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JJPOC Monthly Meeting Agenda

Date: April 17, 2025

Time: 2:00PM-3:30PM

Location: Via Zoom Viewing Options

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

Welcome and Introductions

Representative Toni Walker
Undersecretary Daniel Karpowitz

Overview of Meeting and
Announcements

Brittany LaMarr

OJJDP Update

OPM

STTAR Enhancement Plan

Dr. Frank Gregory, DCF

Statewide Diversion Policy Update

Diversion Workgroup Chairs: Thea
Montanez; Lisa Simone

DCF

Next Meeting: September 18, 2025



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University of New Haven

Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee

July 17, 2025

2:00PM – 3:30PM

Remote via Zoom

Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight
Committee

Agenda

Welcome and Introductions

Rep. Toni Walker/Undersecretary Daniel Karpowitz

Overview of Meeting & Announcements

Brittany LaMarr, University of New Haven, TYJI

Update on OJJDP

OPM

DCF STTAR Program Update

Dr. Frank Gregory

Statewide Diversion Policy Update

Diversion Workgroup Chairs: Thea Montanez, Lisa Simone

DCF



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Update on OJDP



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DCF STTAR Program Update



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Statewide Diversion Policy Update



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Per statute passed this year: “Not later than February 1, 2026, the Police Officer Standards and Training Council established under section 7-294b of the general statutes, the chairpersons of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee established pursuant to section 46b-121n of the general statutes and representatives of the community expertise subcommittee of said committee shall develop (1) a state-wide uniform youth diversion policy for proposed adoption by said council, and (2) a youth diversion training curriculum for proposed inclusion in minimum basic training programs requiring satisfactory completion for purposes of obtaining certification as a police officer.”

Steps Taken:

A small group, per statute, has met to work on this policy. The group consists of: POSTC Chief Wydra, and Jessica Gouveia, Lt. Curtis Eller, Thea Montanez, Lisa Simone, Tasha Hunt, Erica Bromley, Stella Rose, Christina Quaranta, Chief Bernegger, Rep. Nolan, Renee Cimino, Brittany LaMarr. They have met 5 times to develop the policy and additional outreach was made to other law enforcement agencies to include their input and perspective.

History:

For five years, following a report from the Council of State Governments, JJPOC efforts to mandate pre-arrest diversion through statute were unsuccessful due to concerns about eliminating discretion, unclear tracking mechanisms, and limited support from police leadership. The initiative stemmed from a Council of State Governments study highlighting inequities in the diversion system. Last year, with law enforcement support, the Diversion Workgroup concluded that implementing diversion through police policy—rather than legislation—would be a more practical and adaptable approach, leading to the passage of the policy outlined above.



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The Policy

This policy is specifically directed at police; it does not include the practices within the diversion system or how JBCSSD handles juvenile cases.

This policy creates the floor or equity for diversion. It prioritizes pre-arrest diversion for first- and second-time misdemeanor offenses but does not eliminate police discretion to divert beyond first- and second-time misdemeanors.

Additionally, if a police officer chooses not to divert, they would complete a form outlining why they chose to send the case to juvenile court.

The policy also includes a data and tracking component that is still being worked through in partnership with law enforcement.

This policy will be formally submitted to POSTC this August for their consideration.



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DCF Supplement to Diversion

A critical piece to implementing the policy will be the assurance that DCF will supplement the existing diversion system to cover areas where diversion is not currently utilized/accessible, so that all law enforcement have a place to divert to.

STATEWIDE POLICE DIVERSION POLICY

FINAL DRAFT

I. Purpose

This policy establishes a statewide standard for police referrals to youth diversion to prevent formal arrest and judicial involvement for eligible youth. It emphasizes early intervention, rehabilitation, and restorative practices while promoting public safety and accountability.

II. Policy Statement

All Connecticut law enforcement agencies should prioritize pre-arrest diversion as a preferred response for eligible youth. Eligible youth should be diverted, in lieu of arrest, for, at a minimum, their first and second-time chargeable misdemeanor offenses. Police officers retain their discretion and are not restricted from diverting a youth beyond their first two chargeable misdemeanor offenses or for chargeable offenses beyond misdemeanors. Diversion offers structured alternatives to prosecution, reduces recidivism, and fosters positive youth development by engaging youth in community-based services tailored to their needs, while prioritizing accountability.

III. Definitions

- **Diversion:** A structured alternative to arrest or prosecution that redirects youth into community-based services while prioritizing accountability.
 - **Eligible Youth:** Individuals aged 10–17 who could be charged with first and second-time misdemeanor offenses; other offenses and additional referrals will be subject to police discretion.
 - **Juvenile Review Board (JRB)/Youth Diversion Team (YDT):** A multidisciplinary, community-based team that assesses referred youth and coordinates diversion efforts.
 - **Referral Officer:** The officer who initiates the diversion referral and explains the rights and responsibilities to the youth and guardians.
-

IV. Eligibility Criteria

Youth are eligible for diversion if all the following apply:

1. Between the ages of 10 and 17

2. Could be charged for an offense that is eligible for Juvenile Court
 3. First or second-time chargeable misdemeanor offenses; or additional offenses with police discretion.
 4. Youth and guardian agree to participate at the JRB/YDT diversion intake meeting
-

V. Procedures

A. Officer Discretion & Referral

- Officers encountering an eligible youth must consider diversion before arrest.
- If diverting, the officer issues a Diversion Referral Form in lieu of a summons.
- The youth and guardian sign an initial agreement to participate in an intake and contact the diversion program within 5 business days, if applicable.

B. JRB Role and Responsibilities

- JRBs/YDTs can include, but are not limited to, representatives from law enforcement, probation, schools, youth services, mental health providers, and the community.
 - Upon referral, the JRB/YDT conducts an intake and screening and/or assessment to determine potential appropriate services (e.g., counseling, community service, restitution, or mentoring) to go along with the reparation of harm.
 - The JRB/YDT agrees on a diversion plan with defined expectations and timeline for completion.
-

VI. Program Outcomes

- **Successful Completion:** If the JRB/YDT agreement is completed, youth avoids court for the diverted incident, and does not have a criminal record. Support services continue if needed.
 - **Non-Compliance:** If the youth does not engage with the JRB/YDT (engagement is determined by the JRB/YDT), the JRB/YDT may send the case back to the referring entity (i.e., law enforcement agency). At that point the law enforcement agency must use its discretion and either send the case to the juvenile court via a police summons/court referral or choose not to pursue the offense.
-

VII. Tracking, Data, and Documentation

- Law enforcement agencies must maintain:
 - A secure Diversion Tracking Log to include:
 - Documentation of each referral, outcome, and youth demographics
 - A record of the explanation for why an officer did not divert a youth for their first or second-time chargeable misdemeanor offense
 - Annual reporting to POSTC and local oversight bodies
 - All diversion records are sealed and subject to data retention limits consistent with confidentiality statutes.
-

VIII. Training Requirements

- Officers must be trained on this pre-arrest diversion policy as part of their 14 hours of statutorily required juvenile justice training every 3 years.
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IX. Law Enforcement Supervisor Responsibilities

- The law enforcement supervisor on duty must:
 - Review all juvenile contacts for diversion eligibility
 - Ensure documentation is complete and timely
 - Provide guidance and feedback on diversion decisions
-

X. Oversight and Review

- The Connecticut POST Council will determine whether this policy is in place in connection with its state accreditation program.
- The JJPOC will review policy effectiveness biannually, incorporating feedback from stakeholders, youth, and community partners.



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STTAR Enhancement Plan
Update for JJPOC
July 17, 2025

Presented by
Dr. Frank Gregory

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

PA 25-168

"Section 250. (NEW) (Effective from passage) Not later than July 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Department of Children and Families shall report on its implementation of the Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification Enhancement Plan released by the department in March 2024, to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee established pursuant to section 46b-121n of the general statutes. Such initial report shall use metrics in use at the time of such reporting. Not later than September 30, 2025, the department shall consider and may develop additional metrics for use in successive annual reports."

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Current STTAR Programs

- DCF STTAR Programs

- Boys & Girls Village (Bridgeport, male)
- Bridge Family Center (Hartford, male)
- Bridge Family Center (West Hartford, female)
- Bridge Family Center (Wolcott, male)
- Noank Support Services (Ledyard, female)
- Noank Support Services (Ledyard, female)
- Waterford Country School (Montville, male)

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Point-in-Time Demographics

- Age: Most youth were between 14 & 17 years old (91%),
 - most common age is 15 years old (32%).
- Race/ethnicity:
 - Hispanic (30%)
 - Black (27%)
 - White (22%)
 - Multiracial (22%).
- Youth identifying as LGBTQIA+: 32%
- Youth entry into DCF care via Order of Temporary Custody (OTC): 81%
- Youth entry into DCF care result of parent refusal: 57%
- Youth who have experienced disrupted adoption/guardianship: 41%

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Point-in-Time Demographics

- Prior placement in Functional Family Therapy Foster Care program (FFT-FC): 68%
- Post-STTAR discharge goal:
 - FFT-FC (32%)
 - Core/Kin Foster Care (22%)
 - Higher Level of Care (32%)
- History/suspected/high risk of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST): 38%
- Diagnosis of Intellectual Disability (ID) and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): 16%
- Treatment plan includes psychiatric medication: 81% (with 37% refusing medication)
- Juvenile Justice involvement prior to entering DCF care : 30%; Current: 49%
- Youth display significant aggression or engages in property destruction: 32%

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Program Enhancement Plan

- Renamed STAR (Short Term Assessment and Respite) programs to STTAR (Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment, Assessment and Reunification) programs.
- Provided additional funding to support additional supervisory staff and funding for youth recreational opportunities.
- Reduced census of STTAR programs (from 6 to 5) to enhance ability of program staff to implement therapeutic milieu.
- Developed a process to expedite admission process for youth who have been approved for PRTF level of care and who are disrupting from their current treatment settings, including STTAR residents.
- Implementing Intensive Transitional Treatment Centers (ITTC) to provide additional treatment resource for youth whose needs cannot effectively be met in the STTAR program.

