

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

Upcoming JJPOC Meetings:

JJPOC Meetings are held the third Thursday of every month at 2 p.m., via Zoom and can be viewed on ct-n.com.

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Student Contributor to this newsletter:
Jasmine Kaur, MS, Criminal Justice, '23

Looking forward:

We are excited to share with you Issue Briefs in the coming months on:

- The Importance of Summer Youth Employment
- Pros and Cons of SROs
- "Aggregate Truancy"

Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations Community Engagement Projects

The 14 police officers in the first cohort of the Connecticut Institute for Youth and Police Relations (CIYPR) have been actively partnering with community members since their graduation in September 2021 working on the implementation of their Community Engagement projects. In groups representing their departments, they are collaborating on the implementation of their projects. Below is an overview of their community engagement activities:

Officers Kory St. Pierre and Erika McNally of the Bristol Police Department have created a community engagement project where they are partnering with Juvenile Review Boards and Bristol's Youth Services Department, called Strengthening Teen Engagement Program (STEP). The STEP program is a mock youth citizens' academy where they were given a tour of the Bristol Police Department, lunch, scenario-based interactions, car stop simulations, K-9 demo, bowling, among other activities. The quarterly program has invited 15-20 other officers to participate in the trust-building events with the community. The officers are working with the Boys & Girls Club where they met weekly. They have already graduated their first cohort in the program and are planning the second cohort.

Officers Marc Caruso and David Flores of the East Hartford Police Department started working with Mayberry Elementary school and the East Hartford Rotary Club to host their East Hartford Police and Youth Leadership Program, where fifth-grade students were selected by the principal and school administration to lead the sessions. The Citizen and Adult Academy is part of the partnership, and the goal is to organize a group of police officers and teachers to join the Leadership program and make progress toward building trust between the community and police. Officers and youth have been meeting monthly beginning on November 21, 2021 and are currently still meeting. The program consists of monthly activities that bond the youth and officers and get them more involved with their communities. Activities have included a day at Dave & Busters, a Toy and Turkey Drive near the holidays,



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and a leadership class at the police department, and a night out at opening night for the Hartford Yard Goats. They also involved the Police Pals into their program and plan to have a weeklong academy, for youth and parents. They will also have a banquet at the end of the program for the youth and their families.

Officer Sue-Ellen Jobes of the Glastonbury Police Department has initiated a program called fitness-with-a-cop! She is partnering with youth in the community that need more access to group involvement with other youth and police through a program called Fitness with a Cop. Glastonbury High School, Orange Theory Fitness, Youth and Family Services, and Glastonbury Police have agreed to a long term goal of fostering trust between youth and police by hosting wellness programming and physical fitness opportunities for youth. The program is intended for high school students, monthly meetings are designed so that everyone can interact as a group and become confident in their trust with the community. Youth have been referred by school counselors to best reach those in need.

Captain Jeffrey Rousseau, Detective Kevin Small, and Sergeant Luan Bojka of the Hartford Police Department are launching a community engagement project based on trust building for the Hartford Police and high school youth aged 13 to 18. Local partnerships with the Hartford School Safety Director and other public/private agencies have been formed in support of the overall goal of trust-building outcomes and involvement between officers and youth. They will be collaborating with sports programs around the city (i.e. Yard Goats, XL Center, etc.) to coordinate activities where youth and police can bond in informal and fun settings. Implementation of the program has been delayed due to COVID-related restrictions with potential partnering agencies. They are also hoping to collaborate with faith-based agencies and the local JRBS/YSBs.

Sergeant Rachael Levy of the University of Connecticut Police Department has developed a program, the Collegiate Awareness Prep Program, to be implemented in conjunction with the Husky Watch Program. Along with student employees and other police officers, they are revitalizing the program to include resources and supplemental information for students to get involved and expand their knowledge of community engagement, and work towards finding a career path that is right for them. This program is being revamped by the new UConn PD leadership to provide first-generation youth with mentorship and college advancement tools. They will collaborate with UConn Student Government and youth-serving majors to include peer-mentorship element. Staffing limitations at UConn PD have paused implementation as of Feb 2022.

