



“A Multi-Level Examination of Health, Housing, and Education Indicators for DCF/Justice-Involved Youths and Young Adults”

“Referred to as the HHEJ Study”

Rationale:

Members of the JJPOC and its workgroups have heard many presentations over the past few years and especially in 2020 that highlight evidence that there is racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile and criminal justice systems in Connecticut. It has also been stated that expanding our knowledge, especially in areas such as health, housing, and education, is necessary for better understanding and then preventing harmful and traumatic experiences for youth and young adults. The intersectionality of these issues requires a robust dataset that does not currently exist to conduct an analysis of this magnitude.

Goals:

The project aims to accomplish the following: 1) Understand the role of health, housing, and education factors for DCF/Justice-involved youth and young adults, and how those factors influence racial and ethnic disparities among individual and community-level outcomes; 2) Identify gaps in the data to inform future data collection and sharing; and 3) Inform the state’s Juvenile Justice and Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC) with recommendations to positively advance youths and young adults’ wellbeing.

Description:

This research project addresses the need for research on racial and ethnic disparities among the Department of Children and Families (DCF)/Justice-involved youth while accounting for indicators of health, housing, and education. The overall purpose of this study is to coordinate and analyze data from 2014-2019 to understand youth and young adults (24 years or younger) who are entering and exiting various systems (such as the juvenile and criminal justice systems, as well as child welfare systems), as well as to explore community-level indicators of limited health services and experiences with housing instability. The results of this study will be used to better identify the roles that health, housing, and education variables play as predictors of DCF/justice-involvement. Additionally, these results will help produce recommendations related to service needs and acknowledging barriers for improving future data collection among state agencies and community partners.

Research Questions:

1) What individual-level health, housing, and education factors predict DCF/Justice-involvement for youth and young adults? 2) What community-level health, housing, and education factors predict DCF/Justice-involvement for youth and young adults? 3) What barriers limit the availability and access for health, housing, education, and justice data collected by state agencies and community partners for research projects that require multi-system data?



Research Design/Analysis Plan:

First, the researchers will construct a multi-level dataset with the available data. Second, the researchers will conduct multi-level modeling to examine the individual-level and community-level data. Third, a review will be conducted of the feasibility and limitations of the data used to complete the project. Overall, this research design addresses the goals of identifying factors leading to the prevention and reduction of the racial disparity among DCF/justice-involved youth and young adults in Connecticut, as well as informing future research projects that require multi-system data collected post-2020.

Data Sources:

UNH currently holds data on justice-involved minors supervised by CSSD, DCF, or DOC from 2005 to 2018. The MOA coordinating this data will expire 12/31/2020. New data agreements have already been entered into with the Connecticut Coalition to End Homelessness (CCEH) and United Way of CT/2-1-1 for 2014-2019 data, and a data agreement and transfer is underway with DMHAS.

It is recommended that a new MOA be entered into with CSSD, DCF, and DOC, as well as adding in SDE. This agreement would incorporate this study as a focus for data usage and expand the data in several ways: 1) the data existing data held at UNH should be updated to 2019, 2) DCF data should be expanded to include all DCF-involved youth (regardless of justice-involvement), and 3) data on young adults (18-24) should be included.

Funding:

Additional funding for this project will be sought from the W. T. Grant foundation through their Research Grants on Reducing Inequality Application. The Letter of Intent for this application in January 13th, 2021. An updated MOA or letter of support from state agencies would help indicate state support and boost the perceived feasibility of the project.

Timeline:

February 2019- Initial presentation to the JJPOC Executive Committee

Summer/Fall 2019- Discussions with TYJI Advisory Council, State-Agencies, Community Partners, and additional researchers.

Spring 2020- University of New Haven IRB Approval received

Summer 2020- Data requested from CCEH, 211, DMHAS

Fall 2020- Data MOA Drafted and additional state-agency (JB, DCF, DOC, SDE) data requested;

Spring 2021- Apply for additional funding; Data acquisition from state agencies and data cleaning

Summer 2021- Multi-level model analyses; Discussion with Key Stakeholders and additional analyses

Fall 2021- Presentation of Preliminary Findings to JJPOC