBHS, and MDFT programs. Individuals will establish a step-by-step process to increase referrals from the New Haven Police Department to increase referrals to these programs to decrease arrest rates and increase improved solutions for behavioral health concerns in the community. Monthly meetings will be held to discuss potential cases or current cases that need any additional support. We would identify different mental health or behavioral health agencies that are part of the partnership and assign a police officer and mental health professional to work in partnership to manage referrals and troubleshoot issues to evaluate and reassess implementation operational procedures between agencies. Wheeler Clinic will survey if there was a decrease in arrest rates after treatment, officers' opinions of an improvement in relationships with community members such as parents and juveniles, if the officers felt supported when making the behavioral mental health recommendation partnership, and more. Survey findings will be addressed in monthly meetings to develop the next effective and operative communication between partnerships. The surveys will be provided to the Department of Children and Families, New Have Police Department, and the Mental Health Agencies providing the services/partnership.

VII. Title: Reducing Trauma While Incarcerated

- ▶ Bryan Viger, Dept. of Corrections (DOC)



Issue

Through experience working inside Connecticut's only male youth prison, Manson Youth Institute, individuals experience struggles while incarcerated, including a lack of support system, especially when returning from a visit, from a family member, the court, or other criminal justice functions. They tend to return to their housing unit frustrated and confused, resulting in impulsive actions. Several follow up-interviews with the offenders regarding what happened and the altercation results in frustration and concern with their future, both immediate and long-term. Given the lack of data specific to this demographic, I have suggested that we, as an agency, attempt to gather this data and track, via our statistical database, to better assist in preventing future acts. In addition to this data, it will allow us to discover patterns, specifically those with ongoing behavioral issues, housed in specific housing units, and so much more. With elevated Medical and Mental Health scores (DOC Database, 2020), one adds to the problem. Using some of the outlined methods currently being used at both MYI and YCI, I believe that the atmosphere, not only to the affected person(s) but also to the facility, will be more positive. Youth need to have access to "tailored" programs, working collaboratively with outside stakeholders; programs could be implemented to help an individual specifically, rather than a group.

Concept

Youth returning from such activities noted above should be provided additional services, support to assist with their needs. Incarcerated youth are incredibly vulnerable to specific situations, most of the time, reacting without thought of any consequence. Many of them do not have a support system to fall back on, having to rely on other offenders that have been through the system (i.e., "OG's"). If not all, the information they are provided is not accurate and sometimes can be detrimental to the youth related to their current incarceration. I would look to implement a program that prepares youthful offenders (under the age of 21) for life during incarceration while at an "adult" facility. These programs will help the young population express their emotions, assisting with the trauma of being incarcerated and going through the court / legal process and other "adult-like" traumas that offenders face. Unlike the adult population, which tends to have more of a developed social base (family, friends, colleagues, etc.), these youthful offenders rely on connected staff or other inmates to help assist with the transition and questions upon their legal proceedings. Using such programs, such as, but not limited to, could be implemented to assist: Coping techniques; Stress Reduction Therapy; Conflict Resolution; Legal Assistance; to administer the youth with what is going on; and many other programs. Training will also focus, as the staff does not receive any additional training while working at MYI, explicitly dealing with the youth.

VIII. Title: The Impact of Incarceration on Children

- ▶ Timothy Fraylon, The Urban League of Greater Hartford



Issue

The absence of a parent can negatively impact a family, primarily their children, upon incarceration. In our juvenile system today, there has been a concern about "integrational incarceration" or a high likelihood that youth with incarcerated parents will themselves follow in their parent's footsteps, continuing a vicious cycle of criminal behaviors. In a 2014 study, parental incarceration was proven to be independently associated with increased risk of learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, behavioral and conduct problems, developmental delays, and speech or language problems. One in 14 children nationally has experienced the incarceration of a parent, according to Child Trends. Connecticut Department of Corrections inmates come mainly from a few cities (primarily Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven, Waterbury, and New Britain; Reinhart, 2010). It may be that particular neighborhoods within these cities are disproportionately affected. In June 2016, 8,248 incarcerated adults in Connecticut reported being caregivers to a total of 18,034 dependents, according to the Department of Corrections (DOC). Organizations with the most resources for providing services may or may not have connections in the areas most affected by parental incarceration.

