

A close-up photograph of a wooden door with a brass handle and decorative studs. The door is made of dark wood and features several dark, round studs arranged in a grid pattern. The brass handle is ornate, with a textured, conical top and a fluted base. The background is slightly blurred, showing the continuation of the door and another handle.

Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee

2021 - 2024 Strategic Plan

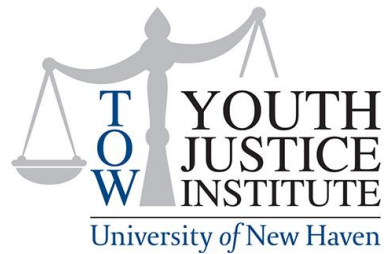
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Addendum

- A. Legislation from 2019 – 2021
- B. JJPOC Membership

This report is produced by the Tow Youth Justice Institute in partnership with the State of Connecticut Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) was created in 2014 by Public Act 14-217.



Executive Summary

In 2014, Public Act 14-217 established the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) to oversee the continued reform of the juvenile justice system. This Committee was tasked with the following:

- Recommending changes in state law regarding juvenile justice.
- Crafting a standard definition of recidivism.
- Setting goals for reform.
- Assessing the impact of the Raise the Age legislation.
- Assessing the quality of education within the juvenile justice system.
- Planning for implementation of Results-Based Accountability (RBA) by agencies and as a juvenile justice system.
- Analyzing the existence of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) across the juvenile justice system.
- Reporting to the state on the quality and effectiveness of a variety of programs in community supervision, congregate care, diversion, behavioral health, and other areas.

The University of New Haven's Tow Youth Justice Institute supports the JJPOC through staffing, research and coordination of efforts. The work of the JJPOC has been largely conducted through its six workgroups: Diversion, Incarceration, Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED), Community Expertise, Education, and Cross-Agency Data Sharing. The workgroups are comprised of state, local, private, not-for-profit, and advocacy agencies who collaboratively develop system-wide and research driven strategies to improve youth justice in the state of Connecticut.

Strategic Plans

Connecticut adopted three previous strategic plans, in 2006, 2016 and 2019 respectively, to guide its reform efforts in juvenile justice.

2016 Strategic Plan

The plan established three strategic goals to guide juvenile justice reform efforts by mid-2018.

Goal #1 - Increase diversion of children and youth from juvenile court by 20%

Toward the Diversion goal, two measures have been established: referrals of delinquents to Juvenile Court and referrals to Juvenile Review Boards. The number of delinquency referrals (referring youth to juvenile court) as reported on December 2019 has decreased by 31% effectively meeting the 20% diversion increase, and the increase of referrals to JRBs/YSBs has been increased by 3.5%.

A number of programmatic initiatives have supported the accomplishment of this goal. A Community-Based Diversion System was implemented utilizing the state's YSB system as the Hub in each community to receive referrals. This diverts status-offending youth from the juvenile justice system, as well as those who commit low-level offenses, to effective and 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 the Community-Based Diversion System was a School-Based Diversion Plan that was completed in early 2018. It included a focus on revision of current school discipline policies. 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.

Goal #2 - Decrease the number of children and youth confined (incarcerated) in state-run facilities by 30%

Toward the goal of a 30% reduction in incarceration, the progress in reducing the incarceration rate for juveniles has important implications nationally. As reported in December 2019, a cut of over 50% in the state's juvenile detention centers has already been achieved. The reduction in males admitted to the Manson Youth Institute has remained steady each year near our goal. Admissions to The York Correctional Institute have remained below 10 for the past four years.

Through 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, a 50% reduction is unprecedented.

Goal #3 - Decrease the rate of recidivism among juvenile offenders by 10%

Toward the 10% decrease in recidivism goal, the system has been making slow progress. Recidivism increased for adjudicated youth on probation but decreased for youth released from DOC. The Incarceration Workgroup has focused on improving re-entry and wraparound services for youth. Tracking of recidivism data also remains a commitment by the Cross-Agency Data Sharing Workgroup, as they present this information to the JJPOC on an annual basis. The importance of understanding the impact of juvenile justice reform efforts on rearrests rates are vital to the evaluation process of our collaborative effort.

2019 Strategic Plan

A new strategic plan for 2019 – 2021 was developed to reflect the significant progress accomplished toward the three goals above and to guide the important work for the next three years. The JJPOC and workgroup members developed the following goals and objectives, developed strategies to achieve them, and identified indicators to assess outcomes and achievement of the goals. During the development process of this plan, the JJPOC felt it critical to elevate certain issues and highlight a focus on Racial and Ethnic Disparities and Youth Engagement.

Goal #1: Limit youth entry into the justice system.

Objectives

- A. Assess and increase both the quality and availability of diversion programming
- B. Ensure that youth have supports from youth-serving agencies (schools, Department of Children and Families, community providers, etc.) as viable alternatives to the formal juvenile justice system
- C. Identify sustainable funding for the Community-Based Diversion Plan and School-Based Diversion System through a variety of resources
- D. Reduce inappropriate referrals to the juvenile justice system
- E. Apply restorative practices and principles in diversion programming

Goal #2: Reduce incarceration.

Objectives

- A. Support efforts to create and operate developmentally appropriate, small, secure/staff secure residential settings (in lieu of formal, adult-like correctional settings) that can provide therapeutic care for Connecticut's

youth who cannot succeed in less restrictive environments (regardless of whether the youth was prosecuted in the juvenile or adult systems).

- B. Improve the quality and availability of behavioral health care services and education and vocational training provided to justice system-involved youth placed out of home.
- C. Remove youth from adult prisons pre- and post-adjudication
- D. Achieve safe and humane conditions of confinement that are culturally responsive, conducive to healthy development and responsive to special populations (e.g., gender/sexual orientation).
- E. Increase and improve re-entry support and services for youth.
- F. Ensure that probation violations are handled in a developmentally appropriate manner
- G. Provide evidence-based, developmentally appropriate responses as well as positive incentives to youth in the justice system.

Goal #3: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities of youth in Connecticut’s juvenile justice system.

Objectives

- A. Ensure the collection, review, and public reporting of race and ethnicity data at each important point of contact in the juvenile justice system.
- B. Ensure that race and ethnicity data and the strategies to address disparities are interpreted and developed in true partnership with communities of color.
- C. Enhance and support opportunities for localized review (community oversight) of school and police practices.
- D. Promote the use of racial justice assessments of policy proposals that impact school discipline and juvenile justice.
- E. Identify opportunities where inequities within the juvenile justice system can be effectively addressed.

Goal #4: Right-size the juvenile justice system by setting appropriate lower and upper age limits.

Objectives

- A. Eliminate or reduce the barriers in the justice system that prevent or hinder youth in their ability to mature and “age out of crime” and lead productive, healthy, law-abiding lives.
- B. Review research and develop recommendations on developmentally appropriate lower and upper age limits of juvenile justice jurisdiction.

IOYouth Initiative

P.A. 18-31 mandates that by January 1, 2020, the JJPOC shall report on a Justice Reinvestment Plan that will allow for the reinvestment of a portion of the savings from the decreased use of incarceration and congregate care programming to become strategic investments in home, school and community based behavioral health services for children diverted from the juvenile justice system. In June 2019, leadership from Connecticut’s three branches of government launched the Improving Outcomes for Youth (IOYouth) Statewide Task Force through the Council of State Governments to assess whether recent juvenile justice system reforms have been implemented as intended and have had the expected impact. The Task Force’s charge was to determine what next steps are needed to ensure that policies, practices, and resource allocation decisions are aligned with what the research says works to strengthen public safety and improve outcomes for youth. The IOYouth Task Force, co-chaired by Rep. Walker and Melissa McCaw, Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, included other elected officials, representatives from all three branches of government, state and local juvenile justice system leaders, and advocates, among others.