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Additional Program Improvement Activities

- DCF has increased regulatory visits to the homes meeting with provider leadership and developing strategies to improve safety.
- DCF clinical and program staff, as well as representatives of the Commissioner's office, have participated in public meetings with municipal officials to discuss the STTAR homes and their effect on municipal resources.
- To improve the professional development of STTAR program staff, the following trainings are provided to the contractors who operate the home:
 - Community Child and Family Teaming
 - Restorative Justice Training
 - Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Group Skills
 - *My Life My Choice*, Justice Resource Institute (JRI) technical assistance program
 - Support and training related to Human Trafficking
 - Crisis Intervention/Emergency Safety Intervention
 - Trauma Model
 - Mandated Reporter

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Additional Program Improvement Activities

- Collaborating with the JJPOC Gender Responsiveness Workgroup to identify enhanced training opportunities for STTAR program staff.
- Providing funding (approx. \$35,000) to each STTAR program to implement facility safety enhancements (e.g., exterior cameras) to help reduce AWOL and risk of DMST.
- Identifying dedicated care coordination resources to support transition planning for youth in STTAR programs.
- Strengthening need assessments of children being placed in STTAR homes.

Update on STTAR Enhancement Plan

Additional Program Improvement Activities

DCF continues to work with providers to improve the services being provided to the youth in STTAR homes and the larger behavioral health continuum. The goal of the Department is to provide safe living situations that allow children to thrive while treating their underlying behavioral health needs and return home to their families or other permanency disposition.



Questions?

Dr. Frank Gregory
Francis.Gregory@CT.gov



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STARR Home Enhancement Plan Update for JJPOC

July 1, 2025

STTAR HOME ENHANCEMENT PLAN UPDATE

STTAR Program

A Specialized Trauma Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification (STTAR) program is a temporary congregate care setting that provides short-term care, assessment and a range of clinical services to children who are committed to the care of DCF. Youth who are referred to STTAR programs have disrupted from their current living situation, and an alternate safe living situation in the community cannot be identified. Although youth are not referred to STTAR programs as a primary treatment resource, youth in STTAR programs are provided with assessment services, substance use screening, crisis management, therapeutic support and educational support. Care is provided by a multidisciplinary team who have the responsibility of providing structure and support in a safe and nurturing environment.

STTAR programs are operated via contracts with a network of private non-profit provider organizations. There are currently 35 STTAR program beds available statewide. An additional 5 beds have been solicited via RFP; efforts to bring these additional beds online continue. The current STTAR provider agencies, location and gender of youth served are below.

DCF STTAR Programs

- Boys & Girls Village (Bridgeport, male)
- Bridge Family Center (Hartford, male)
- Bridge Family Center (West Hartford, female)
- Bridge Family Center (Wolcott, male)
- Noank Support Services (Ledyard, female)
- Noank Support Services (Ledyard, female)
- Waterford Country School (Montville, male)

STTAR homes are a last resort for youth when all other placements have been unsuccessful or haven't met the youth's needs. They are the only congregate care setting that must admit a child per contract. STTAR homes do not need Carelon authorization and referrals are managed by DCF clinical teams. Other congregate care or psychiatric settings such as residential treatment facilities and therapeutic group homes require Carelon authorization and the youth must meet the medical necessary criteria. Many of the youth have been in foster care, residential facilities, behavioral health facilities and juvenile justice facilities.

This population of youth have experienced intensive trauma, and their families are unable to meet their extensive needs with in-home supports. Many of the youth have exhibited violent and destructive behavior, often toward their caregivers. At times, families won't pick up their children from emergency departments, courts or juvenile justice facilities, leading those entities to contact DCF to take custody of the children.

Youth Demographics

A review of youth in STTAR programs identified key demographics. Point-in-time data will vary depending upon when assessed, and the number of STARR residents at any one time is relatively small, as there are only 35 available beds, these data can provide a baseline "snapshot" for future comparison.

- Age: Most youth were between 14 & 17 years old (91%),
 - most common age is 15 years old (32%).
- Race/ethnicity:
 - Hispanic (30%)
 - Black (27%)
 - White (22%)
 - Multiracial (22%).
- Youth identifying as LGBTQIA+: 32%
- Youth entry into DCF care via Order of Temporary Custody (OTC): 81%
- Youth entry into DCF care result of parent refusal: 57%
- Youth who have experienced disrupted adoption/guardianship: 41%

- Prior placement in Functional Family Therapy Foster Care program (FFT-FC): 68%
- Post-STTAR discharge goal:
 - FFT-FC (32%)
 - Core/Kin Foster Care (22%)
 - Higher Level of Care (32%)
- History/suspected/high risk of Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking (DMST): 38%
- Diagnosis of Intellectual Disability (ID) and/or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): 16%
- Treatment plan includes psychiatric medication: 81% (with 37% refusing medication)
- Juvenile Justice involvement prior to entering DCF care: 30%; Current: 49%
- Youth display significant aggression or engages in property destruction: 32%

As the data shows, STTAR home residents have higher care needs with the majority (81%) having a treatment plan that includes psychiatric medication, 32% display aggression or engage in property destruction and 30% had prior JJ involvement. These care needs were present prior to STTAR home admission and likely contribute to 57% of youth who enter DCF care due to parental refusal.

The data does not provide the details of the complexity of some of the youths who are placed in the STTAR. Below are a few examples of youth who were placed in a STTAR home:

1. Adolescent male with history of multiple arrests due to assaultive behaviors in the community including car theft, marijuana use and missing from care episodes. He was discharged from a CSSD REGIONS program to DCF.
2. Adolescent female who was a victim to domestic minor sex trafficking with missing from care episodes, inviting unknown males into the home of their parents then kin foster home, assaultive behaviors towards relative care givers, on-going marijuana and alcohol use and refusal to attend school or take psychiatric medication.

3. Adolescent male with ASD/IDD and is non-verbal. This youth needed full care with showering and feeding. He used diapers and had significant sensory challenges, elopement and challenges. He was provided care at a STTAR home with 1:1 supervision and CNA services.

Development of Enhancement Plan

In 2024, after concerns raised with a STAR provider in Harwinton, DCF worked with Governor Lamont and legislative leaders to develop an enhancement plan for the program. DCF managed to repurpose existing funds to achieve key improvements and safety features to the program. Components of the STTAR enhancement plan include:

- Renaming STAR (Short Term Assessment and Respite) programs to STTAR (Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment, Assessment and Reunification) programs
- Providing additional funding to support additional supervisory staff and funding for youth recreational opportunities
- Reducing census of STTAR programs (from 6 to 5) to enhance ability of program staff to implement therapeutic milieu
- Developing a process to expedite admission process for youth who have been approved for PRTF level of care and who are disrupting from their current treatment settings, including STTAR residents
- Implementing Intensive Transitional Treatment Centers (ITTC) to provide additional treatment resources for youth whose needs cannot effectively be met in the STTAR program.

HB 7287, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2027, and Making Appropriations Therefor, and Provisions Related to Revenue and Other Items Implementing the State Budget, included a section that requires DCF to report on the implementation of the enhancement plan.

"Sec. 268. (NEW) (Effective from passage) Not later than July 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, the Department of Children and Families shall report

on its implementation of the Specialized Trauma-Informed Treatment Assessment and Reunification Enhancement Plan released by the department in March 2024, to the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee established pursuant to section 46b-121n of the general statutes. Such initial report shall use metrics in use at the time of such reporting. Not later than September 30, 2025, the department shall consider and may develop additional metrics for use in successive annual reports."

Implementation Status of STTAR Enhancement Plan

Rename STAR (Short Term Assessment and Respite) programs to STTAR (Specialized Trauma-informed Treatment, Assessment and Reunification) programs.

- Completed. STTAR program contracts were amended to reflect the new program name.
- DCF has increased regulatory visits to the homes meeting with provider leadership and developing strategies to improve safety.
- DCF clinical and program staff, as well as representatives of the Commissioner's office, have participated in public meetings with municipal officials to discuss the STTAR homes and their effect on municipal resources. For example, DCF trained providers on the new missing from care policy. Criteria for making a missing from care report was clarified with staff and law enforcement to minimize unnecessary emergency calls reserving police resources for when law enforcement involvement is absolutely necessary.
- Also, some staff would call the police if an argument erupted between residents, or a youth didn't behave in the home. DCF provided training to staff to deescalate those situations without police involvement. Those conversations have resulted in improved relationships and better outcomes for the youth.
- To improve the professional development of STTAR program staff, the following trainings are provided to the contractors who operate the home:
 - Community Child and Family Teaming
 - Restorative Justice Training
 - Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT) Group Skills
 - *My Life My Choice*, Justice Resource Institute (JRI) technical assistance program
 - Support and training related to Human Trafficking
 - Crisis Intervention/Emergency Safety Intervention
 - Trauma Model
 - Mandated Reporter

Provide additional funding to support additional supervisory staff and funding for youth recreational opportunities.