Officers Joe Hopkins, Peter Kisela, and Nick Sanford of the West Hartford Police Department have organized a program with weekly meetings focused on third to eighth graders. Their partnership with the HANOC Center will sustain their goal of community outreach, being involved with the community, and several important topics including social media, peer pressure, and substance abuse, and will help youth in underserved areas of West Hartford with homework/tutoring services, life-skills training, etc. Their Department promoted the program through presentations to the CT Justice Alliance, the Town Public Safety Committee, all department leadership, and community flyers.

Officers Carmelo Pena and Officer Edward Harris of the Windsor Police Department have partnered with the Sparks Program at the local high school to start a collaborative youth program named Male Youth Development. The goal is to offer coaching and support to participating youth, and to provide life-skills planning to youth who may not have role-models in their lives. Student Resource Officers and other youth-engagement officers will collaborate with the SPARK program and the Youth Service Bureaus in their geographical areas. So far, the program has recruited 10 young men but is on-hold due to COVID outbreak in the department. Female officers have already been contacted to lead a girls group as well.



Legislative Process 101 for University of New Haven Students

The Tow Youth Justice Institute held a webinar on March 3rd for students on how a bill is introduced and becomes legislation. **“Connecticut Legislation Process 101”** featured presentations from **William H. Carbone**, *Executive Director at Tow Youth Justice Institute and Senior Lecturer of Criminal Justice at the University of New Haven*, **Erika Nowakowski**, *Associate Director of the Tow Youth Justice Institute and Committee Administrator for the appropriations committee, who works at the legislative office for the State of Connecticut.*



Mr. Carbone began with a historical review of Connecticut’s juvenile justice system in the early 1990s, as a very fragmented system with major inadequacies and dysfunctions. There was a lack of evaluation data and services, a high rate of incarceration, and overcrowding of prisons. It was not until 1999, when a new Court Support Service Division (CSSD) of the Judicial Branch was created, that the juvenile justice system started to improve. CSSD became an instrument for strategically redesigning a unified justice system by consolidating a number of entities, including juvenile and adult probation family service, and detention centers, into a systematic approach that resulted in the implementation of comprehensive reforms.

In 2014, the State of Connecticut established the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) to oversee the continued reform of the juvenile justice system. Erika Nowakowski, Associate Director of Tow Youth Justice Institute, talked about the reforms implemented by the JJPOC and its current goals. The JJPOC became the vehicle for developing legislation to improve the juvenile justice system in Connecticut.

Erika explained that workgroups of the JJPOC were established in 2015 to create structure in developing reform and setting goals each year. Connecticut has become widely considered a model for how a state can improve its juvenile justice system while improving public safety and overall youth outcomes. As an early adopter of many reform policies based on a better understanding of crime deterrence and youth developmental psychology, Connecticut has earned recognition for its leadership, continued reforms, and innovations that will allow the state to uphold this reputation. Increasingly, youth charged with minor offenses are diverted from court involvement, and may instead receive behavioral health supports and other programming proven effective. For youth involved in the court system, the state has passed laws ensuring evidence-based practices, greater access to education and behavioral health care, and improvements in legal processing. The state also now regulates many issues stemming from school discipline policies that may otherwise push youth into unnecessary court involvement. For reforms based on a framework of youth justice to successfully take hold, they must be accountable to communities throughout the state, building toward improved, equitable outcomes for all youth.

Susan Kean, Committee Administrator for the appropriations committee, who works at the legislative office for the State of Connecticut, elaborated the legislative process of Connecticut. *“In Connecticut, people have the power of informing, influencing, and shaping their laws and policy directions by proposing and drafting a bill in Connecticut regardless of their age, citizenship, or right to vote”*, Keane said. Susan went on to explain the process of a bill becoming a law. A proposed bill needs to be sponsored by an elected legislator of either the state’s House of Representatives or Senate as a legislative proposal and is a brief statement in non-legal language that expresses the fundamental idea for a law that a committee should consider. At the next stage, the proposed bill is reviewed by a specific concerned Committee of Cognizance. The processing of a bill involves either drafting it to legal language or sending it to different committees that have more to do with the fundamental idea for a law. Followed by the committee process, sessions for public hearings are conducted in order to seek consensus from different stakeholders.

