



WINTER 2024 NEWSLETTER

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS: TRAILBLAZERS AND INNOVATORS IN YOUTH JUSTICE CONFERENCE

We are thrilled to invite you to the upcoming "Pathways to Success: Trailblazers and Innovators in Youth Justice Conference" where we'll have a full day of informative discussions on Juvenile Justice and Children's Behavioral Health. This year's program will be a memorable event, featuring Keynote speaker Dr. Maysa Akbar and insightful panel presentations, along with the opportunities to network with fellow advocates and professionals in the field. We are grateful to our Presenting Sponsor, Dalio Education.



What to Expect:

We'll kick off the day by commemorating TYJI's decade of impactful contributions and the transformative changes brought about in the youth justice system.

We are honored to welcome Dr. Maysa Akbar as our keynote speaker. Dr. Akbar is a renowned psychologist, author, and advocate for youth mental health and justice reform. Her expertise and insights promise to inspire and enlighten us as we embark on this journey of reflection and progress.

Key Panel Highlights:

Interconnected Youth Systems: Bridging Gaps for Change: In this enlightening session, we'll delve into the interconnectedness of juvenile justice, behavioral health, and education systems, exploring collaborative models and best practices to foster systemic change and support our youth.

Attendees will have the opportunity to participate in one of three engaging breakout sessions:

- **Navigating Inclusivity: Advancing Gender-Responsive Approaches for Diverse Youth**
- **Building System Collaborations for Youth with Disabilities**
- **Rethinking Youth Housing: Community-Centered Solutions**

- Pathways to Success: Trailblazers and Innovators in Youth Justice Conference
- Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee Updates

- JJPOC Annual State of the System Report
- Diane Sierpina Award for Emerging Leadership in Youth Justice Reform

- Transforming Youth Justice Is underway
- Chief Justice of Supreme Court
- The role of International Human Rights in Connecticut's criminal legal system

Each session will offer valuable insights and strategies to address the unique needs of diverse youth populations.

Building Bridges: Enhancing Public Safety through Innovative Police-Behavioral Health Collaborations.

We will wrap up the afternoon with a Panel Discussion as we explore innovative collaborations between police agencies and behavioral health professionals, showcasing successful partnerships aimed at improving public safety and crisis intervention.

After a day of engaging discussions and insights, attendees unwind and connect with fellow Transforming Youth Justice Program alumni at our networking event and happy hour sponsored by the Transforming Youth Justice Program Alumni Network.

Don't miss out on this enriching event! Save the date and be part of the movement towards positive change in youth justice. We look forward to seeing you there!

For more information and registration, visit [The Tow Youth Justice Institute | A Leader in Reform \(newhaven.edu\)](https://www.newhaven.edu/youth-justice) or contact Shauntaye Williams-Monroe at smonroe@newhaven.edu. For sponsorship information, click [here](#) to view our sponsorship package and contact Donna Pfrommer at dprommer@newhaven.edu for more.

Follow us on social media for updates and exclusive content: @TowYouth
Let's pave the way to a brighter future for our youth together!

Date: Wednesday, May 22, 2024 Time: 8:30 am-5:00 pm Location: Connecticut Convention Center

**** Registration begins at 8:00 a.m. ****

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS:
Trailblazers and Innovators in Youth Justice Conference

Presenting Sponsor: Dalio Education

Keynote Speaker: Dr. Maysa Akbar

Dr. Maysa Akbar, is a groundbreaking psychologist, best-selling author, and healer. Dr. Akbar is a thought leader and expert in racial trauma, allyship, diversity, equity, and inclusion. She is an engaging and dynamic speaker who is sought by corporations, philanthropies, nonprofit organizations, urban school districts, and social service agencies in their efforts to promote antiracism and advance racial equity. She brings insight, courage, and passion to her conversations with communities of color and white communities alike.

8:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.
Wednesday, May 22, 2024

Connecticut Convention Center
100 Columbus Blvd., 3rd Floor, Hartford, CT

Exciting Updates on Panel and Registration to Follow!