- Completed. Each STTAR program contract was amended to increase annualized funding (approx. \$125,000). This funding facilitated the hiring of an additional supervisory staff member, or equivalent. For example, one provider hired a restorative justice coach.
- The funding also included support for additional youth recreational activities.

Reduce census of STTAR programs (from 6 to 5) to enhance ability of program staff to implement therapeutic milieu.

- Completed. STTAR program census reduced from 6 to 5. (One provider with two programs requested 4 and 6, for a total 10, to facilitate single rooms. This was approved.)
- DCF issued an RFP to procure an additional STTAR program to add bed capacity for females given the reduction in census. This did not result in any proposals. Efforts continue to identify a provider for this program. Providers are hesitant to bid on this program given the challenges of the youth and the fiscal liability and public scrutiny they face.

Develop a process to expedite admission process for youth referred to Solnit Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) who have been approved for PRTF level of care and who are disrupting from their current treatment settings, including STTAR residents.

- Completed. Solnit PRTF leadership implemented a triage and expedited intake process for youth who are disrupting from their current treatment settings. This includes, but is not limited to, youth residing in STTAR programs. To date five youth from STTAR programs have been able to access this route to PRTF admission.

Implement Intensive Transitional Treatment Centers (ITTC) to provide additional treatment resource for youth whose needs cannot effectively be met in the STTAR program.

- Completed. DCF issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to procure two ITTC programs: a 6-bed program for males and a 6-bed program for females. The RFP was issued March 18, 2025, and proposals were submitted by May 6, 2025. The contract has been awarded with an anticipated start date of July 1, 2025.

Other STTAR program improvement activities underway:

- Collaborating with the JJPOC Gender Responsiveness Workgroup to identify enhanced training opportunities for STTAR program staff.
- Providing funding (approx. \$35,000) to each STTAR program to implement facility safety enhancements (e.g., exterior cameras) to help reduce AWOL and risk of DMST.
- Identifying dedicated care coordination resources to support transition planning for youth in STTAR programs.
- Exploring ways to conduct needs assessments of children being placed in STTAR homes.

DCF continues to work with providers to improve the services being provided to the youth in STTAR homes and the larger behavioral health continuum. The goal of the Department is to provide safe living situations that allow children to thrive while treating their underlying behavioral health needs and return home to their families or other permanency disposition.

May JJPOC Meeting Minutes

May 15, 2025

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Legislative Office Building Location

Zoom Option Available

Attendance

Amy Marracino	Hector Glynn
Anthony Nolan	Heriberto Cajigas
Charles Hewes	Joshua Bernegger
Christina Chio	Martha Stone
Colleen Violette	Michael Pierce
Daniel Karpowitz	Michael Williams
Derrick Gordon	Ray Dancy
Elizabeth Bozzuto	Sharmese Walcott
Erica Bromley	Tammy Nguyen O'Dowd
Gary Roberge	

TYJI Staff

Andrew Zhebrak
Brittany LaMarr
Erika Nowakowski
Paul Klee

Welcome and Introductions

Erika Nowakowski welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Overview of the Meeting

The May monthly meeting consisted of the Center for Children's Advocacy's Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities in the Justice System. Additional presentations were provided regarding the DCF-JJEU, and the meeting concluded with an overview of the JJPOC 2025-2029 Strategic Plan.

Acceptance of JJPOC Meeting Minutes

Erika Nowakowski asked for a motion to accept the April 20th meeting minutes. The motion was moved, seconded, and passed unanimously.

Updates

No updates were provided.

Center for Children's Advocacy's Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities

The presentation's intent was to extensively focus on 10 disabled youth within the Juvenile Justice System. The report's intent was to spotlight the individual issues within the educational system, what are the root causes for the social and behavioral histories for the educational disabilities, and what could be done to intervene. The report reviewed the educational, developmental, and social histories for 10 youth from 2015-2022, focusing on the individual voices of the participants.

The report noted that all of these men experienced violence at an early age (ACES), all were from urban areas, Black, Latino, or multiracial, and all were disabled, even if they weren't all immediately apparent.

Additionally, the report spotlighted specific stories of youth, focusing on the individual experiences they went through. Anthony received services from 0-3, but didn't receive them afterwards. The father was incarcerated, and the mother had a history of violent interpersonal relationships. Once Anthony entered school, he exhibited behavioral outbursts and repeated 1st grade but was not referred to special education services. By middle school, he entered an alternative program where his issues were further exacerbated, and his disengagement worsened. At age 16 he was incarcerated at MYI, where his mother and a legal advocate helped Anthony with obtaining special education services due to a language-based disorder. Despite these hardships, Anthony aspires to work with his hands and enter a trade once his term at Manson is completed.

8/10 youth did not have educational documentation regarding ACES in their early childhood, and 7/10 youth IEPs did not indicate a confirmed psychiatric or psychological evaluation or diagnosis, despite presenting symptoms at that age, thus worsening their ability to access educational supports and programs that would address their needs.

Most of the youth did not meet academic standards from an early age and were not properly referred to special education services. The median age of referral was 13.5, and 6/10 youth were referred for special education by their legal advocate post-incarceration. There was a noted trend of youth experiencing gradual disengagement from school in relation to academic difficulties, and increasing feeling of anxiety and depression. One of the participants in the report noted that his issues got worse in middle school, and another mentioned that he felt as if he never felt like he belonged in school.

Jayden resided in a dangerous neighborhood and didn't feel safe getting to school, and felt overwhelmed once he was there. Throughout his life, he experienced three substantial physical traumas (head injuries in car accidents, and once kicked in the head). Only in high school was he referred to special education, and was only able to complete his high school diploma once he was incarcerated. He later re-entered the justice system, where he is now reincarcerated in adult prison. This is a frequent trend, as 70-80% youth released from residential programs are rearrested in 2-3 years. 8/10 youth's records indicated attentional concerns, such as OHI and ADHD. No one made the connection behind the trauma of these young men and the anxiety which is associated with it, such that it appears to be ADHD, but is deeper in their backgrounds.

All youth were below grade level in reading, which feed into the false perception that "school is not for them". 4/10 records indicate grade retention, and one was promoted by exception in 9th grade. Language impairment was highly associated and unrecognized with these youth, which is highly connected with the development of problem behaviors, but rarely identified as part of their problems. This is further exacerbated by a lack of language-based assessments, and a failure to notice issues with these students acquiring pragmatic language skills. These students are twice as likely to reoffend once they leave an institution and return to the community.

In addition to the language difficulties, 8/10 of them experienced extensive discipline from school, with most of them expelled at an early age. 8/10 attended alternative schools, and these youth are pushed out of school and into justice system involvement prior to high school, where 8/10 of the youth were arrested prior to 9th grade, and 4/10 were incarcerated prior to high school.

The report then spotlights a youth named Leo, whose early life was marked by significant challenges. His father was incarcerated, and his mother faced personal struggles that led to involvement with the legal and child protection systems. From a young age, Leo had difficulty focusing and was a late reader, which contributed to him being held back in elementary school. In seventh grade, he was expelled for a year following an altercation in the school cafeteria, and there is no record of him receiving education during that time. After repeating seventh grade, Leo's academic path continued to decline, and he eventually stopped attending school altogether until he was placed in juvenile detention.

While incarcerated, Leo was assigned an educational advocate and attorney, and he was finally identified as having a reading disability—something that should have been addressed by his third year of high school. Despite his struggles, Leo's teachers described him as diligent, engaged, respectful, and eager to succeed. He managed

to complete high school while in detention. Leo aspired to become a barber and to be an active, present father for his daughter. However, after re-entering the community last year, he unfortunately recidivated.

Youth records reflected minimal special education service hours. Transition serves were very limited, typically one hour per month
Median IEP service hours/week for the ten youth were 2.75 hours, with a range of 1.5 hours to 5.5 hours. Most youth, 6/10, had no LEA representation at PPTs.

This led the CCA to develop recommendations for this issue, focusing on gaps beneath the special education laws and on youth most at risk for entering the justice system due to their educational service needs not being met. These recommendations include the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) strengthening its oversight of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to ensure proper implementation of Child Find through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), using clear processes to identify and refer students exhibiting risk factors—such as grade retention or chronic absenteeism—for special education evaluation. CSDE should monitor referral practices, particularly in districts that contribute significantly to the juvenile justice system, with a focus on critical transition years like fourth and fifth grade. Additionally, CSDE should issue guidance promoting trauma-informed practices, including the use of bio-social histories and trauma screening tools in the referral process. This guidance should also emphasize the importance of evaluating for language-based disorders, which are often linked to school disengagement and behavioral challenges.

The CSDE should enforce the use of evidence-based behavioral supports across all educational settings, including self-contained, alternative, and private special education programs, while providing oversight for programs where students are separated from non-disabled peers. Public progress monitoring and corrective actions should be required for programs with high rates of arrests, suspensions, or restraint/seclusion. LEAs must effectively monitor the quality of education in these settings, including private program contracts. Professional development should be provided for justice system staff on the impact of trauma and language-based disorders on behavior and learning.

Exclusionary discipline should be phased out in elementary schools and limited in higher grades to only severe safety threats, with a shift toward restorative practices and trauma-informed supports. The Educational Success (ESS) model should be expanded to include Juvenile Review Boards and the adult system. In justice settings, the Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU) must be empowered to support

special education referrals, access educational attorneys, and report on Child Find and evaluations, while minors should be removed from adult correctional facilities.