After the series of critical examinations and review, if a bill has been given a favorable status, it is brought to the general assembly. The CT General Assembly is a part-time legislative body that only meets for a few months every year that enacts laws dealing with the collection and allocation of funds, public welfare, the environment, education, public works, civil and criminal law, and other matters. Here the bill is debated among lawmakers for amendments and/or changes, and voted in favor, or rejected. The approval of both chambers of the General Assembly is needed to be taken, otherwise, the bill may get rejected. If the bill is approved by both chambers, it is brought to and reviewed by the Governor, who can sign the bill making it a law, or veto the bill. If the Governor fails to take action, the bill will automatically become law within five days of it being brought before their desk during the legislative session or for 15 days when the General Assembly is adjourned.

Interested in understanding more about the legislative process in Connecticut? You can view the webinar on our YouTube page [here](#).

Welcome Brittany LaMarr

The Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) has become a leader in the youth justice field, in part, by facilitating significant policy and legislative reform through staffing the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC), a legislative body created in 2014 with an aim to evaluate and assess policies related to the juvenile justice system in Connecticut.

Brittany LaMarr joined the Tow Youth Justice Institute in April, 2022 as the Project Manager for the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, the legislative body that works to reform to the juvenile justice system. Brittany has a strong background in juvenile justice system issues as well as experience in the areas of policy advancement and engaging multiple stakeholders. Ms. LaMarr has over six years of experience working within the Connecticut State legislature including work with the Secretary of State in 2013 and a U.S. Senator in 2012. In her work with Capitol Strategies Group, LLC, she monitored, tracked, researched and analyzed state and federal public policy and legislation, and wrote reports and briefings that were used to refute adverse legislation to sustain programs. During her time at STAND, USA, Brittany coordinated grassroots advocacy strategy, and wrote op-eds on international human rights atrocities. In her most recent job with the Journey Home in Hartford, she coordinated outreach for the Greater Hartford and Central Community Action Network, representing 39 towns and cities. She worked with outreach coordinators, providers, shelters, social services, police departments, hospitals and other stakeholders to connect individuals experiencing homelessness with services, programs and shelter.



Brittany has and continues to be involved in many projects that support youth. She has consulted with the American Youth Policy Forum in Hartford to prepare for a policy forum with elected officials, state agencies and non-profits. She led the panel, providing talking points on youth justice reform

and created points of action. Ms. LaMarr has been a Justice Advisor with the Connecticut Justice Alliance organizing and participating in numerous vision sessions in youth facilities, police departments, communities, universities, and juvenile review boards. She collaborated with state and national partners, including Youth First and the ACLU, to improve conditions for system-involved youth and advocated for the ending of the criminalization of youth. She conducted qualitative and quantitative research the root issues and system failures that push youth people into the system.

Brittany is known nationally and has been panelists and speakers for the Juvenile Crime Forum hosted by Reps Leeper and McCarthy Vahey, the UCONN IMRP webinar on Youth Car Theft, the Vera Institute of Justice Looking Ahead: Envisioning College in Prison Through the Eyes of HEP Graduates, and the National Juvenile Justice Institute's Covering the Youth Justice Beat: Avoiding Stereotypes and the Criminalization of Youth of Color in Reporting. Brittany was also a Quinnipiac University Delegate at the National Conference on Higher Ed in Prison and was a Combat Engineer Specialist with the U.S. Army National Guard, 250th Engineer Company. She has a BA in Political Science from UCONN and is currently pursuing a Masters' in Public Policy with a Human Rights focus. She is an Access to Law School Program Fellow and is interested in pursuing a law degree. Brittany lives in Cromwell with her two sons.

2022 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration

This past January, The University of New Haven held a weeklong **Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration** which took place from Jan. 21-26. The theme this year was **"Call to Action: Renewing the Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr."** The University hosted several events and programs throughout the week, including service and advocacy opportunities, aimed to inspire students, staff, faculty, and local communities to engage in social change with purpose and intention.

On Wednesday, January 25, 2022, they hosted the commencing celebration program, where Tow Youth Justice Institutes' very own **Dr. Danielle Cooper, & Richard Concepcion '20, '22 M.A** were identified among staff and students at the **University of New Haven, who embody the ideals of Dr. King, by making a difference on campus and in the communities in which they live.** They were selected as the inaugural winners of the MLK Jr. Vision Awards as well as the recipient of the Philip H. and Susan S. Bartels Award for Advocacy, Leadership, and Service. The program included a keynote address by **Dr. Yohuru Williams**, a professor, author, and activist who is a distinguished university chair and professor of history as well as the founding director of the Racial Justice Initiative at the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota.

Congratulations Dr. Cooper & Richie!!

