

# Moving Justice Forward

**A Blueprint for the Connecticut Division  
of Criminal Justice**

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# Executive Summary

This Implementation Blueprint sets out goals for innovating the work of the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice (the Division). The Center for Justice Innovation (the Center) and the Division worked together, between February 2022 and January 2023, on the Moving Justice Forward project, an initiative focused on enhancing efficiency and fairness within the Connecticut criminal justice system.

Connecticut can be proud of its prosecutorial system, which works to represent the people of the State of Connecticut and strives to provide fair and efficient justice. Prosecutors interviewed during the needs assessment phase were open, candid, and willing to implement changes that will improve the justice system. A roundtable of stakeholders was convened to discuss the findings of the needs assessment and identify goals for the future of the Division. The stakeholders at the roundtable were enthusiastic about finding paths for effective change.

Throughout the development of the Implementation Blueprint, the Division was highly motivated to tackle big problems and find real solutions. Leadership encouraged all prosecutors to speak candidly about their experiences. They did not shy away from the information that came as a result of the needs assessment, focusing on the potential for better efficiency and fairness for the people of the State of Connecticut.

This Implementation Blueprint is a strategic plan to create change. In it, we lay out ten goals, each with concrete objectives and action steps to ensure that the implementation work is specific, measurable, and achievable. Each goal focuses on an area of change that can occur within the Division.

- **Goal 1 | Expand problem-solving approach to prosecution through development of robust diversion options.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include extending statewide early screening and intervention (ESI), identifying areas for early diversion *prior* to any action by the prosecutor's office, and cataloging existing diversion options.
- **Goal 2 | Strengthen infrastructure of local States' Attorneys' Offices.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include upgrading technological capacity statewide, evaluating existing staffing plans, and improving discovery collection protocols.
- **Goal 3 | Increase recruitment strategies to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include expanding fellowship and internship positions, eliminating the requirement of bar passage prior to hiring, expanding lateral hiring opportunities, increasing contact with local schools, and streamlining the hiring process.
- **Goal 4 | Improve community relations.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include hiring a Director of Community Engagement, reviewing the need for a community relations position at each office, creating community engagement strategies to be used statewide, and piloting a restorative justice initiative.
- **Goal 5 | Increase transparency with the public.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include updating the mission statement, creating annual reports showcasing the work done in local communities, and reviewing the victim outreach process.

- **Goal 6 | Improve cohesion across all State’s Attorneys’ Offices.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include implementing an annual retreat for State’s Attorneys, encouraging more connection between leadership and line-staff statewide, creating opportunities for prosecutors to work in different jurisdictions.
  
- **Goal 7 | Improve data collection and reporting.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include prioritization of data entry and consistent use of eProsecutor (a case management system), expansion of internal reporting and review of data, operationalizing data to improve practices, and creating public facing materials to report data.
  
- **Goal 8 | Improve how pro se litigants move through the court system.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include creation of an inclusive stakeholder coalition to the needs of pro se litigant and development of a pro se engagement guide for prosecutors.
  
- **Goal 9 | Address the burden of high workload for prosecutors.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include normalizing health, wellness, and self-care for prosecutors, expansion of the prosecutorial workforce, and an assessment of statewide workflow.
  
- **Goal 10 | Enhance and improve prosecutor training.** Concrete steps to achieve this goal include revision training programs, both for new and experienced prosecutors, and formalizing a mentorship program.

# Introduction

This Blueprint is the result of a strategic planning initiative conducted by the Center for Justice Innovation<sup>1</sup> (the Center) with the Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice (the Division), between February 2022 and November 2023. This Blueprint is designed to lay out a clear path for enhancing efficiency and fairness within the Offices of the State's Attorneys.

## The Center for Justice Innovation

The Center promotes new thinking about how the justice system can respond more effectively to issues like substance use, intimate partner violence, mental health, and juvenile delinquency. The Center achieves its mission through a combination of operating programs throughout New York City and New Jersey, original research, and national expert assistance. The Center employs staff with diverse work backgrounds, including prosecutors, defense counsel, probation officials, senior administrators of major criminal justice system agencies, social workers, technology experts, researchers, victim advocates, and mediators.

## Connecticut Division of Criminal Justice

The Division is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of all criminal matters in the State of Connecticut. It is an independent agency of the executive branch of state government, established under the Constitution of the State of Connecticut.

The Division is comprised of the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, and the Offices of the State's Attorneys for each of the 13 judicial districts across the state. The Chief State's Attorney, the Deputy Chief State's Attorneys, and the State's Attorneys for the 13 judicial districts, who serve as the chief prosecutor for their respective judicial districts, work with the assistant state's attorneys as Connecticut's prosecutors. The State's Attorneys are analogous to district attorneys in many other states. Local State's Attorneys' Offices range in size from seven to thirty prosecutors.

