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## JJPOC Monthly Meeting Agenda

Date: December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

Time: 2:00 – 4:00 PM

Location: Via Zoom

Viewing Options [YouTube](#) or [CT-N](#)

Welcome and Introductions

Representative Toni Walker  
Undersecretary Daniel Karpowitz

TYJI Administrative Updates

Paul Klee, TYJI

JJPOC Draft Proposed Recommendation  
Language Level Setting

Erika Nowakowski, TYJI

Emerging Adult “Parole”  
Recommendation –  
Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW)

Elizabeth Hinton  
Kadeem Roberts  
Stella Rose  
Deivone Tanksley

Transportation Recommendation –  
Education Workgroup

Representative Maryam Khan  
Representative Anthony Nolan  
Oluwaseyi Oluborode

Truancy Recommendation –  
Education Workgroup

Amy Vatner  
Charles Hewes  
John Frasinelli

**Next Meeting:** January 22, 2026



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University of New Haven

Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight  
Committee

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# Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee

December 18th, 2025

2:00 – 4:00 PM

Via Zoom

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# Meeting Facilitation

## Mute on Zoom

- Participants must remain muted on Zoom unless speaking

## Hand Raising

- Virtual attendees should use the Hand Raise Feature on Zoom for questions and comments

## Questions at the End

- Hold questions and comments until the presenters have finished speaking

## JJPOC only

- Only JJPOC members may ask questions and make comments

## Recording

- This meeting is being recorded

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# Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

**Toni Walker, Connecticut State Representative**  
**Daniel Karpowitz, Undersecretary, Office of Policy and Management**

TYJI Administrative Updates

**Paul Klee, TYJI, University of New Haven**

JJPOC Draft Proposed Recommendation

**Erika Nowakowski, TYJI, University of New Haven**

Language Level Setting

Emerging Adult "Parole" Recommendation –  
Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW)

**Elizabeth Hinton, Yale Institute on Incarceration & Public Safety**  
**Kadeem Roberts, Connecticut State Representative**  
**Stella Rose, Center for Children's Advocacy**  
**Deivone Tanksley, CT MLK Legacies**

Transportation Recommendation –  
Education Workgroup

**Maryam Khan, Connecticut State Representative**  
**Anthony Nolan, Connecticut State Representative**  
**Oluwaseyi Oluborode, Student, University High School**

Truancy Recommendation –  
Education Workgroup

**Amy Vatner, Yale Child Study Center**  
**Charles Hewes, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut State Department of Education**  
**John Frasinelli, , Connecticut State Department of Education**

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# Administrative Updates

# Workgroup/Subgroup Upcoming Meeting Dates

Workgroup/Subgroup:	Meeting Date:	Agenda Items:
Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee	January 22nd, 2025, 2:00 – 4:00 PM (In-Person & Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>JJPOC Recommendations Package Presentation and Submission to JJPOC</li><li><b>Special Note:</b> JJPOC Feb 19th monthly meeting will be led by the youth/CEW. This meeting will be a voting meeting. In-person attendance is preferred.</li></ul>
Education Workgroup	December 19th, 2025, 12:00 – 1:00 PM (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transportation Recommendation Discussion</li></ul>
Community Expertise Workgroup	TBD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Professional Development Training: Legislative &amp; Storytelling Trainings</li><li>2026 Recommendation Review</li></ul>
Cross Agency Data Sharing/RED Workgroup	January 19th, 2026 (Date Change Pending), 11:00 – 12:30 PM (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>OPM, DAPA Crossover Youth Update</li><li>Juvenile Justice Equity Dashboard 2.0 discussion</li></ul>

# Workgroup/Subgroup Upcoming Meeting Dates

Workgroup/Subgroup:	Meeting Date:	Agenda Items:
Diversion Workgroup	January 13th, 2025, 2:00 – 3:30 PM (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reporting Metrics for JRB's, DCF</li><li>• RFP diversion supplement, DCF</li><li>• POSTC Policy Adoption</li><li>• Youth Police Training</li></ul>
Incarceration Workgroup	February 16th, 2025, 1:00 – 2:30 PM (Zoom)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Conditions of Confinement Update</li><li>• Gender Responsive Update</li></ul>
<p><b>Direct any Questions to the following Tow Youth Justice Institute Staff:</b></p> <p>Erika Nowakowski: <a href="mailto:enowakowski@newhaven.edu">enowakowski@newhaven.edu</a></p> <p>Namandje Wali <a href="mailto:nwali@newhaven.edu">nwali@newhaven.edu</a></p> <p>Paul Klee: <a href="mailto:pklee@newhaven.edu">pklee@newhaven.edu</a></p> <p>Andrew Zhebrak: <a href="mailto:azhebrak@newhaven.edu">azhebrak@newhaven.edu</a></p>		
<p>*TYJI will be closed from Dec. 25th, 2025 – Jan. 1st, 2026 and will reopen Jan. 2nd, 2026*</p>		