Cost: \$85pp

WHAT IS TRANSFORMING CHILDREN'S BEHAVIORAL HEALTH POLICY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE (TCB)?



The TCB, established in 2023 by action of the General Assembly approved by the Governor, serves as a legislative committee of the State of Connecticut. Pursuant to Conn. Gen. Stat. § 2-137 (Public Act 23-90), the committee is tasked with evaluating the availability and efficacy of prevention, early intervention, and behavioral health treatment services for children from birth to age eighteen. It makes recommendations to the General Assembly and executive agencies regarding the governance and administration of the behavioral health care system for children. The leadership of the committee is vested in the Tri-Chairs: Claudio Gualtieri, Office of Policy and Management, Senator Ceci Maher, and Representative. Tammy Exum.



TCB Workgroup Co-Chairs announcement

Per Public Act 23-90, TCB has established five crucial workgroups to address critical areas of children's behavioral health: prevention, services, school-based initiatives, system infrastructure, and strategic planning. These workgroups play a pivotal role in fulfilling TCB's mandate by providing leadership and direction on practical and policy matters to foster comprehensive community and state-level programming. Each workgroup is tasked with reviewing needs and developing strategies to leverage opportunities and improve children's behavioral health across the state. Their work is guided by TCB's overarching goal of transforming the governance and administration of the behavioral health care system for children.



We are delighted to announce that we have identified our co-chairs for two workgroups. For the Service Workgroup, we have appointed Yann Poncin, MD, and Edith Boyle, LCSW. Edith is the President & CEO of LifeBridge Community Services, Inc. in Bridgeport, CT, a leading non-profit behavioral health organization serving adults, children, and adolescents through mental health and substance use recovery. Edith's commitment to results-driven leadership and community wellness shines in her transformative initiatives. From securing federal grants to forging strategic partnerships, she's tackled Bridgeport's pressing challenges head-on. Under her guidance, LifeBridge has flourished, becoming a beacon of hope for Fairfield County.

Dr. Poncin has administrative, leadership, and clinical responsibilities within the Yale Child Study Center and Yale New Haven Children's Hospital, including Vice Chair for Clinical Affairs and Quality & Safety. His expertise lies in child and adolescent psychiatry, psychopharmacology, individual therapy, and parent guidance for a range of emotional and behavioral concerns. Dr. Poncin's extensive experience and dedication to improving children's behavioral health make him a valuable addition to the TCB team.

For the System Infrastructure Workgroup, we have appointed Alice Forrester, Ph.D., and Jason Lang. Jason Lang serves as CHDI's Chief Program Officer, leading efforts to advance solutions that result in equitable and optimal behavioral health and well-being for children, youth, and families. With his expertise in child trauma, evidence-based practices, and implementation science, Jason brings invaluable insights to TCB's mission of transforming the governance and administration of the behavioral health care system for children.

Alice Forrester, Ph.D., is the Chief Executive Officer of Clifford Beers Clinic in New Haven, CT, overseeing behavioral health services and advocacy for children and families with an integrated approach. She holds leadership roles in various public and private appointments, including the State of Connecticut Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council and the Tow Youth Justice Institute Advisory Council. Dr. Forrester's extensive implementation experience and expertise in clinical psychology make her a valuable addition to TCB as the System Infrastructure Co-Chair.

These individuals bring a wealth of experience and expertise to their respective roles and will play a crucial part in advancing TCB's mission. We look forward to the contributions of these workgroups and the positive impact they will have on children's behavioral health in our state.

TCB Monthly Meeting Presentations

The committee convenes monthly to delve into critical issues impacting children's behavioral health. State agencies, system partners, non-profit providers, parents, and experts can share their insights through presentations and open question-and-answer sessions.

In September, discussions centered on Urgent Crisis Centers' operations, with presentations from the Department of Children and Families and the four centers highlighting strengths, challenges, and recommendations. Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI) outlined a proposed draft organizational chart in alignment with 23-90 guidelines, facilitating feedback through surveys and workgroup sign-ups.

