

School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)

Funded by: CSDE

Timeframe: 2008 – Present

Annual Budget: \$900,000 (*Per State Budget Biennium Ending June 30, 2025*)

Additional Amount- \$60,000 from DMHAS & \$20,000 from JB-CSSD

Overview:

The School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) promotes positive outcomes for both schools and students. SBDI reduces the rate of in-school arrest, expulsion, and out- of school suspensions. By doing this, SBDI helps keep youth in school, improves student outcomes, reduces costly juvenile justice involvement, and ensures that students receive fair and equitable in-school discipline regardless of mental health, special education needs or demographic characteristics such as race or ethnicity. Instead of arresting and suspending children with behavior problems, SBDI schools support students and connect them to school- and community- based behavioral health services.

Goals:

The goal of SBDI is to reduce the number of youth who come into contact with law enforcement and juvenile justice system, to build knowledge and skills among school staff to recognize and manage behavioral health crisis in schools, and link youth at-risk for juvenile justice involvement to appropriate community-based services and supports.

Key Partners:

- SBDI was developed in Connecticut as a component of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundations Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network
- Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE)
- Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS)
- Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JB-CSSD)
- Department of Children and Families (DCF) also serves on the Advisory Committee
- Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) co-developed the model and has served as the Statewide Coordinating Center since 2008

Key Activities:

- **Workforce Development-** SBDI has trained over 150 school resource officers/police officers and over 5,500 teachers and staff to recognize trauma and mental health concerns and manage behavioral health crisis in schools.
- **School Policy Development-** SBDI has helped schools implement restorative practices and develop a Graduated Response Model of discipline intervention; Memorandum of Agreement between schools, local providers, and police; and other efforts including family engagement.
- **Collaboration-** SBDI has facilitated collaboration with law enforcement and community mental health providers so schools call Mobile Crisis Intervention Services (211) or

directly engage service providers instead of the police (911) to manage a behavioral health incident.

Results:

- SBDI has been implemented in 76 schools across 26 Connecticut school districts, impacting over 80,000 students. On average since 2010-2024 participating schools have reduced court referrals by 25 percent.
- SBDI has increased Mobile Crisis Intervention Services referrals and connections to other behavioral health services by 24 percent.
- Many schools have sustained or even further exceeded these outcomes over time.