Under the guidance of the Task Force, the Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center conducted a year-long comprehensive assessment of Connecticut’s juvenile justice system from referral to reentry, including extensive

analyses of case-level juvenile justice and fiscal data; focus groups with stakeholders across Connecticut, such as juvenile justice and other youth-serving agency officials, prosecutors, public defenders, judges, law enforcement, probation staff, community-based providers, advocates, and youth and families; and reviews of state policies, regulations, practices, and resource allocation.

The IOYouth Task Force met several times in 2019 and 2020 to review the CSG Justice Center's assessment findings and identify data-driven strategies to improve youth outcomes. In July 2020, the Task Force convened its final meeting and reached a consensus on a broad set of research-based policy recommendations to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for youth in Connecticut's juvenile justice system.

An IOYouth Implementation Committee was established as a workgroup of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) to oversee the adoption and implementation of the IOYouth recommendations. The Implementation Committee is chaired by Rep. Walker, Secretary McCaw, and Gary Roberge, Executive Director of the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD). The Implementation Committee is responsible for translating the consensus-based IOYouth recommendations into legislative and administrative policy changes for JJPOC approval, and providing feedback to the Judicial Branch and Department of Children and Families on agency policy changes resulting from the IOYouth initiative.

Research

The JJPOC is committed to using research and data to identify key areas for reform. Research from many sources drives the objectives and strategies that improve the overall outcomes of youth and ensure public safety. The JJPOC values the role of research in all its work and is committed to investing in research going forward.

The Research Team of the TYJI is comprised of University faculty, students, and the TYJI Director of Research. The Research Team is an active participant at the JJPOC meetings and a primary research partner. The following list includes research projects that are in progress:

Ongoing Projects

- **Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations** is a comprehensive training program (including didactic training, intensive coaching, and a collaborative capstone project) for CT local law enforcement to improve youth/police interaction, inform officers' understanding of youth development, decrease incidents of excessive force and increase the use of diversion programs. A partnership between the Tow Youth Justice Institute and Center for Advance Policing at the University of New Haven, this project is currently in Year 2 of a 3 year grant. The first cohort of officers began implementation of their Community Engagement Project in September 2021.
- **A Multi-Level Examination of Health, Housing, and Education Indicators for DCF/ Justice-Involved Youths and Young Adults** is a project addressing health, housing and education indicators that inform system contact for DCF/justice involved youth/ young adults. This study would require the coordination and collaboration of many system stakeholders in order to identify points to leverage to maximum effect prevention and intervention efforts in CT. The scope of this project was presented to the JJPOC Executive Committee in March of 2019. The feasibility and preliminary data exploration are ongoing.
- **Achieving Positive Youth Outcomes Creating Safer Healthy Communities** is a study that is in the developmental stages. This study would seek to assess the current state of diversion and early intervention in the CT, with emphasis on racial and ethnic diversity. This study would help inform policies and practices

being implemented through the Community-Based Diversion Systems Plan as well as other initiatives of the JJPOC. In terms of progress, a grant was awarded in 2018 and began in 2019. The scope of this study was presented to the JJPOC Executive Committee in February of 2019 and a presentation was given to the Black Doctoral Network in December 2020. There has also been ongoing engagement with the current RED work in CT.

- **Building Bridges for School-Based Diversion—Georgetown Capstone Project** seeks to improve school-justice partnerships in CT and support parts of the implementation for the school-based diversion plan. This project is in partnership with Georgetown University. The initial steps of this project have begun which includes collecting inventory on the use of school-based diversion in CT's middle and high schools. A report of the data and findings for this study are forthcoming.
- **Assessing Adult Opinions and Feedback about Next Steps for Truancy and Other Status Offense Policies in Connecticut** implemented an online questionnaire among adults living in four major cities. The questionnaire assessed awareness and attitudes about policy changes for truancy and other status offenders. The preliminary analysis of the data has been completed and a preliminary report was provided to the American Society of Criminology in 2019.

Going Forward: 2021-2024 Strategic Plan

Introduction

To build on the progress achieved so far, the JJPOC, in partnership with the Tow Youth Justice Institute at the University of New Haven, worked over the course of the last six months on developing a new strategic plan for the next three years (2021 to 2024) that continues the four goals outlined in the 2019 – 2021 plan.

Goal 1: Limit youth entry into the justice system.

Goal 2: Reduce incarceration.

Goal 3: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities of youth in Connecticut's juvenile justice system.

Goal 4: Right-size the juvenile justice system by setting appropriate lower and upper age limits.

The strategic plan serves as a roadmap created to guide future work. First and foremost, this strategic plan is a statement for a shared vision: to achieve positive youth outcomes for safer and healthier communities. This requires a fair, effective and equitable youth justice system.

The JJPOC recognizes that this Strategic Plan should be considered a “living document” that can be developed further over the course of the three-years, and not a static mandate. Workgroups will develop, as they currently do, work plans over the course of the three years. This proposed process and structure should be periodically reviewed and changed as needed. External changes will occur (e.g., elections of new state leadership, changes in funding and budgets) as well as internal ones (e.g., addition of new JJPOC members with specific expertise), and the JJPOC needs to have the flexibility to respond to both new challenges as well as positive opportunities that might arise within the overall framework of this plan.

JJPOC wishes to acknowledge that members are still working to implement goals and carry out the strategies from the last strategic plan. The JJPOC will continue to oversee and assess the implementation of prior recommendations and reforms. The Tow Youth Justice Institute will continue to support the JJPOC through operationalizing this plan and relevant research studies.

Process Used to Develop This Strategic Plan

The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee began the process of developing an update to the strategic plan in March 2021. Steps taken since then have included:

- Multiple meetings with the co-chairs of the workgroups.
- Multiple meetings with workgroup members to obtain their feedback on strategies and measures.
- Specific feedback and edits provided by the co-chairs on working drafts.
- Ongoing discussions and coordination from the TYJI at the University of New Haven.
- Conversations with the JJPOC co-chairs, Representative Toni Walker and Office of Policy and Management Secretary Melissa McCaw and the leadership team.
- Input from national consultants, including the Center for Children’s Law and Policy and the Council for State Governments.

Throughout the process, the JJPOC and its workgroups developed updates to the objectives, strategies, and indicators of each goal, while prioritizing measurable and realistic deliverables which will be presented to the full JJPOC for approval. The JJPOC also took into consideration the most recent set of legislative recommendations passed when updating the strategic plan.

It is important to note the impact of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic in relation to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee. The pandemic impacted the many aspects of the juvenile justice system, including court operations, facility guidelines, the well-being of our youth and families, and much more. During these unprecedented times, the work of the JJPOC was able to continue through virtual platforms, such as Zoom, WebEx, and Microsoft Teams. Meetings have been recorded, livestreamed, and documented to ensure that both JJPOC members and audience members are able to stay updated and included. The workgroup co-chairs modified their goals for the future based on realistic and concrete expectations. This experience has also impacted our view on our future work and the update to the strategic plan.

Given the challenges of the past two years caused by the pandemics of COVID and racial injustice, the JJPOC renewed and elevated further their desire to tackle Racial and Ethnic Disparities and engage the authentic voices of youth and parents.