November's meeting delved into Outpatient services within the Continuum of Care, featuring insights from the Child Health and Development Institute and presentations from providers such as Community Health Resource, LifeBridge, and Mid-Fairfield Community Care Center. TYJI presented a revised organizational chart and outlined workgroup assignments, while Karen Snyder introduced the TCB Statewide listening session project plan draft.

During the December presentation on sustainability efforts through Medicaid, a few individuals from the Department of Social Services talked about their objectives for Medicaid's children's behavioral health services. Fatmata Williams, the Director of the Integrated Care Department, Yvonne Pallotto, the Medical Administration Manager of the NEMT Division of Health Services, and William Halsey, the Deputy Director of Medicaid and Division of Health Services discussed the partnership for behavioral health, Medicaid's role in providing behavioral health services for children, the population profile, Medicaid-covered behavioral health services for children, initiatives to improve access to these services, high-level utilization data, and next steps.

The January presentations continued the December presentation on Sustainability Efforts through Commercial Insurance and Accessing the Continuum of Care: Intensive Home-Based Services. Elizabeth Cannata, VP of Community-Based Family Services at Wheeler Clinic, provided an in-depth overview of the evolution of children's behavioral mental health care in Connecticut, emphasizing models such as Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy (MDFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST). The presentation covered evidence-based interventions for youth mental health challenges, including Multi-Dimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Intensive In-Home Child & Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS), and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). These programs, funded by various sources, including DCF (Department of Children and Families) grants and insurance, offer targeted support with positive outcomes such as reduced substance use and improved family functioning. Despite successes, challenges like workforce shortages and funding limitations persist, necessitating urgent legislative support to maintain quality care and address the state's child mental health crisis.

TCB Level Setting Training Summary

On 5th January, TCB conducted a level setting training program for all its committee members at the Middlesex Community College, Middletown, CT. The training program was attended by 31 members and the TYJI staff.

Objective: This training aimed to establish a foundation for the newly formed TCB Committee by:

- Building team cohesion and understanding the committee's purpose.
- Gaining knowledge about children's behavioral health in Connecticut.
- Learning about the state's behavioral health treatment system for children.
- Exploring specific approaches to mental health treatment for young children.
- Understanding the challenges and needs of children with neurodevelopmental disorders.



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Key points:

Welcome, and Introductions: Senator Ceci Maher provided opening remarks, followed by an agenda overview by Erika Nowakowski.

Experiential Activities: Facilitated by Rachel Keyworth, these activities helped members brainstorm the committee's purpose and identify the need for a dedicated children's committee.

Children's Behavioral Health: Laine Taylor and Dr. Jeana Bracy presented common diagnoses, age-specific considerations, and case studies, providing a scientific perspective on children's behavioral health in Connecticut.

Behavioral Health Treatment System Overview: Elizabeth Cannata and Jennifer Nadeau discussed the various levels of care, historical context, and navigating the AIM tool for connecting children to appropriate services.

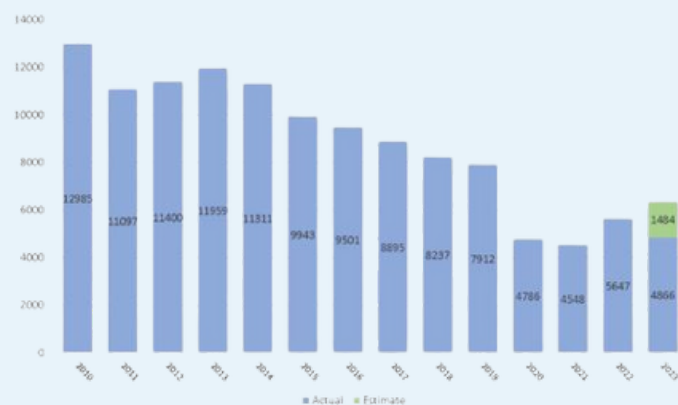
Mental Health Treatment for Young Children: Darcy Lowell focused on the Child First Initiative, addressing families experiencing trauma, children with behavioral/mental health challenges, and the effectiveness of evidence-based interventions.