Click [here](#) to watch the MLK Celebration & Vision Awards



Reinforcing Successful Juvenile Reform for Safer and Healthier Communities

This past January we hosted the first of our 2022 Fact vs. Fiction webinar series! This webinar discussed the facts about juvenile crime and what our state has done to improve and reduce it. Connecticut is seen as a leader in many ways as it pertains to evidence-based, data-driven juvenile justice reforms. There have been significant reductions in juvenile crime across the board. Current reforms follow best practices. Legislative changes are made based on facts and data. Higher rates of youth incarceration are not inevitable; rather, they are driven by policy choices.

- **Marc Schindler**, Executive Director, Justice Policy Institute- Moderator, was joined by national speakers:
- **Michael Umpierre**, Director, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, McCourt School of Public Policy, Georgetown University
- **Lael Chester**, Director, Emerging Adult Justice Project, Columbia University Justice Lab,
- **Tiana Davis**, Policy Director for Equity and Justice, Center for Children's Law and Policy
- **Clinton Lacey**, President, and CEO, The Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement (CM3)



The national experts, many of whom have worked directly with various partners in Connecticut on its juvenile reform explained that now is not the time to make changes to a system that has undergone successful reform. The investments being made in diversion programming and services have been effective in reducing juvenile crime. Knee-jerk reactions leading to harsher punishments and incarceration will lead to increased recidivism and reduced public safety. The inherent environment of youth prisons with locked doors, high fences, and limited freedoms is considered by many to be counter-productive to the stability and effective delivery of services that kids need to have the greatest chance for success.

You can view the recorded webinar on our YouTube page here: <https://youtu.be/avPnHMUG2E>

Transforming Youth Justice Program An Overview of the 2022 Cohort #6 Capstone Projects

As members of cohort #6 moved toward graduation, they began developing capstone projects they would like to implement in their current professional role. The following is a brief recap. YOU can find more details by visiting towyouth.newhaven.edu/cohort-6/

Title: Transition Practices for Justice-Involved Youth

Dr. Lilian Ijomah, Ed. D., Program Director, Domus Kids @ Hartford Juvenile Detention Center

Title: Juvenile Probation with Restorative Practices in REGIONS Treatment

Noelia Mena Dondele, Juvenile Probation Supervisor I, Judicial, Court Support Services Division
Aneta Szczypiorski, Juvenile Probation Officer, Judicial, Court Support Services Division
Janessa Stawitz, Judicial, Court Support Services Division

Title: Incorporating Facility Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions at MYI

Gabriel Fernandez, Correctional Captain, Dept. of Corrections
Lori Williams, Rehabilitation Music Therapist, Dept. of Corrections

Title: Do No Harm: Trauma-Informed Practices with Correction Settings

Nick Rodriguez, District Administrator, Dept. of Corrections
John Watts, Adult Probation Officer, Judicial, Court Support Services Division

Title: The Importance of System Involved Youth Voices

Michael S. Kosko III, Youth Prevention Specialist, Guilford Youth and Family Services

Title: Repairing Health Police, and Community Relations

Paul Finch, Police Sergeant, New Haven Police Dept.
Tai Richardson, Juvenile Probation, Juvenile Probation II, Judicial, Court Support Services Division
Jessica L. Rizzo, MDFT Program Manager, Wheeler Clinic Inc.
Ann Taylor, Paralegal Specialist, Waterbury Superior Court

We Thank You so much for the support of the Tow Youth Justice Institute's Transforming Youth Justice Program and their capstone projects.

Every donation counts, so please be on the lookout for more ways to support our programs!.



Congratulations to our TYJI Interns - University of New Haven's Class of 2022 Graduates:

Mariana Vasquez - M.A. Criminal Justice with a concentration in investigative services.

Richard Concepcion - M.A. Community Psychology with a concentration in Forensic Psychology, Magna Cum Laude

Paula C. Nwana - M.A. Business Analytics

Isabelle Hajek - B.S. Psychology with a concentration in forensics, Summa Cum Laude

Kaylei Krejci - B.S. Criminal Justice

Jessica Ellis - B.S. Criminal Justice with a concentration of Victim Services, and a minor in Sociology

[Click here](#) to watch a VERY SPECIAL thank you video from our students

Please visit towyouth.newhaven.edu for more information about the Tow Youth Justice Institute. Please scan the image to read our other Issue Briefs and Quarterly Newsletters.



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