2021-2024 Goals and Objectives

GOAL 1

Limit youth entry into the justice system.

(Reserving the formal justice system only for cases that cannot be diverted or otherwise appropriately served by alternative means or systems.)

Connecticut is committed to preventing youth from entering the formal justice system by appropriately serving them by alternative means or systems (e.g., community-based diversion, restorative justice approaches, mental/behavioral health services, etc.) in order to achieve better outcomes for youth.

Research shows that using prevention and early intervention methods work better than formal system involvement regarding social, personal and financial outcomes.¹ Identifying children that are most at risk of being arrested and improving the protective factors that address those risks will lessen the likelihood of delinquency in Connecticut. If and when delinquency occurs despite these preventive efforts, Connecticut will reserve the formal justice system only for cases that cannot be appropriately served by alternative ways, such as community-based diversion programs.

By ensuring that the “right” cases are processed in the juvenile justice system, Connecticut will prevent the trauma to youth and their families potentially caused by the experience of being involved in the justice system, and will connect youth and their families to alternative and effective services in their own communities that they can access now and in the future.² This will allow justice system officials to focus their efforts and limited resources to where they are needed most. Connecticut has begun investing in innovative diversion procedures and programs, such as the Juvenile Review Boards, that can be used at numerous stages of the system. At least one-third of all juvenile cases in Connecticut’s Juvenile Courts are handled and successfully resolved in a non-judicial manner.³ This highlights the importance of cross agency collaboration within and outside of the justice system to ensure youth are not inappropriately escalated into the justice system.

In addition to overseeing the process of diversion, JJPOC is committed to ensuring accessibility and quality of diversion programs and services, as well as ensuring race equity. The JJPOC has identified the following objectives as priority areas of Goal 1 to build on the progress so far achieved with the Community-Based Diversion System currently in place. Workgroups met numerous times to develop overall measures for the goal and corresponding strategies and measures for each objective.

Primary measures

- # of youth entering Juvenile Justice system.
- # of youth participating in diversion programs; including JRBs

¹ Loeber, Rolf, and Farrington, D., and Petechuk, D. (March 2003). “Child Delinquency: Early Intervention and Prevention.” Available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/186162.pdf>. This bulletin summarizes the final report of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP) Study Group on Very Young Offenders, published by Sage Publications as *Child Delinquents: Development, Intervention, and Service Needs* (edited by Rolf Loeber and David Farrington).

² Weber, J., Umpierre, M., and Bilchik, S. (May 2018). “Transforming Juvenile Justice Systems to Improve Public Safety and Youth Outcomes.” (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform).

³ Lael Chester and Vincent Schiraldi. Public Safety and Emerging Adults in Connecticut: Providing Effective and Developmentally Appropriate Responses for Youth Under Age 21. Boston, MA: Harvard Kennedy School Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, 2016. (Submitted to the Tow Youth Justice Institute, University of New Haven.)

- # and % of youth successfully completing diversion programs.
- # and % of youth participating in diversion programs that have justice involvement 12 months later (data development agenda).

Objectives:

A. Assess and increase the availability of diversion programming

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map and identify what diversion programs exist within communities. • Conduct a gap and needs analysis to identify missing resources, services, and interventions needed within the community system, including data collection and data availability. • Define “effectiveness” of diversion programming both short term and long term. • Obtain qualitative data from youth and families about the quality of diversion services received. • Use gap analysis to increase services and interventions within areas of need. • Review recommendations from JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete landscape analysis for YSBs and JRBs and issue report • Issuance of gap and needs analysis identifying missing resources, services, and interventions needed within the community including gaps in the data collection and data availability. • Collection and analysis of qualitative data from youth and families about the quality of diversion services received and satisfaction with the process. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of YSBs and JRBs participating in the landscape analysis • % of parents responding satisfied with JRB on exit surveys • % of youth responding satisfied with JRB on exit survey |

- B. Ensure that youth have supports from youth-serving agencies **to remain in home with families** (schools, Department of Children and Families, community providers, etc.) as viable alternatives to the formal juvenile justice system, including but limited to:
- a. Substance use services
 - b. Mental and behavioral health services
 - c. Child protection and welfare services
 - d. Educational services, including special education, and alternatives to discipline
 - e. Housing services for youth and their families
 - f. Other services for youth with disabilities

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data from systems (as noted above a-f) to identify viable alternatives to the formal juvenile justice system. • Improve collaboration with Children’s Behavioral Health Advisory Board. • Utilize LIST infrastructure to enhance partnerships between | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of a report on youth homelessness, health and juvenile justice disparities. • Participation in Statewide Minor Homelessness Taskforce • Collaborate with DCF and Judicial to improve | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of JJPOC members involved with Children’s Behavioral Health Advisory Board and/or its workgroups. • # of entities listed above participating in Statewide Minor Homelessness Taskforce • # of youth in juvenile justice who are in out-of-home placement |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>youth serving agencies who work with at-risk and system involved youth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage families in understanding available resources in their community. Define criteria for appropriate ordering of temporary custody in partnership with parents from the Community Expertise Workgroup Review recommendations from JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | <p>behavioral health diversionary services for children involved in the juvenile justice system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identification of successful educational practices for parents regarding distribution of information on available services | <p>(foster care, congregate care) or on an Order of Temporary Custody (OTC) necessitating placement without abuse or neglect</p> |
|--|---|--|

C. Reduce inappropriate referrals to the juvenile justice system.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define criteria for appropriate referrals to Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare systems using a racial justice lens. Reduce exclusionary school discipline. Conduct on-going police training and awareness regarding appropriate utilization of alternatives to arrest; including court referrals and referrals to DCF. Review and enhance current CSSD policy regarding diversion from juvenile court Conduct on-going training for youth-serving agencies and schools for appropriate referrals to the child welfare system. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review data on referrals to Juvenile Court Creation of learning objectives for police training on appropriate referrals, including to the child welfare system. Creation of internal policy for CSSD regarding appropriate referrals for diversion Participation on Suspension and Expulsion Committee | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of students suspended and expelled by race/ethnicity/gender/district. % of school based arrests by race/ethnicity/gender/district. # and % of first-time non-felony cases referred back to the community by juvenile court. # and % of unsubstantiated DCF Educational Neglect cases by age. |

D. Apply restorative practices and principles in diversion programming.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct introductory, intermediate, and advanced training on restorative practices for JRB members, school staff and youth servicing agency staff. Use newly trained staff to bring training to the field | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trainings conducted for a variety of stakeholders, especially JRB members Advanced training held for those who can effectuate change in their JRB | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of advanced RJ trainings held. # of introductory and intermediate trainings completed on Restorative Justice # and % of staff trained by agency type. |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify opportunities & resources for training on restorative practices with member associations, state and local agencies, non-profits, etc.• Support implementation of restorative practices across diversion programming. | | |
|--|--|--|

GOAL 2

Reduce incarceration.

Connecticut is committed to ensuring that youth who are committed to confinement are held accountable through individualized rehabilitative services, treated with fairness and dignity, and offered the support needed to mature into healthy and productive members of our communities.

Connecticut has implemented several strategies to reduce the incarceration of youth. Effective January 1, 2017, state law was changed to significantly limit the grounds for detaining a child in a Juvenile Detention center during the pendency of their case. This has resulted in far fewer juveniles being detained. In calendar year 2016, the average daily pretrial population was 72; in calendar year 2017 that number went down to 38, and in calendar year 2020 it was 29. In addition, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School was closed in May 2018 and the Judicial Branch assumed responsibility for providing secure and staff-secure residential treatment centers for post-adjudication juveniles. A juvenile must undergo a comprehensive assessment by clinical staff in order to place in a secure or staff-secure treatment facility.