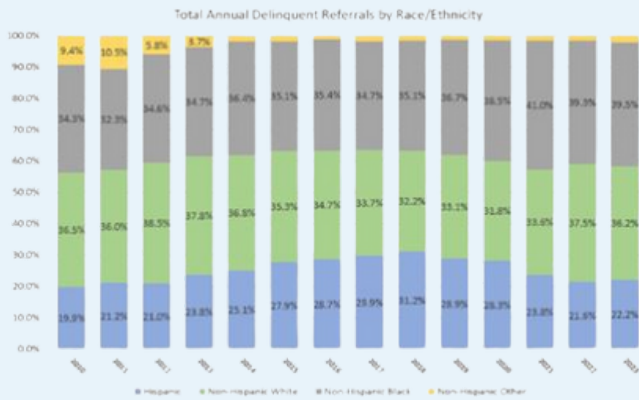
Children and Youth with Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Michael Powers presented data on the prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and poverty among children in Connecticut, highlighting the need for accessible services for vulnerable populations. He emphasized the crucial role of various systems in supporting children with ASD.

Closing Remarks: Senator Maher concluded the meeting by summarizing key takeaways and encouraging future collaboration.

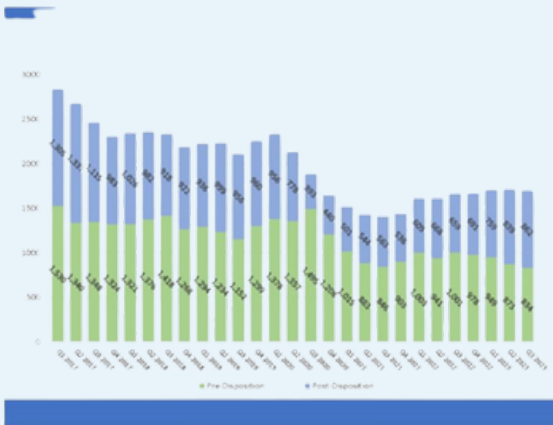
JJPOC ANNUAL STATE OF THE SYSTEM REPORT

In its annual report in November 2023 to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, the Judicial Branch provided a high-level look at juvenile justice trends in the State of Connecticut. Despite the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, the report highlighted a notable trend of decreasing referral volumes compared to pre-pandemic periods. Reductions in referral volume have averaged 6% per year since 2013 for a total decline in delinquency referrals of 49% since 2010. While acknowledging the differences between the pandemic years, the report underscores a sustained downward trend, indicating potential systemic changes or advancements in preventive measures.



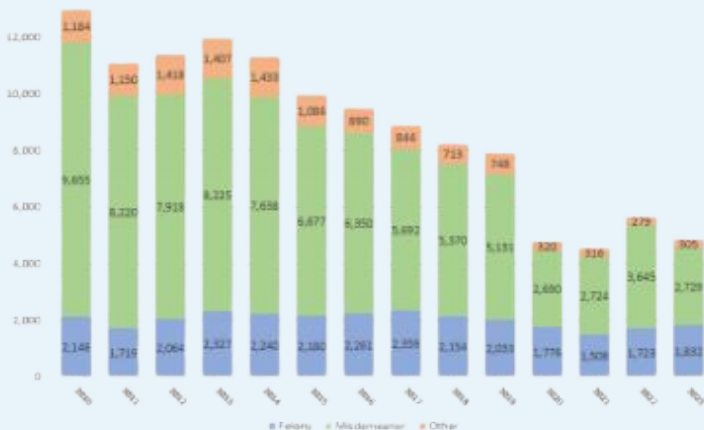


Challenges in the area of racial and ethnic disparities remain. The proportion of delinquent referrals for Non-Hispanic White and Non-Hispanic Black clients have increased slightly, while the proportion of Hispanic clients has been decreasing.