A question is raised regarding whether it would be prudent to expand audit requirements for school districts with disproportionate levels of suspension and expulsion. The presenters noted that there is a current issue with the lack of focus on problem behavior, and a lack of complying with federal evaluations regarding disability. If it these were to be followed, programs could be structured to target key elements on root of the social behaviors, thus addressing them prior to justice involvement. The presenters are in favor of these audit requirements. There's a note about banning suspensions for elementary school students.

A question is raised regarding common traits of the sampled youth in early childhood, which could be used as a predictive measure of their profiles? The presenters noted issues with reading comprehension and a failing to diagnose and address dyslexia, which is frequent in that population. As youth education transitions into more abstract and text-based, they are at further risk for disconnection, and early grade retention. Trauma is another commonality, with there being gaps in social work reports behind the trauma they experienced in their backgrounds.

There is a comment from a member of the JJPOC that recounts their experiences with teaching classes at prison systems, noting that some of the highest performing students dropped out of high school the earliest. They the strength and perseverance of the students he taught, in response to the traumatic events that led them to justice involvement. He follows this up by asking about strategies on where justice involving individuals succeed and break through their earlier educational gaps. The presenters noted a need to better comprehensively evaluate the individual youth, and finding a way for them to succeed in a certain subject matter rather than solely focus on their academic deficiencies.

DCF JJEU Presentation

This presentation is part of the DCF's statutory requirement for serving justice involved youth.

The work of the JJEU is driven by 4 elements of an accountability framework, including academic data accountability measures, investing resources in vocational training, supporting teachers and administrators' efficacy, and a guiding principle of re-entry.

The unit is required to develop and review quarterly reports on academic performance and related issues students it serves. To support this, the Star Assessment should be used to measure reading and math levels, establish baselines, track student growth, and inform instructional planning. The data gathered from these assessments is actively used to guide and tailor instruction to meet individual student needs.

Between 9/2024 and 2/2025 there were 73 students with reading data parings, and 69 for math. The average score increase from the initial assessment in reading was 5%, and for math 4%. There was a substantial improvement regarding the levels of assessment, as for reading, the necessity for urgent intervention went from 63% to 49%, and for math from 65% to 37%. There is similar progress at MYI as well, for the collected 16 data parings. In their time at Manson, the necessity for urgent intervention in reading decreased from 62% to 6%, and for math, 37% to 25%.

The presentation transitioned into discussing credit recovery information. Transition specialists play a key role in supporting students as they move from secure facilities back into their local educational programs. Their responsibilities include organizing transition and reentry meetings—both pre- and post-release—and collaborating with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to develop and implement reentry plans. They ensure that educational credits earned during out-of-home placements are accurately transferred to students' home schools. These specialists maintain frequent communication with reentry coordinators, build relationships with smaller districts, and support the continued implementation of the Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU) reentry process. Additionally, they work with the State Department of Education (SDE) to monitor and update the statewide reentry coordinator list, ensuring consistent support for students returning to their communities.

In 2023, 17 students were enrolled in credit recovery, and 1 senior was able to graduate, with an average of 1.5 credits earned. This is in sharp contrast with 2024, 54 students were enrolled in credit recovery, and 3 seniors were able to graduate that year, with an average of 17.8 credits earned. There is also a notable increase in the quantity of reentry meetings, as well as students with reentry meetings (from 42 to 312 over the last 1.5 years). There is a noted increase in the quantity of family engagements at both REGIONS and MYI.

There is also an increase in the total quantity of students served, including those in predisposition, with 174 serviced for the prior calendar year. There were a total of 7,526 contacts with supports in the last year, the most common being educational services, community support and parental contact. 46% of the supports were contacted post-release, and 45% pre-release. There were efforts to contact re-adjudicated student supports with 165 outreach efforts between 10/24-12/24.

Following the enactment of Public Act 21-174 in June 2021, the unit assumed responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the education of youth in justice facilities, with a focus on standardization, reentry planning, and quality assurance. In collaboration with facility leadership, a multi-step learning walk process was developed to assess instructional practices, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement. This process has informed targeted professional development in areas such as student learning, instructional planning, classroom management, and ESL identification. The unit also holds monthly meetings with Educational Network providers to align efforts and share best practices. To further support instructional quality, educational staff are surveyed regularly to identify common needs and trends, which guide the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and inform ongoing training. The unit continues to identify problems of practice and explore new strategies to enhance student learning through the network, ensuring that educational services in justice settings are responsive, effective, and aligned with students' needs.

There were 68 professional development efforts, with 20 in MYI, 26 in CJR, 8 in Hartford DOMUS, and 14 in Hamden REGIONS. The PDs were assessed at a 4.4 regarding subject matter knowledge, with 65 responses at the facilities, and 4.2 regarding the efficacy of them explaining complex concepts. Most staff (65%) noted that they could apply what they learned in the PD courses.

To expand access to career and technical education for justice-involved youth, the unit partnered with CSSD and the Justice Education Center to launch a vocational training pilot at Kaynor and Eli Whitney Technical High Schools. VR Transfer Goggles were introduced at multiple facilities to support career exploration. These efforts aim to prepare students for the workforce through hands-on learning and industry-recognized certificates developed with employer input.

A question is raised from a member of the JJPOC regarding whether it is possible to identify earlier gaps through Child Find screenings in JRBs, which could assist in tracking disability at an earlier point in time. There is agreement with another

member in the JJPOC, noting that identifying these issues at MYI is too late in the process. The presenters also agree with this idea. Another member of the JJPOC notes that in their facilities, the STAR assessment has been a useful tool in identifying at what point students are behind in their educational development, with an average of being 2.5-3.5 below grade level. Due to tiered interventions and MTSS, they were able to bring the student to a PPT. Individual districts need to address this as early as possible.

JJPOC Strategic Plan

There is a quorum of votes for the strategic plan set between 2025-2029, and thus it is adopted.

Next Meeting:

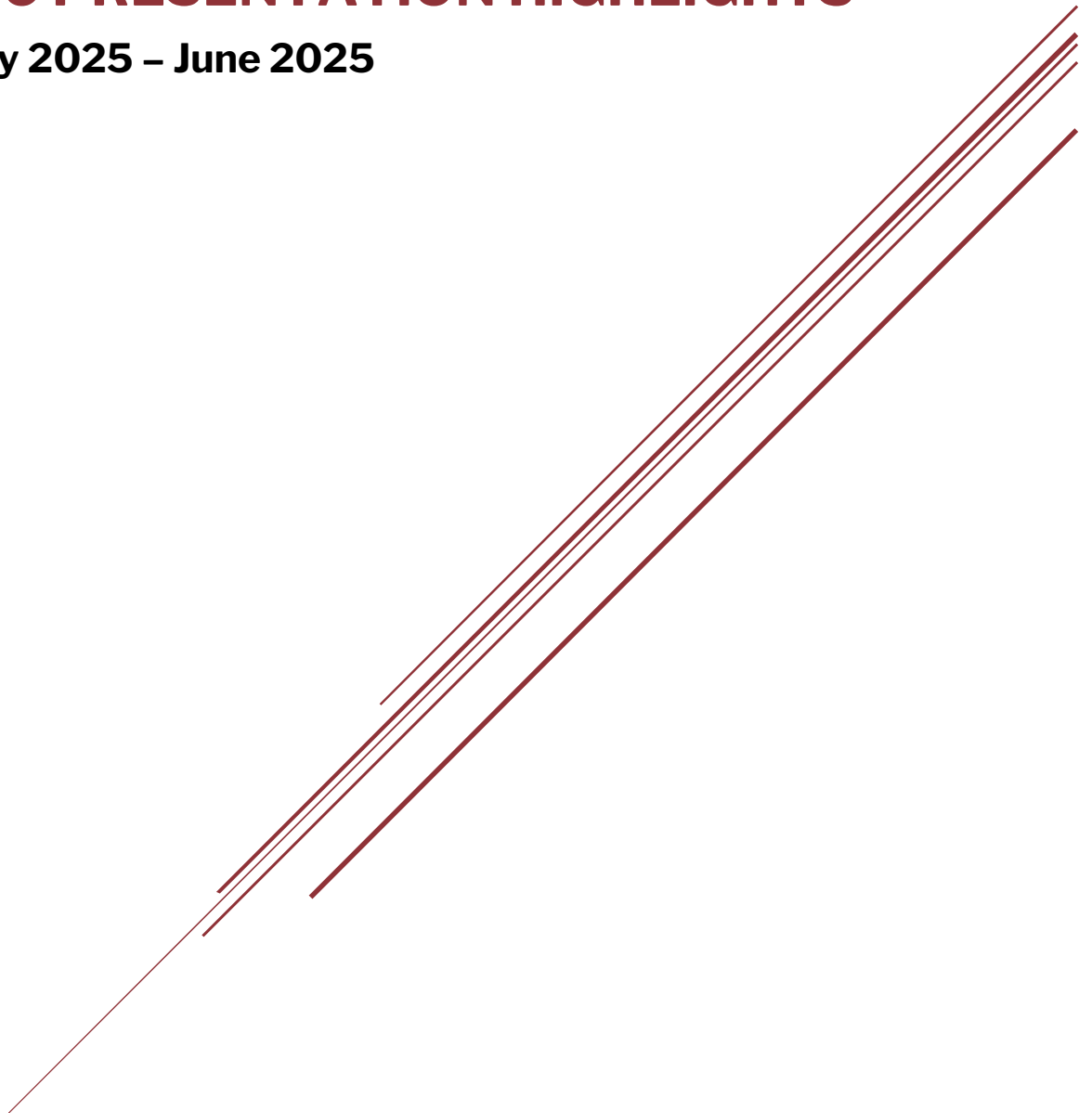
June 20, 2025

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM

Legislative Office Building Location

JJPOC PRESENTATION HIGHLIGHTS

January 2025 – June 2025



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Executive Summary

Introduction:

The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) convened five times between January 2025 and June 2025. These meetings included membership voting on committee recommendations, a youth led panel, presentations from state agencies and youth serving organizations as well as legislative updates. These meetings solidified the 2025 JJPOC recommendations, provided space for youth voice, engaged the committee in conversation and provided status updates from state agencies and organizations serving young people.