Connecticut acknowledges that holding youth accountable involves both responsibility and repair; pure punishment is an ineffective way to change behavior and improve public safety.⁴ In 2016, Connecticut replaced the wording “punish the child” in the juvenile statute;⁵ to focus instead on responses that research shows to be more effective in increasing public safety -- individualized supervision, care, and treatment. In 2019, legislation increased access to independent ombudsperson services and recreational opportunities. Connecticut continues to focus on the reduction of incarceration with a focus on race equity.

While reducing reliance on formal correctional settings, Connecticut has shifted to a more developmentally appropriate juvenile justice approach that keeps more youth at home, in their communities or smaller-scale residential treatment settings. This approach and these settings address the array of youth needs, including behavioral health care services, education, and vocational training programs that provide pathways to healthy and independent lifestyles for system-involved youth.⁶ These services must also be designed to respond to the unique needs of special populations, specifically taking into consideration gender and sexual orientation, and to ensure that all youth are safe, and fairly and equitably treated. Finally, to reduce further harm to the youth involved in the deepest end of the juvenile justice system, it is crucial that no youth be confined in an adult facility.

JJPOC identified the following overall primary measure for Goal 2, objectives, strategies and indicators:

Primary Measure

and % of justice-involved youth that are incarcerated (pre- and post-adjudicated).

Objectives:

- A. Support efforts to create and operate developmentally appropriate, small, locked secure and staff secure residential settings (in lieu of formal, adult-like correctional settings) that provide therapeutic care for Connecticut’s youth in need of a higher level of care (regardless of whether the youth was prosecuted in the juvenile or adult court systems).

⁴ Coalition for Juvenile Justice. 1998. “A Celebration or a Wake? The Juvenile Court After 100 Years.” Washington, DC: Coalition for Juvenile Justice, pp. 43–44; Danielle Sered. 2017. “Accounting for Violence: How to Increase Safety and Break Our Failed Reliance on Mass Incarceration.” New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2017.

⁵ Public Act No. 16-147, §6.

⁶ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (December 2014). “Meeting the Educational Needs of System-Involved Youth.” <https://www.ojjdp.gov/programs/commitment120814.pdf>.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment of resources needed for the REGIONS Secure and Staff-Secure programs to ensure the current and future programs are resourced for success. Collect input from youth, families, police and community leaders about services and supports needed to divert youth from detention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> REGIONS budget option submitted for FY 23 funding. Issuance of compilation of feedback and submission of budget option for FY23 funding of alternatives to detention. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of needed resources secured. # and % of youth detained # and % of youth placed in contracted REGIONS programs # of youth in large institutional settings (detention, state-run, REGIONS, MYI and York) |

B. Improve the quality and availability of behavioral health care services and education and vocational training provided to justice system-involved youth placed out of home.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate level funding for array of contracted services. Conduct an exploratory review of current quality and availability of behavioral health care services, education and vocational services and whether services meet respective mandates and practice standards. Create educational, vocational. Support DCF in its implementation of Education Administrative Oversight for juvenile justice residential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issuance of review of current quality and availability of behavioral health, education and vocational Issuance of the DCF Education Administrative Oversight Implementation Plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> % of participants in facilities/ programs who have access to needed behavioral health, education, and vocational services. % of these participants in facilities/ programs that received the full “dosage” of those identified services/interventions. % of participants in facilities/ programs who continue with behavioral health, education and vocational services in the community. Designated staff for juvenile justice education administrative oversight by DCF and their established reporting relationships with education providers in juvenile justice facilities/programs. |

C. Remove youth from adult prisons pre- and post-adjudication.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore amending the Connecticut juvenile transfer law Connecticut to reduce the number of juveniles transferred to adult court. Create a plan for serving MYI/YCI juveniles in juvenile facilities and programming. Review the housing of 16 and 17 year olds incarcerated on motor vehicle charges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Issuance of a plan for serving MYI/YCI youth Issuance of a review of effective programming for juveniles who return to the juvenile justice system after or during court ordered services and supervision | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of pre- and post- adjudicated youth housed in an adult correctional facility. |

D. Achieve safe and humane conditions of confinement that are culturally responsive, conducive to healthy development and responsive to special populations (e.g., gender/sexual orientation).

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create youth councils with a diverse representation of incarcerated youth to gather input and feedback from these councils. Increase family knowledge of and access to Ombudsman. Establish and distribute Youth in Custody Bill of Rights. Create access to services for families and youth with limited English proficiency. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of youth councils with a diverse representation of youth who are incarcerated and a reporting mechanism for feedback to administration Issuance of Youth in Custody Bill of Rights. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> # of recommendations that come out of youth councils that are accepted/implemented by agencies. # and % of families of incarcerated youth accessing ombudsperson. # and % of families prohibited from accessing services due to limited English proficiency. # and % of youth prohibited from accessing services due to limited English proficiency. Issuance of Youth Bill Rights incorporated into facility orientation for youth and their family. Issuance of Youth Bill Rights incorporated into facility orientation for youth and their family. # and % of youth talking with family via phone. # and % of eligible youth who have had their records automatically erased each year. |

E. Increase and improve re-entry support and services for youth.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct review of re-entry services and what is effective. • Ensure appropriate level funding for needed reentry services. • Explore reentry services funding structures and identify barriers that agencies face. • Collaborate with community leaders, including parents and youth, to gather feedback and input about what is needed to reduce youth incarceration and improve re-entry services when youth do leave the community. • Establish community based involvement to support youth returning to the community. • Implement community involved restorative justice practices within detention and in community placements. • Review recommendations from JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of review of re-entry services and what is effective. • Issuance of report of appropriate funding level for re-entry services, including re-entry service funding structures, barriers to fully resources those services, and procurement codes. • Issuance of report compiling feedback and input about what is needed to reduce incarceration and improve re-entry services. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # and % of returning youth that receive re-entry services. • # and % of returning youth that get re-arrested within 12 months following re-entry. • # and % of returning youth that receive re-entry services that get re-arrested within 12 months following re-adjudication/reconviction. • # of youth receiving services that are restorative. • # of youth and family members engaged in providing feedback and input. • # of community involved restorative justice practices that are integrated into detention (and other out of home placements) and the community. • # of JJ involved youth completing high school. • # of youth reporting that restorative practices in detention/community placements was helpful. |

F. Ensure that probation violations are handled in an equitable and developmentally appropriate manner.

| Strategies | Milestones | Indicators |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure ongoing education to system practitioners, including implicit bias, of probation officers, judges, attorneys, prosecutors and contract providers. • Review all decision-making areas within the juvenile justice system to identify areas with disparities. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of a decision-making point map of Juvenile Justice System. • Collection of information on training. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % reduction of violations of court orders • % reduction in detention for violation of court orders • % of successful completion of probation without rearrest. • Recidivism rate broken out by risk level, community, race, ethnicity and gender |

GOAL 3

Reduce racial and ethnic disparities of youth in Connecticut's juvenile justice system.

Connecticut is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities of justice-involved youth to ensure fairness and equity for all youth.