The calendar year 2023 estimated Pre-Disposition Detention admission totals (850) represents a 65% decrease from 2013. Pre-disposition detention admissions continue to contract on an annual basis. Calendar Year 2023 estimated admission totals (850) which represent a 65% decrease from 2013.

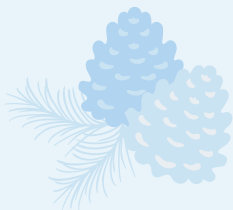
This visual shows the average number of children in the juvenile probation population, broken down by pre-disposition (intake) and post-disposition (supervision) cases. Fewer youth are present in the system on any given day.

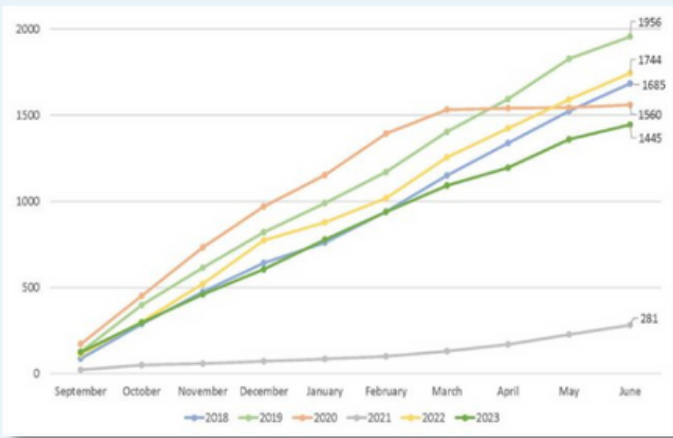


Delinquent referrals to court have been primarily misdemeanor referrals that have decreased 56% from 2013 – 2023. This decline signals a positive shift in the juvenile justice landscape, suggesting potential improvements in youth engagement and diversion strategies have been successful. Among the top ten charges are misdemeanor breach of peace, disorderly conduct, threatening, interference with an officer, and criminal mischief



In 2023, there has been an increase in auto theft-related charges for passengers in auto theft arrest events. The number of court referrals for drivers of stolen vehicles has remained somewhat even with prior quarters





The school year 2023 saw 17% fewer school-related referrals to juvenile court compared to school year 2022. This continued narrowing of the school to prison pipeline has been the result of changes in legislation that address challenging behavior appropriately handled outside the courts. Legislative changes to the JJ System have allowed youth who are moderately high risk to be successfully served in the community instead of incarceration.

This is evidenced by the 12 month rearrest rate dropping from 66.7% in 2018 to 45.9% in 2023. In addition, raising the age to 18, twelve years ago has successfully right-sized the juvenile justice system and subsequent arrests for the 18 – 21 year olds dropped.

These trends reflect efforts to address underlying issues, promote diversion approaches and increase community based services. To see the full State of the System Report, click here <https://towoyouth.newhaven.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/November-JJPOC-Presentation.pdf>

DIANE SIERPINA AWARD FOR EMERGING LEADERSHIP IN YOUTH JUSTICE REFORM

In January, we were delighted to announce the first recipient of the Diane Sierpina Award for Emerging Leadership in Youth Justice Reform. The award was established to recognize a graduate, undergraduate, part-time, or full-time student engaged in a juvenile justice course, club, or internship, showcasing exceptional passion and dedication to youth justice reform.

Alicia Lind-Windham (they/them), pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Criminal Justice, received a nomination from Dr. Janet Garcia-Hallett, Ph.D., professor at the University of New Haven who shares, "Alicia's extensive service portfolio, critical thinking skills about social injustices, and caring engagement with underrepresented and minoritized students make them an excellent candidate." Dr. Garcia-Hallett continues her recommendation by stating, "Given Alicia's personal experiences growing up, they wholeheartedly believe that juveniles should not be criticized as being "at-risk" but recognized as being "at-promise" (in line with Victor Rios' argument in his juvenile justice activism). Alicia has used their platform as the Vice-President of the university's chapter of the NAACP to provide our students with valuable information about the juvenile justice system and the school-to-prison pipeline more specifically, which is a topic that is very close to Alicia's heart."

