

Division on Criminal Justice

Office of the Chief State's Attorney

At a Glance

RICHARD J. COLANGELO, JR., Chief State's Attorney

John J. Russotto, Deputy Chief State's Attorney for Personnel, Finance and Administration

Kevin D. Lawlor, Deputy Chief State's Attorney for Operations

Established - 1973.

Constitutional authority - Article XXIII of the amendments to the Connecticut Constitution.

Statutory Authority - General Statutes §§51-276 and 51-277.

Central Office - 300 Corporate Place, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

Number of Employees - 486 (positions authorized) 440 (positions filled)

Recurring Operating Expenses - \$50 million (all sources)

Organizational Structure - The Division of Criminal Justice is composed of the Office of the Chief State's Attorney and one State's Attorney's office for each of the state's thirteen Judicial Districts: Ansonia/Milford – Margaret E. Kelley; Danbury – Stephen J. Sedensky III; Fairfield – Joseph T. Corradino; Hartford – Gail P. Hardy; Litchfield – Dawn Gallo; Middlesex – Michael A. Gailor; New Britain – Brian W. Preleski; New Haven – Patrick J. Griffin; New London – Michael L. Regan; Stamford/Norwalk – Paul Ferencek; Tolland – Matthew C. Gedansky; Waterbury – Maureen Platt; Windham – Anne F. Mahoney.

Mission

The Division of Criminal Justice is the agency within the Executive branch of government responsible for investigating and prosecuting all criminal matters in the adult and juvenile courts of the State of Connecticut. The agency also represents the state in all appellate, post-trial and post-conviction proceedings arising from the prosecution of criminal matters.

Statutory Responsibility

The Division of Criminal Justice is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of criminal matters in Connecticut. Through the Chief State's Attorney and the thirteen State's Attorneys the Division takes necessary and proper steps to prosecute all crimes and offenses against the laws of the state. This includes ordinances from municipalities and regulations from proper authorities.

Public Service

The Division serves the public by conducting investigations and prosecutions fairly, justly and transparently with deference to the rule of law. The Division maintains the highest ethical standards to serve the public appropriately. This includes accused persons, victims of crime and the public at large.

In March of 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division, in conjunction with other relevant stakeholders undertook steps to streamline day to day operations. This included the ability to handle cases remotely through the enhanced use of technology.

Improvements/Achievements 2019-2020

Prosecutors and Inspectors assigned to the Division's Cold Case Unit continued their success in solving and prosecuting previously unsolved murders. The unit made an arrest on a double homicide from Hartford in 2017. State v. Brandon Letman which is still pending. In addition, the unit tried two other murder cases and a sexual assault case in 2019-20. The Unit continues to investigate a number of cold cases from around the state dating back to 1982.

The Division of Criminal Justice continued efforts to improve traffic safety and reduce impaired driving in our state. In furtherance of these goals, 1,097 law enforcement officers were trained by the Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor (TSRP) in the following areas: 1) operating under the influence investigations; 2) search and seizure law; 3) report writing; 4) the legal environment for breath blood alcohol content (BAC) results; and 5) courtroom preparation.

Additionally, the TSRP and the Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) attorneys trained thirty new state trooper recruits in a full day mock trial course. Approximately thirty-five law enforcement officers from multiple jurisdictions throughout the state received bicycle and pedestrian safety training from the TSRP as well as others at the New Britain Police Department. This traffic safety training was sponsored by the CT Department of Transportation.

In July 2019, the Division of Criminal Justice hosted a joint law enforcement training for police and prosecutors on effectively investigating and prosecuting drug impaired motorists. The training was very well-received and there were ninety-one attendees. The day long course included national presenters from Seattle, WA as well as Austin, TX in addition to the local TSRP, state toxicologist, a Drug Recognition Expert instructor, and a toxicologist.

The Division continues to work with other state agencies, the Governor's Office and traffic safety partners such as AAA and MADD to promote new legislation addressing the increasing number of drug impaired drivers.

The Division actively participates as a member in the statewide Impaired Driving Task Force, whose primary mission is to implement programs and policies to reduce alcohol and drug related fatalities in CT. The Impaired Driving Task Force holds quarterly meetings at the Department of Transportation.

A training program was initiated by the Division targeting Deputy Assistant State's Attorneys. These prosecutors with less than three years of experience have an enhanced training obligation. The curriculum is designed to enable new prosecutors to successfully handle criminal cases which impact public safety. The TSRP as well as other senior prosecutors in the Division trained thirty-three Deputy Assistant State's Attorney's (DASAs) in operating under the influence crimes, domestic violence cases, vehicular homicides matters and a variety of court procedures germane to their professional development. This training provides these prosecutors with a necessary foundation to better carry out their duties.

Despite the impact of the COVID-19 situation on daily workflow, the Division continues to provide statutorily mandated training to prosecutors. The Division's Information Technology team has assisted this process by providing access to a wide ranging variety of web and video based continuing education programs available to employees from their desks. In May of 2020,

the Division hired a training coordinator to develop, implement and track training for all employees.