Racial and ethnic disparities exist in every processing stage in juvenile justice, and they worsen as a child continues deeper into the system. Despite this knowledge, these inequities persist. In addition, racial and ethnic disparities exacerbate the significant post-system-involvement inequalities in a variety of important areas of life, including jobs, housing, education and civic engagement, among vulnerable and communities of color. When the juvenile justice system impacts communities of color at higher rates, the decrease in opportunity for socio-economic development hits these communities hardest. All these negative effects of racial and ethnic disparities are amplified in the case of youth. It is clear that each juvenile justice stage, from arrest to incarceration, exhibits a level of overrepresentation of youth of color.

While much progress has been achieved in both the front end and deep end of Connecticut's juvenile justice system by increasing alternatives such as diversion programs for justice-involved youth and reducing confinement, this progress has had a greater benefit for certain segments of the communities than others. Not only has racial and ethnic disparities persisted during these reform efforts, but the disparities appear to have increased in some of the key stages of its juvenile justice system.⁷ Although Connecticut announced its withdrawal from the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act JDPA in April 2018, a federal law that requires states to collect race and ethnicity data and address any disparities, Connecticut remains committed to continuing this important work on an even deeper level to address these inequities. JJPOC will continue to collaborate with other entities, including local RED committees, state agencies, and non-profit organizations, to work towards the common goal of reducing these disparities in Connecticut.

Primary measures, objectives, strategies and indicators are detailed below.

Primary Measures

- Relative % rate index of justice involvement
- Relative % rate index of disposition
- Relative % rate index of service provision by type of service
- Relative % rate index of incarceration
- Relative % rate index of police arrests

The priority area objectives for Goal 3 are as follows.

⁷ Ricketelli, D.M., Hartstone, E.C., and Murphy, K.L. (May 15, 2009). "A Second Reassessment of Disproportionate Minority Contact." Also see, "An Assessment of Disproportionate Minority Contact in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System (4th Study)". November 2017, http://www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cijjyd/jjydpublishations/ct_2017_dmc_assessment_study_final_report.pdf (found disparities in 11 key decision points of the juvenile justice system in Connecticut. Final recommendations of Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee were still under discussion at the time this strategic plan was drafted.)

Objectives:

- A. Ensure that race and ethnicity data and the strategies to address disparities are interpreted and developed in true partnership with communities of color.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct outreach and community listening sessions of leaders in communities most impacted by justice system inequities (Commission on Equal Rights and Opportunities, Black and Puerto Rican Caucus, NAACP, faith leaders from the Black and Latino/Hispanic communities, etc.). • Explore establishing RED committees in each juvenile court jurisdiction in partnership with the LIST. • Ensure RED sustainability by exploring identification of RED project coordinators within each juvenile court jurisdiction in partnership with the LIST. • Identify natural leaders, including youth, in communities who are diverse in thought on the root causes and have lived experiences. • Examine existing practices and develop an action plan to eliminate barriers to partnership with community experts (time/place of meetings, culture within meetings, etc.). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of action plan with strategies to eliminate barriers to partnership with community experts. • Establishment of new community partners engaged in RED workgroup and RED committees. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of listening sessions conducted. • % of court districts with RED committees. • % of committee members with lived experience with the justice system. |

- B. Enhance and support opportunities for localized review (community oversight) of school and police practices.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research best practices for local oversight of police and school policy and practice around racial equity issues. Identify what Connecticut is doing on community oversight of police | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of report on best practices for local oversight of police and school policy around racial equity. • Issuance of report on any oversight happening in | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of communities that have some form of oversight of police and school police practice. • # and % of youth of color involved annually in arrests, school suspensions and expulsions. |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>and schools and how partnerships can be established.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with local and national juvenile justice and education policy organizations who can be a source of potential policy solutions. | <p>CT and recommendations for partnerships.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • % of youth of color who are served by JRBs |
|--|---|--|

C. Identify opportunities where inequities within the juvenile justice system can be effectively addressed.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine best practices from CT or other jurisdictions that have dealt successfully with inequities in the identified areas of the system and try to replicate appropriate interventions. • Review recommendations from local RED committees on addressing inequities in the juvenile justice system. • Review recommendations from JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of best practices report on how other jurisdictions are dealing with inequities in the system. • Create training objectives for implicit bias training by job type. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of strategies identified and implemented to increase diversity of workforces among agencies and service providers. • % of youth of color who are arrested. • # of strategies identified that can effectively address inequities at particular decision points in the youth justice system. • # of specific strategies adopted by state agencies to address inequities in the youth justice system. |

GOAL 4

“Right-size” the juvenile justice system by setting appropriate lower and upper age limits.

Connecticut is committed to focusing its juvenile justice system to the appropriate age range of youth to provide developmentally appropriate and effective services for both the youngest youth (lower age of jurisdiction) and the older youth (including emerging adults) in order to improve individual outcomes and increase public safety.

Determining the appropriate age range for a juvenile justice system has enormous ramifications for the outcomes of the youth served and for public safety. This includes both the lower age and upper age of juvenile justice.

Children that come in contact with the juvenile justice system are already a very vulnerable group. On the lower end, social scientists and legal experts have questioned the capacity, culpability, and competency of young children. Furthermore, research shows that subjecting very young children to court proceedings and/or confinement - even in a rehabilitation-focused juvenile system - deepens victimization, increases the likelihood of future criminal behavior, and is detrimental to a child’s long-term mental and physical health.⁸ Hence, rather than supervising, prosecuting, or detaining young people under a given age threshold, many places across the world have implemented alternative procedures for educational, child protection, social services, or family support interventions. The international norms have firmly established a lower age threshold (age of criminal responsibility) at age 12, while many jurisdictions have chosen to set the age of criminal responsibility at age 14 or even higher.⁹ Connecticut has recently increased the age of criminal responsibility from age 7 to age 10. While there is no clear norm in the United States regarding the age of the lower-end of juvenile jurisdiction, there is increased support to raise the lower age to meet international standards. For example, Massachusetts raised the lower age of juvenile jurisdiction to age 12 in 2018 and New York raised their lower age from 7 to 12 in 2021. Although Connecticut has made recent strides to set a more developmentally appropriate lower age, there is still work to be done. By raising the lower age of juvenile jurisdiction, Connecticut could potentially serve the very young children more appropriately and enable the juvenile justice system to more effectively focus on adolescents and emerging adults.

On the higher end of the jurisdictional age range, research shows that 18, 19, and 20-year olds, commonly referred to as emerging adults, have distinct developmental needs that are not adequately met by the adult criminal justice system.¹⁰ The term “emerging adults” invokes the critical developmental period in which a child who is dependent on parents or guardians for supervision and guidance (as well as emotional and financial support) transitions into a fully mature, independent adult who engages as a productive and healthy member of society.¹¹ Innovative approaches are being implemented across the nation and the world to better address these distinct developmental needs of older youth. Raising the upper age of juvenile justice is one such measure, as has been proposed by bills introduced to the Connecticut legislature twice in the last couple of years. Connecticut is not alone in its efforts to seek new and more effective approaches to justice-involved emerging adults by expanding the juvenile jurisdiction. On May 30, 2018, Vermont enacted a new bill that gradually raises the upper

⁸ See e.g., Dierkhising C.B., Ko S.J., Woods-Jaeger B., Briggs E.C., Lee R., Pynoos R.S. (July 2013). “Trauma histories among justice-involved youth: findings from the national child traumatic stress network.” *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*. 2013 Jul.4:1–12; Petrosino, A., Turpin-Petrosino, C., Guckenburg, S. *Formal System Processing of Juveniles: Effects on Delinquency*. Campbell Systematic Reviews, The Campbell Corporation; Woburn, MA: 2010.