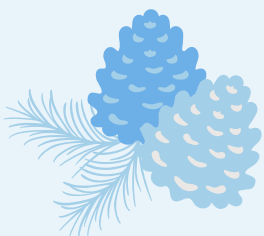


In September the Transform Youth Justice Program (TYJP) kicked off its eighth cohort. Over the past couple of months 18 professionals have been participating in discussions and listening to presentations from content experts. Participants come from police departments, in New Haven, Waterbury, and West Hartford, Court Support Services Division, Department of Correction, Community Partners in Action, ACES REGIONS, Carelon Behavioral Health, YALE-Regions, Youth Advocate Programs, Office of Policy and Management, and Division of Public Defender Services. During the 9-month program, participants have the opportunity to expand their knowledge on juvenile justice policies and practices, allowing them to go back to their agencies and become agents of change.



The cohort members started off hearing presentations from TYJI's Bill Carbone and Erika Nowakowski on past and current juvenile justice in Connecticut. Kris Wraight and Latoya Fernandez presented on Restorative Justice practices. Members had the chance to participate in restorative circles and discuss how restorative practices can fit into their work. In December, Dr. Melissa Whitson, a professor at University of New Haven, presented on adolescent development and trauma. Participants learned about the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) on youth. The participants heard a presentation on the Office of Victim Services (OVS) from Alexandra Gittines. She shared how victims are involved in the juvenile justice system, and the services they can access through OVS. Over the next couple of months, participants will get to hear from more content experts on topics like LGBTQ+ youth in the system, the School Based Diversion Initiative, Funding, and Results Based Accountability.

In December, cohort members began working on their capstone projects. These projects allow participants to explore different juvenile justice issues they're interested in, create an initiative that works to solve the issue, and then hopefully implement the initiative after completion. Their projects target evidence-based programs and practices, with the goal of improving outcomes for the youth they work with. The projects help them to take what they've learned in the program back to their organizations and communities. They will present their projects in May, and at graduation in June during "Cap-tail" hour.



CHIEF JUSTICE OF SUPREME COURT DISCUSSES: IMPLICIT BIAS IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

In honor of Black History Month, The University of New Haven commemorated the occasion with an enlightening event on February 5th, featuring the distinguished Hon. Richard Robinson, Chief Justice of the Connecticut Supreme Court. Robinson, renowned for his expertise on the topic, delivered a captivating lecture titled "Implicit Bias in the Justice System." The event, held in collaboration with the Henry C. Lee College of Criminal Justice and Forensic Sciences, the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Institutional Equity and Diversity, as well as various student organizations, stood as a testament to the university's commitment to celebrating diversity and promoting critical conversations on pressing societal issues.

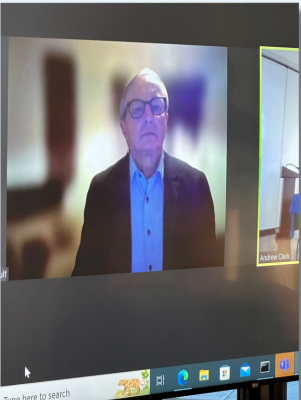


With an engaging and interactive approach, Robinson skillfully navigated through the complexities of implicit bias, drawing the audience into thoughtful reflection. Utilizing his signature tests and polls, he illustrated the prevalence of unconscious biases, challenging attendees to confront their own perceptions and prejudices. Throughout his address, Robinson emphasized the obligation to "See people for who they are, not what they look like," urging for a deeper understanding of individuals beyond surface impressions.