Cases of a severe nature<sup>2</sup> are prosecuted in the Part A court and other matters are prosecuted in the Part B court. Some Judicial Districts have multiple local courthouses for Part B cases, referred to as GA (geographical area) courts.

# Methodology

In collaboration with the Division, the Center’s technical assistance team conducted 84 interviews with criminal justice system stakeholders from across the state. The assessment drew on a mix of in-person and virtual interviews, depending on stakeholder availability.

In-person interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders, including prosecutors and support staff (e.g., secretaries, investigators, inspectors) across four jurisdictions: Danbury, Hartford, New Britain, and New London. Two members of the technical assistance team (an interviewer and a note-taker) conducted each interview. Interviews included questions about professional experience, office policies and culture, case processing, and community perceptions. Interviews generally lasted between 30-60 minutes. The technical assistance team used an abridged version of the interview guide with support staff.

In addition, the technical assistance team interviewed stakeholders outside of the State’s Attorney’s office, including defense counsel, community-based groups, sexual assault service providers, advocacy groups, victim advocates, NAACP, and the Connecticut ACLU. These interviews were designed to glean community perceptions of the State’s Attorney’s office and focused on the role of the prosecutor, community involvement, and transparency. These groups were not exclusive to the four sites, but were drawn from across Connecticut.

Finally, a series of in-person observations were conducted at the four jurisdictions. These included observations of practices across courts; specialized domestic violence and gun dockets; and pretrial conferencing among defense counsel, prosecutors, and the judiciary. The goal of these observations was to better understand court processes and procedures, typical interactions between court actors and defendants, and overall decision-making.

A needs assessment report was written and provided to the Division, the advisory board, and other stakeholders.

In October of 2022, the Center convened a roundtable with representatives from the Division and other Connecticut criminal justice stakeholders. During the two-day roundtable, representatives from the Center presented findings of the needs assessment and the group began to identify goals for change.

The current Blueprint sets out practicable goals for the Division.

## GOAL 1

# Expand problem-solving approach to prosecution through development of robust diversion options.

**Rationale:** The Connecticut criminal justice system features many alternative-to-incarceration and pretrial diversion options. These options mainly address first time offenders and, low-level drug/alcohol, motor vehicle, domestic violence, and quality-of-life offenses. Prosecutors support an defendant's application for diversionary programs when appropriate; however, most programs—except for the Early Screening and Intervention program (ESI)—are created and are run by the Judicial Branch rather than the Division. Prosecutors report that they need more information about the specific programming across the respective diversion options to which they refer. For example, not much information is known by prosecutors about a diversionary programs' effectiveness or it's specific programming. Prosecutors generally agree that these diversion options are essential to addressing litigants' needs; prosecutors also expressed interest in improving and expanding these programs. To ensure that the Division provides quality programming that creates effective and lasting change for participants, prosecutors must know more about the alternative-to-incarceration and pretrial diversion programs.

### **Objective 1A: Support the statewide implementation of Early Screening and Intervention.**

The Division is most directly involved in diversion via its ESI program. ESI includes a dedicated prosecutor who works with a resource counselor (social worker) to screen low-level cases at the early stages of the judicial

process. The resource coordinator uses the screening to identify individuals presenting with underlying needs that can be addressed to reduce future criminal justice contact. The Division launched ESI in 2017 and 2018 across six jurisdictions, and a report was presented to state legislators in 2019 demonstrating the program's promise. The Division and the Center will collaborate to develop statewide policies and procedures, with an eye toward laying the foundation for future evaluation to ensure that any expansion of the ESI model is evidence-informed and guided by best practices.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Develop a clear, written ESI program model (e.g., program manual, logic model) that will serve as a foundation for any future expansion;
- Develop policies and procedures informed by best practices (review of assessment tools, etc.);
- Create uniform, statewide training for prosecutors and resource counselors;
- Set data collection standards that are informed by ESI's program model;
- Adopt eProsecutor<sup>3</sup> as the data collection and case management system for ESI, which will require updating eProsecutor to better reflect ESI programming and extensive training on system use; and
- Determine if ESI can be evaluated and/or conduct an evaluation of implementation.

### **Objective 1B: Determine where opportunities for off-ramping exist to reduce cases entering the system.**

Early off-ramping of cases allows prosecutors to deflect cases before they enter the system. This process can reduce the workload burden on prosecutors and stop cases from entering the legal system when there are better options for their resolution. In Connecticut, cases are automatically docketed in court after arrest; therefore, prosecutors cannot efficiently fulfill their duty to determine whether cases should be prosecuted. This system sets up Connecticut prosecutors to react to whether a prosecution should continue, rather than whether it should occur. This causes the momentum of the system to be towards prosecution rather than dismissal.