Objective:

This Executive Summary provides an overview and identifies common themes presented by young people, stakeholders and committee members. Young people, stakeholders, state agencies and others invested in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System presented and identified numerous critical challenges to be addressed through policies, practices and legislation. For a deeper understanding and additional details into the work conducted by the JJPOC, recorded monthly committee meetings, meeting minutes and Workgroup/Subgroup Meeting summaries can be found on the [JJPOC page of the CGA Website, CT-N](#) and the [Tow Youth Justice Institutes YouTube page](#). Committee meeting recordings are hyperlinked in each section of this report. The presentations and supplemental materials shared during the meeting can be accessed on the JJPOC Page of the Connecticut General Assembly Website.

Common Themes:

- Reentry
- Gender Responsiveness
- Youth Voice
- Transportation
- Racial and Ethnic Disparities
- Legislation

Conclusion:

This summary serves to provide insight into the significant challenges and related suggestions highlighted by stakeholders during JJPOC meetings that took place between January 2025 and June 2025. Collaboration among policymakers, providers, and community organizations is imperative to address these challenges effectively and efficiently. We strive toward a juvenile justice system in Connecticut that is focused on prevention, diversion and the diverse needs of our young people.

We extend our sincere gratitude to all the state agencies and providers who shared their valuable insights and updates as of June 2025.

January 2025 JJPOC - Incarceration Workgroup, Reentry Subgroup and Gender Responsiveness Workgroup Recommendations

Presenters:

Jillian Gilchrest, Gender Responsiveness Workgroup Chair
Sharmese Walcott, Incarceration Workgroup Chair

The [January JJPOC meeting](#) was used to vote on the recommendations from the Incarceration and Gender Responsiveness Workgroups. The Incarceration Workgroup presented three recommendations, and the Gender Responsiveness Workgroup presented two recommendations, all of which were unanimously passed by members of the JJPOC. The Incarceration Workgroup Recommendations were brought to a vote and passed with 27 yes votes, 0 no votes, 0 abstaining, and 17 not present. Similarly, the Gender Responsiveness Workgroup Recommendations were also brought to a vote and passed with 27 yes votes, 0 no votes, 0 abstaining, and 17 not present.

Incarceration Workgroup Recommendations:

(1) JBCSSD and DOC should submit to JJPOC by March 1, 2025, how many of the items listed below are happening, how many youth are utilizing them, what number of youth and families need the services below, and what is the difference between the demand and utilization. Additionally, they should ask families about their needs for the below items and submit an officially recorded anecdote on the utilization and need, to demonstrate barriers, considerations, and opportunities. DOC and JBCSSD may also identify, or offer suggestions of their own, for potential funding reallocations to support the items below. They should identify how many young people leave their facilities on supervision and end of sentence, and any appropriate or necessary partnership to deliver the provision of services below.

(a) When a youth is admitted to a facility or contracted program, necessary transportation assistance to the youth's identified family to visit the young person at the facility or contracted program at least twice a month.

(b) The need for flex funds to support families in need for up to 6 months following a youth's return home. Support may include but is not limited to housing assistance, basic needs, transportation, and vocational training.

(c) The need for flex funds to youth and their families the ability to relocate if needed for safety reasons. Funds may cover moving, basic needs, and initial housing payments.

(2) JBCSSD and DOC should submit to JJPOC by March 1, 2025, a list of vocational/employment programming they have and the limitations to connecting youth to opportunities in the community. They should provide an explanation on how they are connecting youth, and how many, to these opportunities prior to release.

(a) Additionally, DOC and JBCSSD should identify the individual at each facility who is responsible for knowing the youth who are in job related activities, their release date, and how many youths released have an employer and/or connected to a vocational program.

(b) Finally, DOC and JBCSSD should outline strategies and opportunities to address current limitations or inefficiencies in connecting youth to employment/testing/opportunities prior to release and during their time in facility.

(3) There should be annual reporting of the above recommendations, as outlined in the quality assurance logic model reporting outlined in the Reentry Success Plan dated December 2024, using a secure data enclave to conduct the evaluation.

Gender Responsiveness Workgroup Recommendations:

(1) DCF should report to JJPOC by July 1, 2025, and annually thereafter, on the implementation of the new STTAR Plan released in March 2024. The DCF report should include currently available metrics, and should consider developing additional metrics in September 2025 for subsequent annual reports.

(2) DCF will submit to JJPOC by March 1, 2025 on how many calls it receives of possible/suspected child sexual abuse, including reports of abuse and neglect in out of home care settings; how many of those are substantiated; how many calls it receives of possible/suspected child sexual abuse are referred to regional multidisciplinary teams (MDTs); and any gaps in access to or capacity of the MDT system to meet the need.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[1.14.25 Diversion Workgroup](#)

[1.17.25 Community Expertise Workgroup](#)

[1.27.25 Education Workgroup](#)

February 2025 JJPOC – Youth Report and Youth Panel

Presenters:

Connecticut's Young People

The [February JJPOC meeting](#) consisted of a brief review of the [JJPOC Youth Report](#) (The JJPOC Youth Report can be found under the special projects section of the JJPOC page on the CGA website), however, the meeting predominantly consisted of a discussion with young people from multiple organizations across Connecticut, namely Connecticut Justice Alliance, Our Piece of the Pie, Center for Children's Advocacy, Love146, and COMPASS; as well as young adults from Manson Youth Institute and REGIONS. The panel conversation consisted of four areas of focus, goals and future aspirations, anticipated barriers, safety and support, and resources in the community for young people. Below are themes that emerged through the survey.

Goals and Future Aspirations:

The first question asked to the young people was “How do you see yourself contributing to society when you achieve your goals?” Many answers from the young people included: being a leader, a source of support, giving back to others, bridging gaps in services, and eliminating disparities.

The second question asked to the young people was “What is your motivation for wanting to guide youth onto the right path?” direct and/or indirect adverse personal experiences were an important motivator for the young people who responded. The conversation then pivoted to explore potential barriers.

Anticipated Barriers:

The young people were asked what barriers they anticipate encountering in their pursuits to accomplish their goals. Many of the young people shared that their own community, financial struggles, poor and negative company, lack of mental health support, and stress and pressure were sources of barriers. Roughly 15% of the young people surveyed for the Youth Report answered that finances were a concern of theirs. Another question was asked regarding what they believe could help them overcome these barriers, to which youth answered: additional school resources and additional mental health support across the state. The conversation then pivoted to explore safety and support.

Safety and Support:

39.5% of youth surveyed for the Youth Report recorded that they always felt unsafe in their community when asked “How often do you feel unsafe in your community?” The youth panel participants were asked how safe they felt in their community and what support they needed. Many of the youth reported that they do feel safe and supported but added the caveat that there are unsafe aspects to their communities that cause them to be on higher alert. One individual disclosed that he does not feel safe in his community because of the prevalence of gun violence, drug use, and domestic violence. Many youth also described how they thought their community was safe but now realize they were just immune to the dangers.

Many of the youth described their families as being their source of support. To prosper, youth stated they needed a loving support system, additional safe places to spend time at for example a recreational center, greater family and community involvement, mentors outside of school, positive peer groups in school, and more one-on-one interaction. They all agreed that teenagers need a supportive mentor who understands them in their life to succeed. The conversation then pivoted to resources in the community.

Resources in the Community:

The panel was asked about what resources they feel are lacking in their community that they believe would have helped them if they were available. Many of the young people mentioned mental health services, support services, recreational centers, career development and mentors both inside and outside of the school environment. A young person also mentioned it was important to inform youth on how to access these resources. Another individual explained how access to transportation is needed in the Hartford area, including the removal of financial and other access barriers. Financial barriers continue to be highlighted by young people as reasons they are not able to access resources in the community. Economic disparities were mentioned as being a significant barrier for young people and how they experience everyday life.

Some of the young people highlighted organizations like Domus, Project Legacy, Speak Up, Hartford City Mission, and Our Piece of the Pie as being beneficial to them and the larger community, and they share the importance of having mentors that have similar interests and experiences as them.