Concept

With an emphasis on family engagement, we can strengthen the family dynamics and help guide the youth. The Connecticut General Assembly has provided funding to address the needs of children with an incarcerated parent. The IMRP is a non-partisan, University-based organization dedicated to enriching local, state, and national public policy. The IMRP tackles critical and often under-addressed urban issues with the intent of ensuring the most favorable outcomes for affected individuals and entities. A child's ability to continue a relationship with an incarcerated parent has been shown to help prevent adverse effects, including academic failure and substance abuse, and decrease recidivism rates. Creating a survey to collect data on how many families utilize the services will benefit the youth struggling in an atmosphere without familiar support. After collecting that data, I would like to follow up with a publication or source to fully promote the programs and connect hard-to-reach families to said programs. By connecting families to given resources, I would also plan to connect the community-based organizations that align with the population. By connecting them with better-resourced organizations, both providers can provide better services to the families and expand their network to this target community that may have a negative perspective on seeking support.

IX. Title: The Effect of Parental Support on Re-Entry and Re-Integration Success of Juvenile Offenders (9)

- ▶ Tamara Wilson, Dept. of Corrections



Issue

Parental engagement of the incarcerated youth population lacks in the prison system. "80% of offenders left to deal with their incarceration alone; however, parental consent may negatively or positively impact offenders at discharge." (Debriefing guidelines, 2016). Examining a group of offenders with parental support and without support is important to determine any significant difference in their success after incarceration. At the facility, reviewing and choosing volunteers who have completed New Direction Program at Manson Youth Correctional to participate in a study on parental support's effects on re-entry success is the target community. The New Direction Class is a cognitive-behavioral treatment curriculum offered at Manson based on the real-life experience of incarcerated addicts involved in a substance abuse treatment that addresses criminal and addictive thinking. These volunteers will assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and its therapeutic measures. The study will consist of surveys that will ask various questions about parents' involvement in an offender's incarceration and how they assist offenders in planning for the future. Participants would be asked to complete a survey and questionnaire while incarcerated, and another survey would be conducted 120 days after release.

Concept

Participants of this study would be selected from the prison population at Manson Youth Institution, the only juvenile Correctional facility in Connecticut. Participants ages 15-18 would be chosen from the New Direction Class graduates, a cognitive-behavioral treatment curriculum based on the real-life experience of incarcerated addicts involved in a substance abuse treatment that addresses criminal and addictive thinking. We will select and follow 4-6 participants and their parents, as they will be asked to complete a consent and debriefing forms. Participants have successfully completed the New Directions Class before participation in this study. They will be examined and compared to obtain information concerning: What type of parental support was given or not given. Data will be collected and compared to sobriety, housing, employment, and compliance with community release stipulations. Data will be used to prove that parental support can assist offenders in being successful in their re-entry and reintegration back into society. I would pay close attention to "respect for persons," which considers that I would be studying prisoners, and they would be considered a vulnerable population. Researchers will compare the offender's success after incarceration based on parental support or no parental support. Reintegration success will be measured, 120 days after release, based on successes in housing, employment, sobriety, and compliance with community release stipulations.



Transforming Youth Justice: A Leadership Development Program Summary of 2021 Cohort Leaders Presentations of Learning (POL) Leadership Program Session 7

Key Points expressed directly by the 2021 Cohort Leaders

"Through this program, I have gained many ways to grow personally as I continue to focus on the individualized person while looking at the macro approach for my organization. Consistency is key, but also dissection is valuable for effective interventions for all parties. We have a lot of work to do in youth justice, but we are moving forward. Our cohort has so many successful and impactful individuals we could change our society within just our group."
~Victoria Prestileo

"Each session had its unique approach, and the info that was gathered was useful in my work with clients as well as advocating for young people. Being able to explore leadership qualities has helped me to adequately understand what I can improve and what exact areas are needed. The presenters all brought a great combination of personal stories and knowledge. I was able to gain useful tools to use at my agency as well as with my family and friends."
~Timothy Fraylon