⁹ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989, Article 40 (3) (a) requires that all State parties set a minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR). United Nations Human Rights Council’s Resolution 18/12 on Human Rights in the Administration of Justice, in particular Juvenile Justice (2011, Article 12) recommended that this MACR should not be lower than 12, and encouraged states not to lower their MACR to 12 if they were set higher. Among others, Germany, Croatia, Japan and Korea, for example, set the MACR (or lower age of juvenile justice) to age 14, whereas Sweden and Norway set it at age 15.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of such developmental needs of emerging adults and opportunities for better addressing these needs in Connecticut, see Chester L. and Schiraldi, V. (2016). “Public Safety and Emerging Adults in Connecticut: Providing Effective and Developmentally Appropriate Responses for Youth Under Age 21.” Boston, MA: Harvard Kennedy School Malcolm Wiener Center for Social Policy Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, 2016. (Submitted to the Tow Youth Justice Institute, University of New Haven.)

¹¹ This population is also often described as “young adults” or “transition-age youth”.

age of juvenile jurisdiction to the 20th birthday by 2022, while the legislatures in Illinois and Massachusetts have also been considering similar reform efforts.

The JJPOC identified the following objectives as priority areas of Goal 4.

Primary Measure

- # and % of justice-involved youth, by age categories.

Objectives:

- A. Eliminate or reduce the barriers in the justice system that prevent or hinder youth in their ability to mature and “age out of crime” and lead productive, healthy, law-abiding lives.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and address barriers/obstacles that are created by confinement and a criminal record limit the opportunity for further education and career opportunities. • Identify and address barriers/obstacles that limit the opportunity for successful re-entry back into the community, prevent lifelong family connections, and prevent youth from becoming successful productive citizens due to having court involvement-criminal record. • Review recommendations from JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Issuance of report on barriers preventing youth from maturing or aging out of crime that includes recommendations about how to address/ameliorate those barriers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ # of initiatives implemented specific to addressing barriers in the areas of education and career for justice-involved youth. • # of initiatives implemented specific to addressing successful re-entry and family connections. |

- B. Review research and develop recommendations on developmentally appropriate lower and upper age limits of juvenile justice jurisdiction.

| <u>Strategies</u> | <u>Milestones</u> | <u>Indicators</u> |
|--|---|--|
| <p>“Right size” the JJ system, by setting appropriate lower age limits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review descriptive Data including Court/JRB/CPS Involvement. • Review non-juvenile justice interventions and community alternatives to juvenile justice involvement. | <p>“Right size” the JJ system, by setting appropriate lower age limits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on national/international standards and research for lower age limits. | <p>“Right size” the JJ system, by setting appropriate lower age limits:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • # of 7-9 year olds referred to YSB through new referral process • # of 7-9 year olds receiving services from a YSB • # of calls to 911 for 7-9 year olds (Opportunity Districts-Ed Comm) |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| <p>by the juvenile justice system, to compile feedback and input on the age limits of the juvenile justice system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a plan for addressing greater awareness. • Review TYJI Research JJPOC studies and implement where appropriate. | | |
|--|--|--|

Structure of the JJPOC

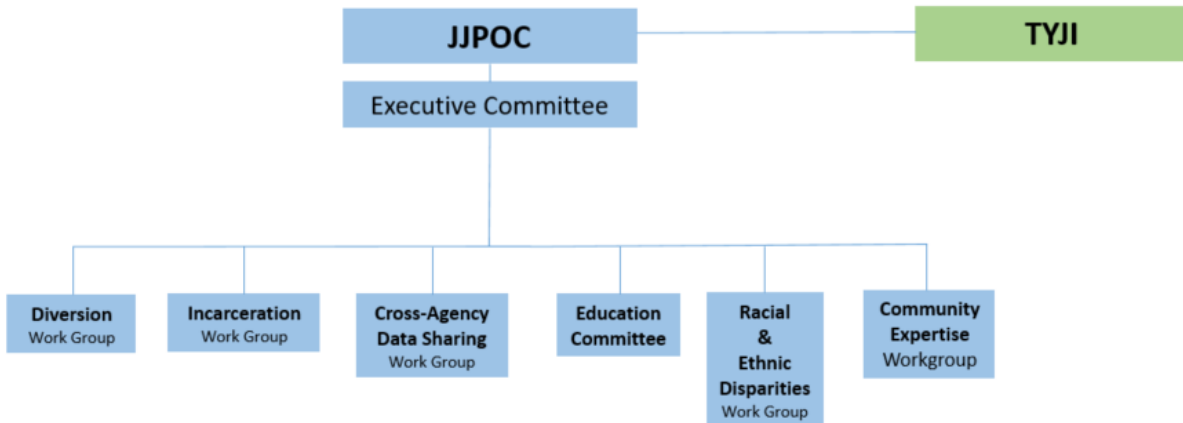
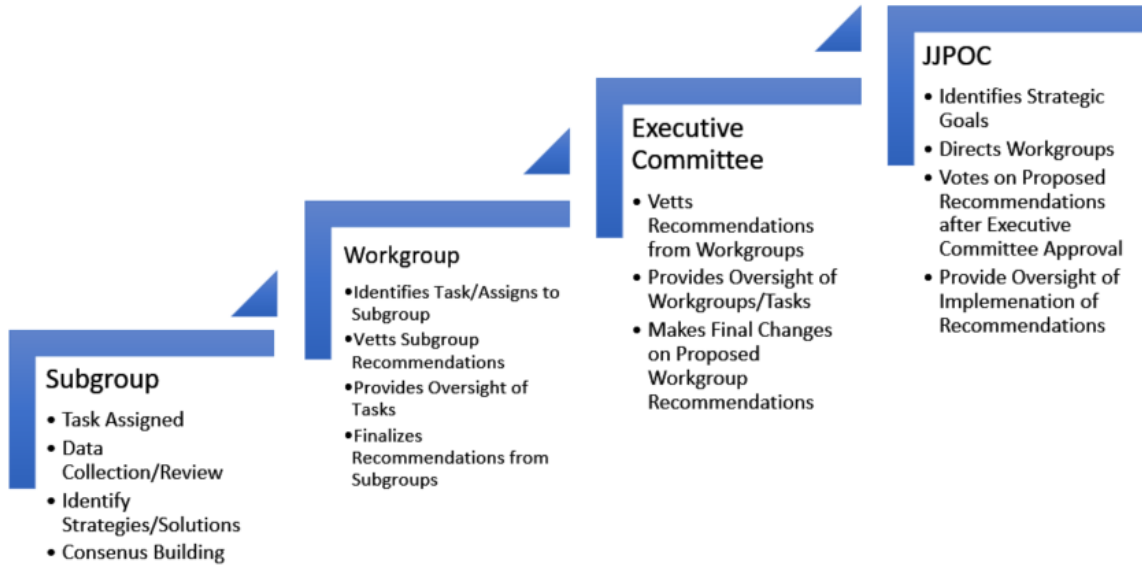
Currently, the JJPOC, with the support of TYJI, uses workgroups to focus on the specific topics identified in its last strategic plan (i.e., diversion, incarceration, and recidivism) along with some subgroups to allow for even greater focus within these topics. In addition, the JJPOC has used two other workgroups: (1) a “Cross Agency Data Sharing Workgroup” to assist the other workgroups in developing measurements to assess whether progress has been made and (2) a workgroup of all the co-chairs of the other workgroups to help coordinate the overall work plan of the JJPOC. It should be noted that these co-chairs played a vital role, driving the planning process to develop this strategic plan.