The importance of available mental health services was also mentioned due to the increasing stress and pressure that young people experience, whether originating from academic, social, and/or extracurricular sources, or generational trauma. There

continues to exist a stigma around mental health that can be combated by accessible and affordable mental health services. Social media continues to influence young people in the community and contributes to low self-esteem. Community violence experienced by young people leads to increased needs for mental health and therapy services as well. The elevated levels of PTSD that young people experience in struggling communities was highlighted.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[2.3.25 Community Expertise Workgroup](#)

[2.24.25 Incarceration Workgroup](#)

[2.3.25 Gender Responsiveness Subgroup](#)

March 2025 JJPOC – DCF, DOC and JBCSSD Reports on JJPOC Recommendations

Presenters:

Jodi Hill-Lilly, Department of Children and Families

Nicole Taylor, Department of Children and Families

Maribel Martinez, Department of Children and Families

Tammy Perreault, Department of Corrections

Catherine Foley Geib, Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division

The [March JJPOC meeting](#) heard reports from DCF, DOC and JBCSSD on JJPOC recommendations. During this meeting several young people were around the table to contribute and inform the committee.

DCF Report

DCF was designated to report to the JJPOC regarding DCF reports with sexual abuse allegations by March 1st, 2025. This requirement is the result of the passage of the related JJPOC Gender Responsiveness Workgroup recommendations in January 2025. The report given by DCF included incidents during the 2024 calendar year (January through December).

The number of abuse/neglect allegations to the DCF Careline totaled 65,127 with 30,318 accepted. The number of sexual abuse allegations (SAA) to the DCF Careline totaled 1,893 with 1,495 accepted, which represents roughly 5% of all accepted reports for abuse and neglect. “Accepted” refers to allegations that meet the requirements for a report.

The accepted reports with an SAA were then more closely analyzed. Out of the 1,495 accepted reports, 89% (1,328) had an SAA against a family member or other entrusted adult, 2% had an SAA against a DCF Licensed Provider, and 9% had an SAA against another provider. Of the 34 allegations of a DCF Licensed Provider, 19 were regarding a DCF foster or adoptive home, four were regarding a Child Placing Agency (CPA) home, five were regarding a DCF facility/cottage, four were regarding a private agency, one was regarding a business, and one was regarding another governmental agency. Of the 133 allegations of another provider, 114 were regarding a school, 12 were regarding a daycare, four were regarding a medical provider, and three were regarding an unidentified provider.

The presentation then shifted to DCF referrals to Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) based on annual data from The Connecticut Children's Alliance (CCA) during the same calendar year. In Connecticut, there are 17 MDTs which work to provide a comprehensive response to various forms of child abuse, including (but not limited to) sexual abuse, trafficking, severe physical abuse, and exposure to violence. These teams are comprised of law enforcement, DCF, various providers, child advocacy center staff, specialized forensic interviewers, medical providers, and prosecutors. Law enforcement personnel work with the MDTs to bring criminal charges against the abusers, but this occurs on a case-by-case basis. This data will be provided to the JJPOC at a later date.

During the 2024 calendar year, there were 1,808 referrals to MDT from DCF in which 1,410 of them were referrals of SAAs and 398 of them were referrals of other abuse and neglect. Child Advocacy Clinics (CAC) care was provided to 1,291 of these cases, and other services (outside services) were provided to 1,400 of these cases. Each CAC is subject to both a national accreditation every five years and a state accreditation every three years. It was suggested that data is provided in the future regarding the follow up procedure to ensure that the JJPOC understands the steps that are being taken to protect these children.

The gaps in the access to and the capacity of the MDT system to meet the needs of this system were presented as well, which include a lack of resources to support forensic interviews for other forms of violence that youth experience, difficulties with reimbursement for forensic interviews as the reimbursement rate has not been updated by the Office of Victim Services in over a decade, a need for additional resources while the funding for CACs has not been changed in 15 years, and the need for standardized referrals from all MDT partners across Connecticut. A question was posed whether a request was submitted regarding the need for

increased reimbursement and resources in which it was explained that a request was submitted but mainly in anticipation of the upcoming federal funding cuts.

Raised Questions:

- (1) How many of the accepted sexual abuse allegations (SAA) cases were confirmed, or substantiated.

Answer: 368 of the 1,495 accepted SAA cases were substantiated.

- (2) Is there more specific data regarding unsubstantiated SAAs?

Answer: DCF provided that substantiated SAAs had extensive evidence, interviews were conducted, and interventions utilized.

- (3) Is the specificity of charge against an abuser tracked based on the severity of the sexual abuse committed?

Answer: DCF provided that the only category of charge in their system is sexual abuse, and that further information is provided only for those cases that are substantiated.

- (4) Additional data was requested on substantiated SAAs happening in public and private schools.

Answer: DCF assured the committee that this was being tracked and that additional information could and would be provided to the JJPOC in terms of the number of public and private schools with SAAs.

- (5) Does SAA data also include cases of trafficking allegations?

Answer: The data suggests that it does.

- (6) Does increased case substantiation occur as a result of the standard referral processes?

Answer: It was explained that although difficult to provide an answer, that this is the case.

DOC Report

DOC reported on their reentry efforts and needs to support JJPOC reentry recommendations. It reported first on the population of Manson Youth Institute (MYI) in which there are a total of 296 individuals there with 258 individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 and 38 individuals who are between the ages of 15 and 17 years old. Of the youth, 33 are accused and five are sentenced.

The youth and their families were surveyed regarding potential reentry support, including financial and transportation support. 38 youth and 26 families completed the survey with all participants indicating that Uber cards would be beneficial since some visitors do not have reliable transportation. 12 youth and families reported that support funds for six months would be beneficial for needs including housing, groceries, employment, and vocational training. Funds regarding relocating for safety reasons were indicated as being needed by 12 youth and 19 families. The survey questions will be added to the MYI Re-Entry Intake Assessment, Family Engagement Meeting Survey, and will be shared with York Correctional Institution.

During the 2024 calendar year, there were 103 admissions, 13 releases and discharges, 45 unsentenced discharges, and 1 remand from MYI. Roughly half of the youth were being discharged directly from court and the other half aged out of the institution. Being discharged from court usually occurs without notice or time to plan and the need for further communication regarding these discharges is needed for DOC.

When the youth were asked about their interest in a Transitional Living Program, 10 answered yes, 25 answered no, and 2 answered maybe. When they were asked if they would like to relocate, 20 answered yes, 13 answered no, and four answered maybe. Regarding vocational and employment support, MYI currently uses Reentry Intake Assessment Surveys a Partnership with Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board and Justice Education Center, MYI Connections as an email point of contact to allow discharged youth to reach out to MYI staff, extensive reentry/discharge planning, and a continuous Re-Entry Group. The barriers that have been recognized as being faced by the youth are as follows: there lacks a driver's education testing site; MYI does not currently have their own set of VR goggles for vocational training; some youth struggle with VR learning; and many of the youth are discharged directly from court with little communication to MYI staff.

All students at MYI will be entered into the high school program upon arrival unless signed out by a parent where they will be exposed to numerous vocational courses,

including a graphics course, a culinary course with ServSafe certification, automotive training, OSHA 10 certification, etc. The MYI staff is working to advance the certification possibilities for the youth and for them to gain some college credit during their time at MYI. In terms of current transitional instruction, when an instructor is unable to teach a given day, a Correctional Transition Instructor (CTI) will come into the class and provide education regarding skills for the students' reentry. Interagency collaboration continues to be increased and highlighted by the MYI staff. MYI has also partnered with the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services which will follow the MYI youth with disabilities to assist them as they enter the job market.

Raised Questions:

- (1) A JJPOC member asked about the importance of incarcerated youth being connected with their support system.

Answer: A representative from DOC explained that the youth have shared how visitation is difficult because it is upsetting to have their family member leave and how they do not want to hear about life outside of the institution. Furthermore, they explained the need for the youth to be continuously connected with their families and support systems to make the transition back into mainstream society more manageable.

JBCSSD Report

JBCSSD was tasked with reporting on the re-entry supports regarding what is needed and what is available for the youth in their care. During the 2024 calendar year, JBCSSD served 245 youth across nine residential programs with 91.7% being discharged on community supervision and 8.3% were discharged at the end of their sentence.

57% of families received transportation to the program for visitation, 73% of families received reintegration support at the discharge of the youth, and 9% of families received relocation support for safety reasons. On the other hand, 24% of youth and their families did not receive the assistance needed or were only partially served. In terms of the youth that are currently in the care of JBCSSD, 63% of families reported needing transportation assistance to visit their child; 59% of families would utilize an Uber/Lyft-style gift card to visit their child twice a month; and 24% of families would utilize a bus pass or gas card to visit their child twice a month. These families also shared that they need assistance with basic needs, including groceries/food, past-due utility bills, transportation to outpatient services for either themselves or their child, transportation to employment for either

themselves or their child, basic furniture for their child, clothing for their child, rental assistance, vocational training support, and relocation for safety reasons.

A variety of challenges exist for these youth and their families, including poverty/low income, disenfranchised and chaotic neighborhoods, struggling schools, and limited time. Despite these challenges, there are existing resources such as case managers, juvenile probation officers, and reintegration mentors that assist them with reentry. Additionally, the Connecticut Justice-Involved Medicaid Waiver Plan, if approved and funded, could address these needs. Despite these resources, they are not enough to provide adequate assistance to the families and the youth.

Five strategies have been identified for these unmet needs, which are as follows: (1) Reintegration Mentor and Family Support Specialist services at Bridgeport and Hartford REGIONS hardware-secure programs for 40 youth; (2) transportation funds for family visitation for 100 youth; (3) Uber-type transportation for 50 youth to/from appointments/work; (4) flex funds for basic needs for 110 youth; and (5) rental assistance for 10 families to relocate for safety.