THE ROLE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS IN CONNECTICUT'S CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE EXCHANGE

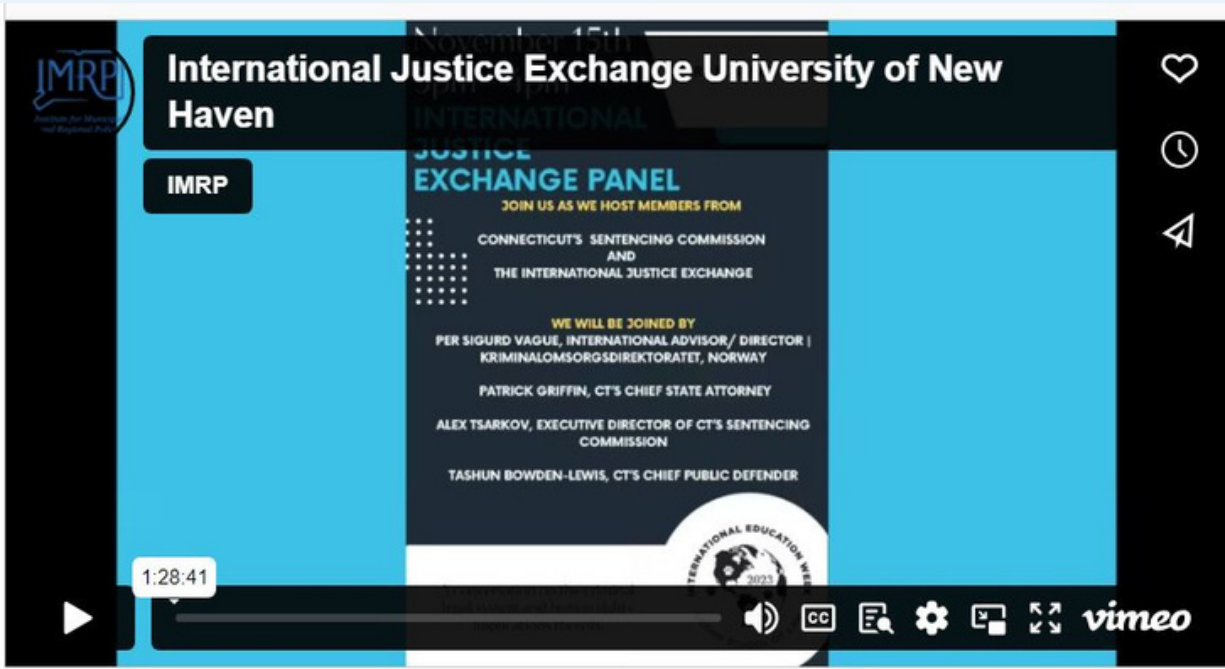
The Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) embarked on a comprehensive educational initiative this past Fall, featuring a series of panel discussions across various locations. These sessions discussed the significant work of the International Justice Exchange (IJE), offering invaluable insights, reflections, and critical information. The panels included guest speakers from both Norway and Germany.

On November 29, 2023, moderator Andrew Clark, Director of the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy at UCONN, joined guest speakers, James Jeter, Co-Founder and Director, Full Citizen's Coalition, Michael Lawlor, Associate Professor, University of New Haven, Prof. Dr. Rüdiger Wolf, Honorary Professor of Criminal Sciences, University of Tübingen and Per Sigurd Vage, International Advisor/ Director, Correctional Service of Norway to discuss the criminal legal system and human rights implications.



Andrew Clark opened his remarks by stating, "CT has had a series of reforms since the early 2000's, changing it's trajectory to a smart on crime approach." This panel discussion was a part of the International Justice Exchange at which is supported by the Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP) at UConn in collaboration with numerous Connecticut, national and international organizations. More information can be found here: <https://internationaljusticeexchange.org/>

Click here to view the entire panel discussion: [International Justice Exchange University of New Haven on Vimeo](#)



Check out our past newsletters on our website :
towyouth.newhaven.edu/news-and-publications/

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

Please visit 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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