As a way to divide up all the work, the JJPOC decided to create sub-workgroups for Incarceration, Diversion, Education, RED and Community Expertise workgroups. The thoughts and discussions of these subgroups are reflected in the strategies recommended below. The flowchart below reflects the structure of the JJPOC and workgroups in place until January 2021. It should be noted that the chart does not reflect all active subgroups. The sub-workgroups were established based on an identified strategy or passed legislation.

Examples of sub-workgroups include:

- Diversion: Truancy subgroup, FWSN subgroup, Raising the Minimum Age subgroup
- Incarceration: Re-Entry subgroup
- Education Infrastructure subgroup, Quality Control subgroup, Re-entry subgroup
- Community Expertise: Youth Expertise group, Parent/Community Expertise group
- RED: School Resource Officer subgroup, Community Policing subgroup
- Cross Agency Data Sharing: Auto-theft subgroup

JJPOC Workflow



JJPOC Annual Process



Community Expertise Workgroup

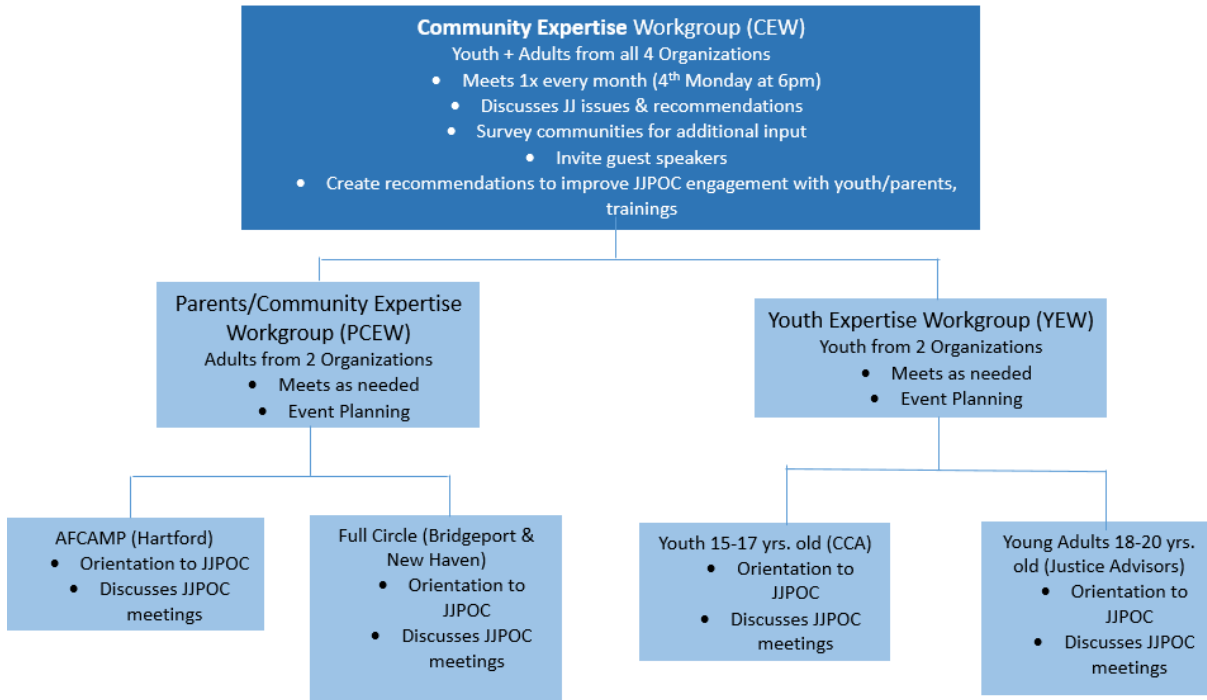
Those most impacted by the juvenile legal system – system-involved youth and their families – have experienced and expertise that is essential in directing reform efforts. The JJPOC is committed to working with youth and families to participate in and inform JJPOC discussions and decisions, and partnering with them to identify ways to ensure their meaningful, sustainable involvement in the development of JJPOC priorities and recommendations. While hearing individuals' first-hand experiences and stories is valuable and impactful, the authentic partnership is critical to ensure those experiences and reflections guide policy and practice decisions.

The role of this group is to identify and suggest ways to overcome the barriers to equal, sustainable participation with JJPOC work by those who have first-hand experience with the juvenile legal system. This group will use their first-hand knowledge to educate JJPOC members and provide input and feedback on policy and legislation. This workgroup includes:

- young people with current or prior juvenile legal system involvement,
- parents, guardians, and family of those with current or prior juvenile legal system involvement,
- victims of offenses committed by young people,
- those who live in communities with a high rate of youth arrests

The overarching goal of this workgroup is to increase collaboration and communication between juvenile legal stakeholders and the communities of Connecticut. In addition, this group will examine the operations of the JJPOC to encourage and support the meaningful participation of community experts in meetings and eliminate barriers to their participation. For example, the timing of meetings (during the work/school day), lack of transportation, stipends, childcare, feeling intimidated by the jargon used, and titles held by people on the JJPOC need to be considered. Through their active participation in the JJPOC monthly meetings, workgroups, and focus group participation, they will directly educate and expand the knowledge of decision-makers. The workgroup will also recommend ways the JJPOC can create a welcoming environment and process that values the input of community experts as equal partners with existing stakeholders. They will invite guest speakers to their meetings to create educational opportunities for their community and strategize ways to further engage their communities, such as surveying community members on their feedback regarding specific juvenile justice policies.

This workgroup should include community experts as members. At the very least, community experts must review and comment on any recommendations before they are finalized and presented to the JJPOC. The long-term goal of the Community Expertise Workgroup is to shift the culture within the JJPOC so that directly impacted members are naturally a part of each workgroup and can work in partnership with all other members.



Education Committee

Connecticut is committed to improving educational services delivered to incarcerated youth. By improving Connecticut’s juvenile education system, Connecticut has the opportunity to increase educational levels and therefore, enhance opportunities for incarcerated youth. In addition, Connecticut could see a decrease in racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system and an overall decrease in recidivism amongst at-risk youth. As a result, better education systems has been known to be one of the most effective crime prevention tools. The JJPOC has identified the following objectives as priority areas of education to further enhance the progress that has been made in improving educational services for youth. The education workgroup, established through Public Act 18-3, met several times to help develop the measures and strategies to ensure that these objectives are achieved under each goal.

Key Considerations

There are four key problems with the status quo for educating youth in the custody of our justice system:

- We are fragmented and expensive: Connecticut has a welter of uncoordinated state and local agencies and actors providing educational services for youth in justice system facilities. Fragmentation costs money by defeating economies of scale in an era of shrinking budgets and falling populations of youth in custody. For instance, in 2016, education at the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and in our detention centers cost more than \$35,000 per seat in staffing alone. However, because we have no economies of scale, even that was not enough, as the detention center schools in Hartford and Bridgeport slashed expenses to the extent that teachers were not always available in every classroom.

- We lack quality standards, monitoring, and accountability: Connecticut has no quality standards for educating out-of-home youth in the justice system, very little data reporting and external monitoring for educational programs in justice system facilities, and few accountability mechanisms to fix failing programs.
- We lack specialization and expertise: Right now, educational services may be provided by programs that lack specialized expertise and which have not invested in teacher training, curriculum development, or the multiple pathways to success that are necessary for educating youth in justice system custody.
- We let youth slip during transitions. Fragmentation makes seamless transitions among facilities, and between facilities and the community, more difficult. Connecticut struggles with records collection and transfer; identifying youth with special needs; and reentry planning and support.