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# JJPOC Community Expertise Workgroup (CEW)



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## Proposed Draft Emerging Adult Recommendation

The CEW recommends aligning state law with the **spirit of Miller v. Alabama** to ensure emerging adults are judged on demonstrated **maturity** rather than an arbitrary calendar date. Currently, Connecticut's juvenile parole eligibility is restricted by an October 1, 2005, sentencing cutoff which has created an **irrational two-tiered** justice system that ignores settled neurodevelopmental **science** showing the brain matures into the mid-20s. By shifting the focus from age-based cutoffs to individual growth and risk, the state can address a policy that disproportionately impacts **Black and Brown** youth---who represent over **70%** of Connecticut's incarcerated population---and begin to mitigate systemic ***racial disparities***.



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# Proposed Draft Emerging Adult Recommendation

The CEW recommends aligning state law with *the spirit of Miller v. Alabama* to ensure emerging adults are judged on demonstrated **maturity** have a meaningful opportunity for release based on demonstrated maturity rather than an arbitrary calendar date.

- **The Ruling:** In *Miller v. Alabama* (2012), the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that mandatory life without parole for juveniles violates the 8th Amendment's ban on cruel and unusual punishment.
- **The Principle:** Children are constitutionally different from adults for purposes of sentencing" due to their diminished culpability and greater prospects for reform.
- **The Extension:** Courts and scientists increasingly recognize that the characteristics of youth—immaturity, impetuosity, and failure to appreciate risks—*do not magically disappear at age 21.*



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# Support for Emerging Adult Recommendation

- **Prioritizing Public Safety Resources:** Ensure that high-cost incarceration capacity is utilized strictly for individuals who pose a demonstrated threat to the community, preventing the inefficient expenditure of public safety funds.
- **Reduce Recidivism:** Align correctional practices with proven criminological data showing that extended incarceration for low-risk individuals yields diminishing returns for public safety.
- **Enforce Accountability:** Transition low-risk individuals to structured community oversight, enabling correctional systems to concentrate resources on cases that demand intensive monitoring.
- **Promote Correctional Safety:** Improve facility safety by linking release eligibility to strict adherence to rules. A clear regulatory framework motivates compliance and reduces disciplinary incidents within correctional facilities.
- **National Momentum:** California, D.C., Massachusetts, & Illinois laws recognize the brain science and that mandatory life sentences for emerging adults is unconstitutional.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** The Cost of Waste-It costs \$\$ keep people incarcerated.

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# JJPOC Education Workgroup



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# Proposed Draft Transportation Recommendation

## Overview

Two-year pilot providing **public bus passes** to high school students (grades 9–12) in **up to 10 school districts** to reduce chronic absenteeism and improve student outcomes.

**Effective date TBD**

## Eligibility & Selection

Districts with **above-average chronic absenteeism** and **Free Lunch eligibility**

Must have **public bus access before and after school hours**

**3 non-urban districts included** to ensure regional equity

Districts selected using a **DOE-developed needs index** (in partnership with JJPOC Education Workgroup)

## Program Design

Grants to districts (**capped per district**) to purchase bus passes

Passes distributed based on **student demand surveys**

Schools track **pass distribution and usage**; report **quarterly, de-identified data**

## Evaluation & Reporting

JJPOC & DOE evaluate **attendance, absenteeism, participation, graduation**, plus stakeholder feedback

**Comparative analysis** with nonparticipating districts

**Final report due June 30, 2027**, with recommendations on continuation or expansion



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# Transportation Recommendation Feedback in Support

- Increases student access to and from school.
- Increases student participation in before and after school programming.
- Increases the safety of students going to and from school.
- Increases efficiency of taxpayer dollars.



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# Proposed Draft Truancy Recommendation

The Education Workgroup of the JJPOC is proposing the removal of the term "Truancy" from CT statutory Language by (Date TBD). This recommendation also includes the creation of a working group comprised of member of the JJPOC Education & Diversion Workgroups, CSDE, and CAPSS to prepare districts for the removal of truancy and adjust or supplement any current forms that utilize truancy as a referral mechanism.