Regarding vocational and employment support, many limitations restrict access, including the eligibility of the youth, funding, space, time, security, and available support. With that being said, there are still a wide variety of opportunities to implement additional programs. As for strategies designed to meet the vocational and employment support needs of these youth, five strategies have been identified: (1) in-program internships for 100 youth annually; (2) tuition for 210 youth to earn Industry Recognized Credentials (IRCs); (3) career exploration augmented virtual reality technology for three hardware-secure REGIONS programs; (4) Reintegration Mentor and Family Support Specialist services at Bridgeport and Hartford REGIONS hardware-secure programs for 40 youth; and (5) continued interagency relationship building. JBCSSD then concluded their presentation and opened for questions.

It was emphasized how influential vocational courses are for these youth.

Although funding concerns continue to be a barrier, there was an emphasis on not allowing this barrier to drive the conversation around these youth, their families, and their needs. The meeting then closed.

Raised Question:

- (1) A question was asked about vocational advancement after reentry and whether this was being tracked.

Answer: It was explained that this information is unknown currently but can be determined in the future.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[3.17.25 Cross Agency Data Sharing Workgroup](#)

[3.31.25 Education Workgroup](#)

April 2025 JJPOC - Transportation Legislation and a Report from Center for Children's Advocacy on Racial and Ethnic Disparity

Presenters:

Sean Tomany, University High School of Science and Engineering
Oluwaseyi Oluborode, University High School of Science and Engineering
Martha Stone, Center for Children's Advocacy
Sean Michel, Hartford Police Department
Noelia Dondele, Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division
Brittney Jackson, Clifford Beers Community Care Center
Abby Olinger Quint, Hartford Public Schools
Kathy Nazario, Capitol Region Education Council
Sarah Gibson, Department of Children and Families
Peter Kochol, Center for Children's Advocacy

The [April JJPOC meeting](#) consisted of a discussion regarding H.B. 1243, a presentation from the Center for Children's Advocacy on their municipal racial and ethnic disparities work, and an overview of the JJPOC 2025 workplans. The Center for Children's Advocacy's Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities in the Justice System was moved to the May JJPOC monthly meeting.

Discussion of H.B. 1243

The principal of the University High School of Science and Engineering along with one of his students presented H.B. 1243, which would allow for free bus transportation for high school students and veterans.

Transportation continues to be a barrier for students to access education and resources, but with bus passes being free of charge during the pandemic students

were able to have more reliable, safer transportation to and from schools, medical appointments, extracurricular activities, and other beneficial resources. The principal estimated that his students took 5,000 bus rides just within one month. A student from the University High School of Science and Engineering further explained how advanced academic opportunities were limited to students due to a lack of reliable transportation.

Raised Questions:

- (1) A JJPOC member inquired about how many students currently ride the public bus to school because that is their only transportation option, and how many students would benefit from the implementation of this bus pass program on a wider scale. It was explained that significantly more students would be using public transportation through the city bus with this program due to a lack of or reduced personal expenses.

Answer: Currently, roughly 200 students at the University High School of Science and Engineering are using these bus passes, as the pilot program of these free and reduced-price bus passes is currently in place at this school.

CCA: RED Presentation

Representatives from the Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA) presented the work being done by the organization and its committees to address racial and ethnic disparities. The Racial and Ethnic Disparity (RED) Reduction Committees are in Bridgeport, Hartford, Hamden, New Haven, and Waterbury. Each committee has a diverse governing body, including but not limited to youth, law enforcement, clergy, school systems, and community service providers. The goals of these committees are to reduce the over-representation of youth of color at key decision points, reduce the disparate treatment of youth of color at key decision points, and to prevent youth of color from unnecessarily entering and moving through the juvenile justice system.

The RED committees have found that there are the highest proportion of Hispanic or Latino youth school enrollment in each of the five cities. Regarding Bridgeport delinquency specifically, there continues to be a disproportionate number of Black youths compared to other racial and ethnic groups. In New Haven and Waterbury, Black youth are considerably more likely to be arrested and referred to court, according to the Equity Dashboard's Relative Rate Index (RRI).

An example of a RED committee meeting agenda was presented, in this case from Hartford. Each meeting usually consists of a deep dive into the data across several systems, including schools, DCF, and diversion.

The benefits of RED committee collaboration are fivefold: (1) creates collaborative partnerships to cohesively discuss systemic issues around disparities in youth care coordination; (2) allows for quicker identification of readily emergent or continually emerging issues; (3) identifies both gaps in system coordination and programmatic supports; (4) elevates best practices and new strategies for service delivery to support youth; and (5) allows for a deeper dive into data across multiple systems to recognize patterns and areas of improvement.

Diversionary efforts are a focus of the RED committees, which review related data. These data are analyzed to determine which diversionary efforts are available and whether diversion efforts are successful. Data around recidivism rates is lacking, though. Each RED committee also reviews school-based arrests to determine which schools have the highest rates of school-based arrests and which gaps in services need to be addressed within these schools. This aims to provide more services and resources to better equip the school to adequately address these issues.

Additionally, the committees review community-based arrests. Statistics reviewed include time of day of the arrest, age, race, and gender of the arrestee, district of arrest, location of arrest, day of the week of the arrest, type of offense, and whether a diversion referral or court summons was given. This data is used to determine efforts that should be taken to reduce the arrest of youth, increase referrals to juvenile review boards (JRBs), and to identify gaps in services. There has been a 19% decrease in youth, community-based arrests between 2023 and 2024 in Hartford. A

Data regarding crossover youth is also included in the analyses conducted by the RED committees. Specifically, DCF arrest data across Connecticut was presented, including the legal status, age, race/ethnicity, gender, and placement type for current crossover youth. This information provides a more holistic view of these youth and which services they may require. The RED committees also focus their attention on school disengagement and prevention, which include students' absenteeism, engagement and reengagement efforts, and discipline involvement. This data is separated by school, age, race, and disabilities of youth. In Hartford schools specifically, roughly 1 in 3 students are chronically absent.

As for next steps, the CCA would like to establish RED committees in the jurisdictions that are showing the most significant RRI, such as Meriden and

Norwalk. It was suggested that additional clarification be given to the JJPOC regarding the definition of crossover youth. This is to be added to the next monthly JJPOC meeting.

Raised Questions:

- (1) A JJPOC member asked whether youth interaction with law enforcement is included in the data at CCA's RED Meetings?

Answer: It was confirmed that these instances are included.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[4.8.25 Diversion Workgroup](#)

[4.21.25 Incarceration Workgroup](#)

[4.2.25 Conditions of Confinement Subgroup](#)

[4.7.25 Gender Responsiveness Subgroup](#)

May 2025 JJPOC - Center for Children's Advocacy Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities, DCF-JJEU Presentations and JJPOC 2025-2029 Strategic Plan

Presenters:

Sarah Eagan, Center for Children's Advocacy

Andrea Spencer, Center for Children's Advocacy

Marisa Halm, Center for Children's Advocacy

Glen Worthy, Department of Children and Families

John Tarka, Department of Children and Families

Tina Mitchell, Department of Children and Families

The [May JJPOC meeting](#) consisted of the Center for Children's Advocacy's Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities in the Justice System. Additional presentations were provided regarding the DCF-Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU), and the meeting concluded with an overview of the approved [JJPOC 2025-2029 Strategic Plan](#), which can be found under the Information Section of the JJPOC's page on the CGA website.

Center for Children's Advocacy's Report on Connecticut Youth with Disabilities

The presentation was focused on 10 youth with intellectual disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System. The report's intent was to spotlight the individual issues within the educational system, what are the root causes of the social and behavioral histories for educational disabilities, and what could be done to intervene. The report reviewed the educational, developmental, and social histories for 10 youth from 2015-2022, focusing on the individual voices of the participants. The report noted that all these men experienced violence at an early age (ACES), all were from urban areas, Black, Latino, or multiracial, and all were disabled, even if they weren't all immediately apparent.

Additionally, the report spotlighted specific stories of youth, focusing on the individual experiences they went through. Anthony received services from 0-3, but didn't receive them afterwards. The father was incarcerated, and the mother had a history of violent interpersonal relationships. Once Anthony entered school, he exhibited behavioral outbursts and repeated 1st grade but was not referred to special education services. By middle school, he entered an alternative program where his issues were further exacerbated, and his disengagement worsened. At age 16 he was incarcerated at MYI, where his mother and a legal advocate helped Anthony with obtaining special education services due to a language-based disorder. Despite these hardships, Anthony aspires to work with his hands and enter a trade once his term at Manson is completed.

8/10 youth did not have educational documentation regarding ACES in their early childhood, and 7/10 youth IEPs did not indicate a confirmed psychiatric or psychological evaluation or diagnosis, despite presenting symptoms at that age, thus, worsening their ability to access educational supports and programs that would address their needs.

Most of the youth did not meet academic standards from an early age and were not properly referred to special education services. The median age of referrals was 13.5, and 6/10 youth were referred for special education by their legal advocate post-incarceration. There was a noted trend of youth experiencing gradual disengagement from school in relation to academic difficulties and increasing feeling of anxiety and depression. One of the participants in the report noted that his issues got worse in middle school, and another mentioned that he felt as if he never felt like he belonged in school.