The Appellate Bureau is responsible for representing the State of Connecticut in the majority of appeals challenging criminal convictions. This bureau, which employs approximately twenty-five prosecutors, prepares written legal arguments (briefs) and presentations (oral argument) before the Connecticut Supreme and Appellate Courts. Appellate Bureau attorneys also track developments and trends throughout the state's trial courts, and conduct important research for the Chief State's Attorney on criminal justice issues.

Since 2019 the Division of Criminal Justice developed outreach programs, including: (1) the Fellowship Program; and (2) the Prosecution Appellate Clinic at the Quinnipiac University School of Law.

The Division created a Fellowship Program designed to provide a pathway for law students interested in serving as a prosecutor toward full-time employment in the agency. It is also intended to help increase diversity in the Division through a consistent presence on law school campuses. This allows the Division to reach a broader cross section of the legal education community. Through the program, Division attorneys conduct presentations and on-campus interviews at law schools in Connecticut, New York, and Massachusetts. In fiscal year 2019-2020, two Fellows were selected. These young attorneys are working in Division field offices gaining valuable experience with actual hands on legal practice.

The Prosecution Appellate Clinic provides a unique opportunity for law students to gain practical experience in the area of criminal appellate law. With the supervision of a designated prosecutor, students enrolled in the Clinic are assigned a pending appeal and are responsible for identifying critical issues, formulating the state's response, drafting the state's brief, and representing the state at oral argument. The Clinic also provides the Division with the opportunity to identify talented students and to cultivate their interest in becoming a prosecutor.

The Division continues to refine the Early Screening and Intervention (ESI) program at several locations throughout the state. ESI is designed to shift certain accused individuals from a more traditional court based response. Staffed with trained prosecutors and resource counselors the program works to meet the needs of low level offenders by addressing root causes of their criminal behavior. This focus on an individual's criminogenic needs helps to reshape behavior with resources targeting the unique situation of a particular offender. The program continues to have success in diverting individuals away from the more traditional consequence based criminal justice system.

The State's Attorney's Office in the Judicial District of New Britain continued to work with its Community Engagement Board (CEB). The CEB is a formal mechanism by which the Office regularly engages with the communities it serves and keeps community members abreast of developments in the jurisdiction. The CEB's diverse membership is comprised of individuals from the medical field, faith-based organizations, youth services, neighborhood revitalization groups, children's law center, registrar of voters, NAACP, and Central Connecticut State University. This program puts prosecutors and community members together in an informal setting to learn, share concerns, and cooperate to make the community a better place to live.

The New Haven State's Attorney's Office also has a Community Engagement Board that strives to meet monthly to discuss criminal justice concerns that relate to their district. Several of the members are local clergy. In 2019 the New Haven State's Attorney's Office participated in a clergy police academy. Modeled after civilian police academies, local clergy members were able to receive training in a variety of legal topics including laws of arrest and search and seizure. This

type of training assists laypersons to better understand the rules police and prosecutors follow in their daily work. Recently these regular meetings have resumed in an online platform. During the summer of 2019 the New Haven State's Attorney's Office participated in the Brookside Community Center National Night Out and the New Haven Police Athletic League summer camp.

The New Haven State's Attorney's Office also provides enhanced trial training for local police departments. Detectives from local departments are able to work with inspectors from the office to follow a trial case from start to finish. This program provides insight to police officers about how trial cases are handled in the courtroom.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented many unique challenges for the Division. In response, the Chief State's Attorney centralized the prosecution of motor vehicle infraction matters at the main office in Rocky Hill until the end of 2020. In cooperation with the Judicial Branch, all infraction matters will be initially dealt with through an electronic system. The Division currently has three prosecutors dedicated to this transition.

Despite the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Division has adjusted the workflow for its employees to comport with public health workplace guidelines. In conjunction with stakeholders in the Judicial Branch, division prosecutors continue to carry out their statutory mission with expanded use of remote technology. While the mode of interaction has changed, the core mission of the Division to investigate and prosecute criminal matters in a fair, just and timely manner continues during these unprecedented times.

The Division made continued progress with the design and testing of a statewide case management system. This computer system will allow prosecutors to record and share information in real time. It will also allow for the capture of relevant data to allow the Division to demonstrate the true nature of the work prosecutors do every day. It will assist in complying with the Division's reporting requirements under Public Act 19-59. The system is in production testing with stakeholders from the Judicial Branch and the Connecticut Criminal Justice Information System. The Division seeks to roll out the new system by the end of 2020 to our field offices.

Information Reported as Required by State Statute

Abbreviations

COVID-19 – Novel Corona Virus

ESI- Early Screening and Intervention

TSRP- Traffic Safety resource Prosecutor

References

Connecticut General Statutes § 51-276 et seq.

Connecticut General Statutes § 51-279c