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## Support for Truancy Statute Recommendation Clean Up

- PA 16-147 in 2017 decriminalized FWSN (inclusive of Truancy).
- Truancy assumes criminal intent and behavior occurred.
- Connecticut State Statutes 10-200, 10-201, and 10-202 contain punitive language including fines and law enforcement intervention for truancy.
- Having two systems that address attendance (truancy and chronic absenteeism) can send mixed messages to families, create duplicative processes for districts, and can delay early intervention.

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# JJPOC Recommendation Timeline



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# JJPOC Recommendation Timeline

## **Key Recommendation Dates:**

- Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>: JJPOC Membership will receive Draft JJPOC Recommendation Package to elicit Feedback
- Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>: Recommendation Feedback is to be sent to Paul Klee from TYJI no later than Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>, 2026
- Jan. 19<sup>th</sup>: The Final Recommendations Package will be shared with JJPOC Membership in preparation for the Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup> JJPOC Meeting
- Jan. 22<sup>nd</sup>: JJPOC Membership will vote on the 2026 JJPOC Recommendations at the February JJPOC Meeting.



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## November JJPOC Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2025

2:00-3:30

Zoom Option Available

### Attendance

Amy Marracino  
Anthony Nolan  
Betty Ann MacDonald  
Charles Hewes  
Christina Ghio  
Colleen Violette  
Daniel Karpowitz  
Elizabeth A.Bozzuto  
Erica Bromley  
Gary Roberge  
Hector Glynn

Heriberto Cajigas  
Jillian Gilchrest  
Joshua Bernegger  
Melanie Dykas  
Michael Pierce  
Martha Stone  
Renee Cimino  
Anthony Nolan  
Toni Walker  
Veron Beaulieu  
Ray Dancy

Paul Cicarella  
Sharmese Walcott  
Susan Hamilton  
Tais Ericson  
Tammy Nguyen  
O'Dowd  
Toni Walker  
Veron Beaulieu

### TYJI Staff

Andrew Zhebrak  
Paul Klee  
Erika Nowakowski

### Overview of the Meeting

During the November JJPOC meeting, JBCSSD provided a JJPOC pulse check, highlighting recent activities and developments in juvenile justice programs. OPM presented a status update on the Juvenile Justice Equity Dashboard, reviewing progress and next steps in its development.

### Progress Updates on Workgroups

The meeting began with opening remarks from the co-chairs, welcoming committee members and attendees. Emphasis was placed on the importance of community expertise in the juvenile justice system, and several individuals with lived experience introduced themselves. A CEW member shared his experience from involvement in the system from age 11 to 20 and his current work mentoring youth across Connecticut. Another CEW Member described his time in juvenile facilities and his current studies at UConn, expressing his commitment to providing insight to improve the system. An additional CEW Member highlighted his experience serving 22½ years in the system and his work with community programs focused on violence interruption. also introduced herself, sharing her experience within the system from age 12 and her current work mentoring youth, particularly girls, through similar challenges. The co-chairs encouraged all community expertise members to

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actively share insights and feedback during discussions, emphasizing the credibility their voices bring to the committee's work.

Administrative updates were provided for various workgroups. The next JJPOC meeting was scheduled for December 18, with a focus on reviewing recommendations and planning for the February session. The Education Workgroup will meet on November 24 to discuss transportation recommendations and trauma-informed, evidence-based training. The Community Expertise Workgroup will review the 2024 Youth Report recommendations. Professional development initiatives include financial empowerment training, and the cross-agency data sharing/RTD workgroup, meeting January 19, will focus on data coordination and the Juvenile Justice Equity Dashboard 2.0. The Diversion Workgroup will convene on January 13, reviewing DCF metrics, diversion policies, and youth-police training updates.

Updates from the Incarceration Workgroup were provided. Meetings continue on December 15, with recent data received from DCF on chemical agent use and progress on the reentry success plan. Subgroups focusing on conditions of Confinement and Gender-Responsive practices were highlighted. The Gender-Responsive Subgroup, scheduled to meet in February, is completing its analysis based on a 2020 legislative charge. Agencies involved include Judicial Branch Court Support Services, Department of Corrections, and Department of Children and Families, with collaboration from staff at TYJI leading the Gender Responsive report. The committee emphasized the importance of including voices of youth and families, reviewing national best practices, assessing service types, and analyzing data broken down by race, ethnicity, gender, age, location, and system involvement.