Jayden resided in a dangerous neighborhood and didn't feel safe getting to school and felt overwhelmed once he was there. Throughout his life, he experienced three

substantial physical traumas (head injuries in car accidents and once kicked in the head). Only in high school was he referred to special education and was only able to complete his high school diploma once he was incarcerated. He later re-entered the justice system, where he is now reincarcerated in adult prison. This is a frequent trend, as 70-80% youth released from residential programs are rearrested in 2-3 years. 8/10 youth's records indicated attentional concerns, such as OHI and ADHD. No one made the connection behind the trauma of these young men and the anxiety associated with it, such that it appears to be ADHD, but is deeper in their backgrounds.

All youth were below grade level in reading, which feed into the false perception that "school is not for them". 4/10 records indicate grade retention, and one was promoted by exception in 9th grade. Language impairment was highly associated and unrecognized with these youth, which is highly connected with the development of problem behaviors but rarely identified as part of their problems. This is further exacerbated by a lack of language-based assessments, and a failure to notice issues with these students acquiring pragmatic language skills. These students are twice as likely to reoffend once they leave an institution and return to the community.

In addition to the language difficulties, 8/10 of them experienced extensive discipline from school, with most of them expelled at an early age. 8/10 attended alternative schools, and these youth are pushed out of school and into justice system involvement prior to high school, where 8/10 of the youth were arrested prior to 9th grade, and 4/10 were incarcerated prior to high school.

The report then spotlights a youth named Leo, whose early life was marked by significant challenges. His father was incarcerated, and his mother faced personal struggles that led to involvement with the legal and child protection systems. From a young age, Leo had difficulty focusing and was a late reader, which contributed to him being held back in elementary school. In seventh grade, he was expelled for a year following an altercation in the school cafeteria, and there is no record of him receiving education during that time. After repeating seventh grade, Leo's academic path continued to decline, and he eventually stopped attending school altogether until he was placed in juvenile detention.

While incarcerated, Leo was assigned an educational advocate and attorney, and he was finally identified as having a reading disability, something that should have been addressed by his third year of high school. Despite his struggles, Leo's teachers described him as diligent, engaged, respectful, and eager to succeed. He managed

to complete high school while in detention. Leo aspired to become a barber and to be an active, present father for his daughter. However, after re-entering the community last year, he unfortunately recidivated.

Youth records reflected minimal special education service hours. Transition serves were very limited, typically one hour per month with median IEP service hours/week for the ten youth were two- and three-quarter hours, with a range of one and a half hours to five and a half hours. Six of the 10 youth had no LEA representation at PPTs.

CCA developed recommendations for this issue, focusing on gaps beneath the special education laws and on youth most at risk for entering the justice system due to their educational service needs not being met. These recommendations include the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) strengthening its oversight of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) to ensure proper implementation of Child Find through Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), using clear processes to identify and refer students exhibiting risk factors—such as grade retention or chronic absenteeism—for special education evaluation. CSDE should monitor referral practices, particularly in districts that contribute significantly to the juvenile justice system, with a focus on critical transition years like fourth and fifth grade. Additionally, CSDE should issue guidance promoting trauma-informed practices, including the use of bio-social histories and trauma screening tools in the referral process. This guidance should also emphasize the importance of evaluating for language-based disorders, which are often linked to school disengagement and behavioral challenges.

The CSDE should enforce the use of evidence-based behavioral supports across all educational settings, including self-contained, alternative, and private special education programs, while providing oversight for programs where students are separated from non-disabled peers. Public progress monitoring and corrective actions should be required for programs with high rates of arrests, suspensions, or restraint/seclusion. LEAs must effectively monitor the quality of education in these settings, including private program contracts. Professional development should be provided for justice system staff on the impact of trauma and language-based disorders on behavior and learning.

Exclusionary discipline should be phased out in elementary schools and limited in higher grades to only severe safety threats, with a shift toward restorative practices and trauma-informed supports. The Educational Success (ESS) model should be expanded to include Juvenile Review Boards and the adult system. In justice

settings, the Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU) must be empowered to support special education referrals, access educational attorneys, and report on Child Find and evaluations, while minors should be removed from adult correctional facilities.

There is a comment from a member of the JJPOC that recounts their experiences with teaching classes at prison systems, noting that some of the highest performing students dropped out of high school the earliest. They the strength and perseverance of the students he taught, in response to the traumatic events that led them to justice involvement. He follows this up by asking about strategies on where justice involving individuals succeed and break through their earlier educational gaps. The presenters noted a need to better comprehensively evaluate the individual youth, and find a way for them to succeed in a certain subject matter rather than solely focus on their academic deficiencies.

DCF-JJEU Presentation

This presentation is part of the DCF's statutory requirement for serving justice involved youth.

The work of the JJEU is driven by 4 elements of an accountability framework, including academic data accountability measures, investing resources in vocational training, supporting teachers and administrators' efficacy, and a guiding principle of re-entry.

The unit is required to develop and review quarterly reports on academic performance and related issues students it serves. To support this, the Star Assessment should be used to measure reading and math levels, establish baselines, track student growth, and inform instructional planning. The data gathered from these assessments is actively used to guide and tailor instruction to meet individual student needs.

Between 9/2024 and 2/2025 there were 73 students with reading data parings, and 69 for math. The average score increase from the initial assessment in reading was 5%, and for math 4%. There was a substantial improvement regarding the levels of assessment, as for reading, the necessity for urgent intervention went from 63% to 49%, and for math from 65% to 37%. There is similar progress at MYI as well, for the collected 16 data parings. In their time at Manson, the necessity for urgent intervention in reading decreased from 62% to 6%, and for math, 37% to 25%.

The presentation transitioned into discussing credit recovery information.

Transition specialists play a key role in supporting students as they move from secure facilities back into their local educational programs. Their responsibilities include organizing transition and reentry meetings—both pre- and post-release—and collaborating with Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to develop and implement reentry plans. They ensure that educational credits earned during out-of-home placements are accurately transferred to students' home schools. These specialists maintain frequent communication with reentry coordinators, build relationships with smaller districts, and support the continued implementation of the Juvenile Justice Education Unit (JJEU) reentry process. Additionally, they work with the State Department of Education (SDE) to monitor and update the statewide reentry coordinator list, ensuring consistent support for students returning to their communities.

In 2023, 17 students were enrolled in credit recovery, and 1 senior was able to graduate, with an average of 1.5 credits earned. This is in sharp contrast with 2024, 54 students were enrolled in credit recovery, and 3 seniors were able to graduate that year, with an average of 17.8 credits earned. There is also a notable increase in the quantity of reentry meetings, as well as students with reentry meetings (from 42 to 312 over the last 1.5 years). There is a noted increase in the quantity of family engagements at both REGIONS and MYI.

There is also an increase in the total quantity of students served, including those in predisposition, with 174 serviced for the prior calendar year. There was a total of 7,526 contacts with supports in the last year, the most common being educational services, community support and parental contact. 46% of the supports were contacted post-release, and 45% pre-release. There were efforts to contact re-adjudicated student supports with 165 outreach efforts between 10/24-12/24.

Following the enactment of Public Act 21-174 in June 2021, the unit assumed responsibility for overseeing and monitoring the education of youth in justice facilities, with a focus on standardization, reentry planning, and quality assurance. In collaboration with facility leadership, a multi-step learning walk process was developed to assess instructional practices, identify strengths, and pinpoint areas for improvement. This process has informed targeted professional development in areas such as student learning, instructional planning, classroom management, and ESL identification. The unit also holds monthly meetings with Educational Network providers to align efforts and share best practices. To further support instructional quality, educational staff are surveyed regularly to identify common needs and trends, which guide the creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and inform ongoing training. The unit continues to identify problems of practice and

explore new strategies to enhance student learning through the network, ensuring that educational services in justice settings are responsive, effective, and aligned with students' needs.

There were 68 professional development efforts, with 20 in MYI, 26 in CJR, 8 in Hartford DOMUS, and 14 in Hamden REGIONS. The PDs were assessed at a 4.4 regarding subject matter knowledge, with 65 responses at the facilities, and 4.2 regarding the efficacy of them explaining complex concepts. Most staff (65%) noted that they could apply what they learned in the PD courses.

To expand access to career and technical education for justice-involved youth, the unit partnered with CSSD and the Justice Education Center to launch a vocational training pilot at Kaynor and Eli Whitney Technical High Schools. VR Transfer Goggles were introduced at multiple facilities to support career exploration. These efforts aim to prepare students for the workforce through hands-on learning and industry-recognized certificates developed with employer input.

Raised Questions:

- (1) Would it be prudent to expand audit requirements for school districts with disproportionate levels of suspension and expulsion?

Answer: It was noted that there is a current issue with the lack of focus on problem behavior, and a lack of complying with federal evaluations regarding disability. If these were followed, programs could be structured to target key elements/roots of problem behaviors, thus addressing them prior to justice involvement. A ban for suspensions of elementary school students was also noted.

- (2) A question is raised regarding common traits of the sampled youth in early childhood, which could be used as a predictive measure of their profiles?

Answer: The presenters noted issues with reading comprehension and failing to diagnose/address dyslexia, which is frequent in that population. As youth education transitions into more abstract and text-based, they are at further risk for disconnection, and early grade retention. Trauma is another commonality, with there being gaps in social work reports behind the trauma they experienced in their backgrounds.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[5.19.25 Cross Agency Data Sharing Workgroup](#)

June 2025 JJPOC - Cancelled

Despite the cancellation of the June 2025 JJPOC Committee Meeting, several of the JJPOC's Workgroups and Subgroups still convened.

Workgroup and Subgroup Activity:

[6.2.25 Education Workgroup](#)

[6.4.25 Conditions of Confinement Subgroup](#)