"I was aware of the ACES tool and Dr. Nadine Burke a few years ago. I automatically assumed that this tool was being utilized in the appropriate arenas, and I was surprised that not many people were familiar with its existence. The ACES tool could help remove the stigma that mental health treatment receives in minority communities as people would easily measure that there is a mechanism that measures experience."
~Tanya Gordon

"Nicole Kowal's training on LGBTQ/GNCT youth provided me with the awareness of treating our young clients with respect and dignity and always be kind to others; even if you disagree with their choices, one must respect that a choice has been made."
~Tamara Wilson

"After gaining knowledge on the JJPOC's function, I understand there is a gap where the education system should be, and there has to be a way to bring them to the table. The argument could be made that the education system and juvenile justice system are two separate entities; however, we need to acknowledge that the goals for both are the same; the goal of supporting and teaching young people to become responsible, equipped, accountable adults."
~Tanya Gordon



"This program highlighted the various aspects of juvenile justice reform and how each element is important as we continue to move towards change. Paying closer attention to JJPOC during this program reminds me of the challenges to reform and why the same conversations held in the past continue to occur in 2021. This leadership program remains valuable for system representatives to come together and learn from one another and hopefully end up working together to tackle juvenile justice reform."

~Nordia Napier

"It was great to be reminded that there is a whole lot of people, coming from different perspectives, influencing the everyday work of the court! The CT Juvenile Justice Alliance Youth Advisors are so important in helping us stay connected to the issues that arise with our youth daily that we may not be aware of."

~Maureen Flanagan

"I have realized how impactful our own leadership styles, approaches, continuing advocacy efforts and use of skills/strengths in administrative roles are valuable in working with youth and families."

~Lindsey Miller

"I set my mission in coming to this program, and I was able to create a capstone project that will put forth a direct initiative to meet my personal goals."

~Elizabeth Hazelwood

"Through my participation in this leadership program, I hoped to strengthen my leadership skills. The better educated I am on the juvenile justice system's trends, the more equipped I am to lead my agency in achieving better outcomes for our youth. I used this opportunity to partner with and educate policymakers, local government, police departments, and other community providers on the issues that impact youth served by DCF. I also viewed this as a great opportunity to contribute my child welfare perspective in reforming a system that is better prepared to understand the correlation between youth involved in the justice system and its impact on their long-term permanency and wellbeing".

~Elizabeth Hazelwood

"This program was a wonderful experience to be with a knowledgeable and experienced group of leaders. Reviewing our core values during each session and how these values were represented in each session was impactful to remember. The use of assessment tools to improve leadership skills can enhance the work of juvenile justice reform and can be applied to all other personal and professional goals".

~Michelle Piper-Mitchell



"This program has allowed me to have meaningful discussions with other cohort members concerning their experience on youth and the justice system. These past nine months allowed me to be adequate to improve my efforts in the way I interact with juveniles and their families daily. Gaining knowledge about our leadership styles formally improved to provide significant changes around policy with the department, and the way officers respond to juveniles and their families on scene."

~Michael Fumiatti

"Learning my strengths as a leader, awareness of advocacy efforts to create sustained change has built better relationships developed across disciplines to impact the lives of youth and families."

~Melissa Garden

"With the CTDOC being such a huge subscriber to both youth justice reform and preparing individuals for life upon incarceration, many evidence-based practices are currently being used, such as VOICES, Motivational Interviewing, Trauma-Informed Programming, and several others. Through this program, we reviewed the importance of treatment with our youth under DOC specifically. I have used this information to educate our staff in my organization about other practices that are not already in place."

~Bryan Viger

"I think Iliana from the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance is proof of the idea behind "Invest in Me CT" because CTJJA investing in her growth has impacted so many people and the system in the state"

~Kristin Mabrouk

"The fundamental way that Dr. Whitson presented and explained trauma in children and how their brains react to trauma and their needs differently was impactful for providing adequate services in youth within our organizations."

~Carmen Hernandez