### **JBCSSD Presentation**

The meeting continued with recognition of contributions by co-chairs and workgroup members, particularly the consolidation of cross-agency data sharing efforts. Bryan Sperry from the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division presented trends in the juvenile justice system, focusing on data from 2010 through Q3 2025, including delinquent referrals, residential placements, and probation supervision. The presentation provided context for long-term system changes and highlighted the impact of committee recommendations over the past decade.

Key findings from the Judicial Branch presentation included a projected total of 5,000 juvenile court referrals in 2025, representing a 19% decrease compared to 2020. Overall, the system remains at approximately half the referral level observed



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ten years prior. Trends in race and ethnicity indicate that Hispanic youth referrals have decreased at a faster rate than those for Black or White youth, although all groups experienced overall declines. Gender representation among referrals remains stable at roughly a 70/30 male-to-female split.

The presentation highlighted the impact of diversion efforts, particularly the risk-based case handling policy implemented in 2023. This approach combines a validated screening instrument with updated criteria for court acceptance, increasing diversion rates from just over 7% pre-pandemic to approximately 30% of cases by 2025. As a result, three out of every ten court referrals are now diverted, reflecting the success of targeted intervention strategies.

In 2024, the juvenile justice system continued to demonstrate significant progress in diverting youth from formal court involvement. Of the roughly 6,200 youth referred to court that year, 4,271 were accepted and handled by the court, while just under 2,000 cases were successfully diverted to alternative programs. Diversion has increased markedly over time, reflecting a systemic emphasis on addressing youth needs outside of traditional court processes. Most diverted youth are referred to the JRBs, which remains the most common diversion outcome, while others are connected to community-based services, such as private counseling or existing programs addressing behavioral or social needs.

**Question:** Where do diverted youth go, and are outcomes tracked?

**Answer:** Referrals primarily go to JRBs or community-based services. Engagement post-diversion is being tracked, and the biennial report is expected to provide more comprehensive data on participation and positive outcomes.

Referrals to court have contracted significantly over the past decade, particularly for lower-severity offenses. Misdemeanor referrals have decreased by more than 50%, while felony referrals have fluctuated but generally averaged around 2,000 per year. By 2025, felony referrals are projected to decline further to approximately 1,600. Reductions are notable across the most charged offenses: third-degree burglary dropped by 45%, first-degree larceny of a motor vehicle fell from 259 to 200 in the first nine months of 2025, and disorderly conduct referrals decreased by over 50%. These trends indicate both effective diversion and broader declines in youth court involvement.

Motor vehicle theft referrals, involving both drivers and passengers, have decreased significantly. Large cities such as New Haven, Hartford, Bridgeport, and Waterbury



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contributed most to prior increases, but recent years show reductions across both drivers and passengers. In 2025, passenger-related arrests totaled 91, compared with 198 previously. Mapping these trends to jurisdictional data could provide additional insight into localized patterns of delinquent behavior.

School-based incidents have also declined. In the 2024–2025 school year, there were 1,083 referrals, a 7% reduction from the previous year and a 45% decrease since 2019. These data are drawn directly from police reports and coded by school or school-sponsored event. While some questions arose about potential underreporting by schools, juvenile probation supervisors validate each case to ensure accurate tracking.

Admissions to predisposition residential centers have fallen dramatically, with an estimated 770 admissions through the end of 2025, representing a 64% decrease from 2014. The daily juvenile probation population has also declined from roughly 2,300 youth pre-COVID to about 1,470 in 2025, reflecting a 36% reduction. This decrease encompasses both pre-disposition cases and post-disposition youth under probation supervision, indicating fewer youth remain involved in the system at any given time.

The risk profile of youth under supervision has shifted as well. Most are now categorized as moderate-risk (Tier 3) based on actuarial assessments, with high-risk youth (Tier 5) representing a smaller proportion. Tier 5 youth often have multiple identified needs, including mental health, school, family, and prior criminal involvement. Changes to risk-scoring algorithms have improved alignment between supervision intensity and youth needs, enabling more targeted interventions and service referrals.

**Question:** How does risk-level impact supervision and outcomes?

**Answer:** Higher-risk youth receive more intensive services, addressing multiple domains of need. Risk-level data helps ensure that youth receive supervision and interventions appropriate to their assessed needs, supporting better outcomes and reduced recidivism.