In January 2019, the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA) issued “Incarcerated/ Detained Youth - An Examination of Conditions of Confinement” in response to Conn. Gen. Stat. 46a-13/(12). The report outlined a number of troubling practices, particularly for youth under the age of 18 in Department of Correction custody as well as youth confined at CSTS.

With regard to education services, the OCA recommended that:

1. All facilities must have clear and specific frameworks for ensuring compliance with all state and federal education laws regarding attendance, discipline, special education, and record-keeping.
2. All facilities must be required to report regarding the provision of educational services to incarcerated youth, including data regarding attendance, discipline, and special education service delivery (with information regarding availability and utilization of special education and related services).
3. Facilities must ensure effective intake and discharge procedures for educational programming purposes. No youth should be discharged without an educational plan which includes a plan for immediate enrollment in an appropriate program.
4. The State Department of Education should provide guidance to school districts regarding necessary practices to facilitate record-sharing, educational meeting participation, and enrollment for justice-involved youth.

The JJPOC authorized the creation of the Education Workgroup to generate policy recommendations for review by the JJPOC. To assist the Education Workgroup, the Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) contracted with Dr. Peter Leone, a Professor in the College of Education at the University of Maryland who has studied and participated in the reform of juvenile justice education systems in a number of states during the past 30 years. He is the former Director of the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice, a federally funded research, technical assistance and training program. In Connecticut, he served as expert to the plaintiffs in *Smith v. Wheaton*¹¹ and was invited to evaluate the education program for youthful offenders by the Department of Correction in 2007. His work has been funded through grants and contracts from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice, the Gates Foundation, the Jett Foundation, Public Counsel, and the Abell Foundation.

From the fall of 2018 to the present, Dr. Leone has supported the Education Workgroup through site visits, consultation, and policy analysis. He has visited MCI-Manson, the Hartford Detention Center, and CT Junior Republic. He has met with TYJI leadership and staff, met with and conferred with the DOC, CSSD, and the SDE. He has also reviewed reports and data provided by the SDE, the DOC (USD #1), CSSD (USD #2), DOMUS (Bridgeport Detention), and the OCA and they began meeting to discuss organizational and programmatic alternatives in June 2019, with assistance from CCLP. In October 2019, Dr. Leone presented preliminary findings

and recommendations to the full JJPOC and produced this report in December to accompany its presentation and recommendations.

Ultimately, the JJPOC Education Committee recommended the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to oversee educational services for youth in justice facilities. This recommendation passed through legislation and PA 21-174 established an implementation team to plan for the operationalization of a new administrative unit of DCF. DCF has experience overseeing education in multiple types of settings, including residential programming of Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS), Solnit South, and Solnit north through Unified School District #2 (USD #2). USD #2 is also involved with planning under the federal Families First Prevention Services Act emphasizing preventative practices and behavioral health services available through schools. DCF has continued to work with the JJPOC to create a plan for oversight of reentry, quality assurance, data sharing, credit transfer, and more. This unit will provide educational oversight for all students on a high school diploma (non-GED) track in all justice facilities and will continue to assess for needed resources to meet the needs of this population

Cross-Agency Data Sharing Workgroup

This group will be a resource and support for all JJPOC workgroups. With their expertise, they have been and will continue to be an advisory group to all of the workgroups and committees. Through their access to data, they will secure and provide appropriate interagency data for use by the workgroups. They assist in the development of measures, but more importantly, provide insight into their efficacy and feasibility. In addition, through their understanding of the implications of implementing these measures, they will identify any barriers in funding needs.

Executive Committee

Membership will consist of the co-chairs of all of the named workgroups. In addition, membership will also include one representative from the following entities: Legislature, Child Advocacy, Department of Children and Families, and the Office of the State Attorney.

The tasks assigned to the Executive Committee will include:

- Coordinating with the Data Sharing Workgroup to ensure that the workgroups have the data needed to assess the progress made to achieve the goals and/or that appropriate steps are being taken to develop appropriate measurements and evaluate progress.
- Reviewing and coordinating all recommendations being made by the workgroups that require JJPOC approval, developing timelines for the JJPOC's work, and providing guidance on how best to present these group recommendations, especially those that will require legislative and/or budgetary changes (including the timing of these requests so that they correspond with both the budgetary process and legislative schedule).
- Troubleshoot any areas of need that arise regarding the new strategic plan and its implementation.

Technical Assistance by Consultants

On behalf of JJPOC, Tow Youth Justice Institute seeks outside assistance with specific workgroup goals. Examples of technical assistance provided by national experts include the Council of State Governments, Center for Children's Law and Policy, and Dr. Peter Leone.

For example, the Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP) was contracted in June of 2019 to provide technical assistance to the Incarceration Workgroup in order to meet the requirements outlined in Public Act 19-187. Their expertise has helped identify options to improve conditions of confinement that correct dangerous and inhumane conditions as well as to implement best practices in the areas of room confinement, chemical agent, PREA, etc. Earlier, in May 2019, OJJDP approved a request for technical assistance to Connecticut’s JJPOC Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) workgroup to advise and support the RED Workgroup with the development of mission, vision and consensus statements, a data-driven work plan with measurable objectives, assist with strategic analysis and use of data to advance racial and ethnic equity, identifying opportunities to leverage effective RED reduction strategies in existing youth justice improvement work. More recently, in October 2020, CCLP was contracted to provide further technical assistance to the RED Workgroup. By facilitating meetings and research on national best practices, CCLP has assisted the RED Workgroup in their three main areas of focus: pedestrian stop data collection, police use of force, and school resource officers.

Conclusion

Given the challenges of the pandemic, virtual meetings, and justice reform in general, it has been an arduous, but necessary process to update JJPOC Strategic Plan. Co-Chairs of each workgroup devoted their time to plan for the future goals and focus of JJPOC and ensure Connecticut remains a leader among the nation on many juvenile justice reforms.

The 2021 – 2024 Strategic Plan is comprehensive in addressing issues along all points in the juvenile justice system. Its four goals are a reflection of the drive and commitment of the JJPOC and its workgroups. This is a “living document” and, as such, updates will be made over the course of the three years to reflect changing environments in national and local government, availability of data and other factors that may arise.

The objectives, strategies, milestones and indicators for each goal are very specific and based on the expertise of the workgroups and their experience as a JJPOC member. They feel comfortable with providing detail on what they are looking to achieve. However, after reading this document, please keep the following in mind:

- Some indicators reflected in the goals are aspirational and require multiple inputs to achieve
- The indicators in all of the goals are based on what data is currently available and what can reasonably be determined to become available
- Program measures and system measures will be developed by the workgroups based on the feasibility of the data to be developed.

Moving forward, each of the workgroups will continue to meet to develop priorities and measures for the coming three years. Each workgroup will continue to utilize six- month project planning to prioritize their work and understand what is being planned by the other workgroups so that recommendations for each year can smoothly be deduced. It is important to reiterate that the JJPOC recognizes the significant learning from qualitative measures, and commits to incorporating insights gained across the system to understand what works well and to learn from negative outcomes.

As the author of this report, the Tow Youth Justice Institute would like to thank and commend all participants in producing this vital update to our strategic direction for our juvenile justice system for 2021-2024.