Referrals to treatment programs and services are increasingly emphasizing community engagement. Programs linking youth to natural supports in the community remain the most utilized, alongside MST education support services and credible messenger programs. This approach prioritizes community integration over institutionalization and supports youth in building positive social connections.



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Outcome measures indicate continued success in reducing recidivism. Approximately 75–80% of youth complete their supervision period without a new delinquent referral, a trend that has remained stable despite shifts in case mix. Recidivism rates for high-risk youth have fallen since 2022, with Tier 5 youth showing a 12% reduction and Tier 4 youth a 13.5% reduction. Adjudication rates also declined in 2025, averaging around 15% for most youth, with slightly higher rates for higher-risk youth, ranging from 30–40%.

**Question:** What explains the decline in recidivism rates?

**Answer:** Declines are attributed to improved case management, targeted diversion, and the delivery of appropriate services tailored to youth needs. The combination of supervision, treatment programs, and community-based support appears to be contributing to sustained reductions in reoffending.

The juvenile justice system in Connecticut has experienced significant transformation over the past decade, with a growing emphasis on evidence-based practices, transparency, and community-oriented interventions. Key stakeholders, including the judicial branch, juvenile probation directors, and the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), emphasized the importance of collective, systemic work across state agencies, community providers, and programs that support youth at risk of delinquency. Participants consistently recognized the efforts of teams led by leaders such as Tasha, highlighting the rigorous, science-informed approach to working with children rather than relying on assumptions or anecdotal experience. The overarching goal is to ensure youth are guided in a direction that reduces the likelihood of deep system involvement while securing the necessary funding to maintain these initiatives.

Speakers acknowledged that while progress is being made, there is always room for improvement, echoing the philosophy of previous leaders who emphasized continuous evaluation and refinement. The judicial branch was commended for setting standards in transparency, providing data that allows other agencies to understand current trends, areas of need, and opportunities for improvement. Data from juvenile probation and community programs has helped identify declining trends in referrals, which has prompted discussion about the underlying reasons for such decreases and the importance of ongoing monitoring and community engagement to interpret these trends accurately.

**Question:** Why have juvenile referrals decreased so dramatically?

**Answer:** While the branch cannot definitively explain all factors, quarterly data

provided to local teams, including schools and law enforcement, helps identify contributing factors. Future meetings may offer deeper insight into these patterns. Stakeholders emphasized that funding mechanisms are tied to service utilization, and reductions in referrals do not imply a loss of funding but rather a reinvestment in evidence-based services that prevent youth from entering the system. Since raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction, significant effort has gone into creating and sustaining programs that support youth outside formal court involvement, highlighting the cost and value of adaptive, research-informed interventions.

A central component of the system is the risk and needs assessment tool, known as the PREDICT instrument, which classifies youth across five tiers based on actuarial assessments of their likelihood to recidivate and their needs across multiple domains, including family, school, and mental health. Probation officers conduct structured interviews with the youth and collateral contacts, such as parents, schools, and support networks, to inform this classification. Tier five youth are identified as presenting the highest risk, and interventions are tailored accordingly to address both immediate stabilization needs and long-term outcomes. The tool has undergone continuous validation and adaptation since its initial conceptualization, incorporating data from the late 1990s and evolving through collaboration with Central Connecticut State University. The system now fully utilizes PREDICT for assessments, with continued modifications to account for emerging trends, such as younger youth entering the system.

**Question:** How does the assessment process account for very young youth or those with unstructured family environments?

**Answer:** The tool is validated for youth starting at age 12. For younger children, early intervention assessments conducted by trained clinical coordinators identify emergent mental health or behavioral needs. Probation officers engage youth in age-appropriate dialogue and involve parents in the assessment process, while collaboration with the Department of Children and Families ensures comprehensive support for the child and family. This approach helps address systemic risk factors and mitigate the likelihood of further system involvement.

Another focus of the discussion was residential placements and the outcomes associated with varying lengths of stay. Evidence suggests that holding youth longer than necessary does not inherently improve outcomes; instead, programs emphasize quickly assessing youth needs and providing targeted interventions that enable safe reintegration into the community. Cost efficiency and outcomes are also central to the system's approach: housing a youth in residential care can cost



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significantly more per year than college tuition or trade school opportunities, demonstrating the financial and social benefits of prevention and diversion.

**Question:** Are shorter residential stays associated with better outcomes?

**Answer:** Outcomes are less dependent on length of stay than on the quality and appropriateness of interventions provided. Swift assessment and targeted programming allow youth to return to their communities safely while addressing their individual risk and needs.

### **Equity Dashboard Update**

The discussion shifted to an update of the state's equity dashboard, which highlights the importance of data transparency and monitoring racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in juvenile justice outcomes. The dashboard tracks metrics such as delinquency referrals, detention, and first-time felony dispositions. Technical challenges have delayed full implementation, particularly for nonjudicial handling measures, but underlying data remains current and publicly accessible. The dashboard allows stakeholders to identify disparities, monitor trends, and guide policy and programmatic decisions to ensure equitable treatment of all youth.

The discussion focused on how to use data to understand both challenges and successes in Connecticut's juvenile justice system. Panelists highlighted the importance of tracking youth outcomes beyond just negative incidents, emphasizing the need to recognize positive trajectories, educational achievements, and community reintegration. One of the primary concerns raised was how to better capture the long-term success of youth who have been involved with the system, particularly those who have completed probation, graduated high school, or gone on to college or vocational training.

**Question :** A participant asked, "Do you guys record successful juveniles that went through the system, like graduated or got off probation early, or completed college?"

**Answer :** While direct collection of this data is limited, there is increasing attention on tracking positive outcomes. One representative from the Office of Policy and Management noted that defining what constitutes "success" is complex. Success can mean different things, educational attainment, job placement, engagement with community services, or remaining crime-free, and measuring these outcomes requires a coordinated approach across multiple agencies, including the Department of Education, Labor, and Social Services. The discussion highlighted the need for a



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shared definition of success and emphasized that capturing these stories is essential for policy planning and funding decisions.

One of the key challenges is maintaining contact with youth after their involvement in the system ends. “Once you leave probation supervision, it’s difficult to track secondary outcomes like labor, school, and health,” he said. However, Connecticut’s longitudinal data system, which links information across state agencies, provides opportunities to monitor long-term outcomes more effectively. This system can help answer questions about education completion, job training, and other measures of successful reintegration, providing a more comprehensive picture of youth trajectories.

A member discussed the Reentry Success Plan, which aims to define the services and supports youth should receive as they return to the community from residential programs. These plans focus on connecting youth to jobs, educational opportunities, community resources, and supports that address barriers like housing and transportation. “Through this initiative, we’re defining data points to capture these outcomes and report on them,” Foley said, emphasizing that the goal is to ensure youth have the tools to succeed upon reentry. She noted that by the end of 2026, the state hopes to have measurable outcomes that demonstrate progress in supporting youth reintegration and success.

The conversation then shifted to the broader importance of mentorship and family engagement. Several panelists emphasized that many youths lack critical family support or positive role models, which can contribute to their involvement in the justice system. One speaker shared a personal story about a youth who escalated from stealing bikes to committing more serious offenses. The panelist stressed that addressing the root causes, including lack of mentorship, family challenges, and unmet social needs, is essential to prevent escalation and reduce incarceration rates. Another participant echoed this sentiment, noting that many youth labeled as “criminals” are, in fact, struggling with complex personal and social challenges. Programs that provide guidance, mentorship, and educational support can help redirect these youths toward constructive pathways.

**Question :** “Has it ever been considered for juveniles who do not commit violent crimes to be placed in schools or structured educational programs instead of residential facilities?”



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**Answer:** This is an important policy consideration. Alternative school placements or structured programs could provide foundational education and life skills in a supportive environment, potentially reducing the need for incarceration. Such programs could prepare youth for future educational or vocational opportunities, bridging gaps caused by their time in the system and ensuring smoother transitions into adulthood.

Panelists also discussed the challenge of promoting higher education among system-involved youth. While many successfully enter the workforce, continue education either at vocational schools or four-year colleges, this problem remains a significant hurdle. Youth often face financial pressures, work demands, and the daunting task of completing long programs. Providing guidance, mentorship, and targeted support for higher education is critical to sustaining positive outcomes and creating opportunities for long-term success.

The discussion returned to the role of data in driving policy and funding. Panelists emphasized that data should not only document challenges but also highlight successes. By tracking positive outcomes such as high school graduations, program completions, and job placements, the state can better understand what works and communicate progress to the public and funders. Creative approaches to public recognition were suggested, such as highlighting the number of youth achieving milestones or sharing aggregate success stories to celebrate community accomplishments..

Next Meeting:  
December 19, 2025  
2:00 PM-3:30 PM