In other jurisdictions across the country, off-ramping has been achieved through collaboration between local law enforcement, first responders, treatment providers, public defenders, prosecutors, and other community leaders. While some programs have been piloted across Connecticut, like Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) in New Haven and Hartford, there has not been a system-wide effort toward deflection. Other examples of deflection programs that might be leveraged are Sequential Intercept Mapping (SIM), in which stakeholders collaborate to determine service needs at various intercept points, and Community First, in which court staff (peers and case managers) conduct community outreach and provide service connection for individuals in need.

*Action Steps:*

- Review and assess lessons learned from LEAD pilots in New Haven and Hartford;
- Create an exploratory committee to determine a statewide strategy for system deflection (i.e. county-based LEAD programs, SIM technical assistance); and
- Identify funding opportunities for system deflection programs.

**Objective 1C: Create and disseminate a catalog of existing diversion programs, including eligibility requirements, descriptions, and contact information.**

The Connecticut criminal justice system uses many diversionary programs.<sup>4</sup> While prosecutors understand the eligibility requirements of these diversionary programs, they have little understanding of what happens after a defendant enters the program. Most Connecticut diversionary programs are run by the Judicial Branch, therefore prosecutors have little to no access to individual defendant's progress or to specific program details. Prosecutors, defense attorneys, and other stakeholders will benefit from a better understanding of the central features of these programs. Toward this end, program information should be available regarding: programs' target population and eligibility criteria, goals and objectives, resources (e.g., staffing, required staff qualifications), program duration, activities (e.g.,

counseling, group-based therapy, number of expected sessions), and data collected to document program delivery and success. Such information will help to guide prosecutors in making more informed diversion decisions. Cataloging this information can also set up prosecutors to work with stakeholders to create a system for default routing of appropriate cases to diversion screening. Additionally, the States' Attorneys can consider creating a role to oversee this work statewide (e.g., Chief of Diversion), as other jurisdictions have accomplished.

*Action Steps:*

- Work with the Judicial Branch to review details of each diversion program;
- Create a catalog of programs that includes intended target population and eligibility criteria, goals and objectives, program structure, activities, participant expectations, completion requirements, and contact information;
- Document which programs have a solid theoretical and evidence base or have been evaluated;
- Disseminate catalog to stakeholders (prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, etc.);
- Consider developing a process for diverting certain cases by default (rebuttable presumption); and
- Develop a suggested list of key indicators (e.g., demographic information, attendance, completion, client exit surveys) that can be used by the state to better understand program delivery and performance.

## GOAL 2

# Strengthen infrastructure of local State's Attorneys' Offices.

**Rationale:** The Chief State's Attorney's Office is responsible for the Division's budget, personnel, and administration across all jurisdictions. Local State's Attorneys are responsible for the oversight, including the internal policies and operations of individual State's Attorney's Offices. Some of the technology available within the Division is outdated, and accessibility varies across States' Attorney's offices and courthouses. The current hardware, video players, software, and Wi-Fi connections significantly impact the time it takes to digitize files, case notes, and discovery. The amount of time and energy dedicated to operating out-of-date technology leads to an increased workload and takes prosecutors and staff away from other pertinent tasks such as ensuring sufficient and effective time is spent on each case.

In 2022, Connecticut experienced a wave of retirements, with almost 25% of staff retiring from the Division. Before the positions are filled, there is an opportunity to examine the current staffing structure and vacancies. With State's Attorney's Offices operating at less than capacity, job responsibilities changed to accommodate the vacant positions.

The process of obtaining materials from law enforcement also varies across jurisdictions and even among police departments within the same State's Attorney's Office. Each police department has its own process and can use any of a multitude of different online databases. There is an increased need for a universal database to share discovery more seamlessly between law enforcement and the State's Attorney's Offices. Prosecutors expressed interest in strengthening the infrastructure and improving the operations of the local State's Attorney's Offices to target these problems.

### **Objective 2A: Upgrade technology across all jurisdictions.**

There is a clear need for improvements to technology across the Division. Technological limitations have added significant time burdens onto prosecutors and staff, time which should be dedicated to individual cases. The Division will determine the minimum necessary technology and ensure that each office has access to that technology.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Create a standardized checklist for jurisdictions to learn about minimum technology standards;
- Survey all jurisdictions to assess technology gaps;
- Create a budget to achieve base-level technology standards; and
- Purchase identified technology and coordinate with IT to install and train staff on proper use.

### **Objective 2B: Review of staffing levels.**

With the extraordinary number of vacancies, this is an appropriate time to evaluate staffing and push towards including more progressive positions that can move the Division further towards its goal of providing justice. The specific staffing needs of the Division have not been systematically reviewed in recent history. A review of the necessity of current positions and the creation of new positions will allow the Division to refocus goals on ensuring efficiency and fairness.

The State's Attorney's Offices will review job descriptions for each position and evaluate whether the descriptions accurately describe the work being done by that staff member or if the tasks and responsibilities better align with a new position. Potential new positions can include operations managers at each jurisdiction or within the Chief State's Attorney's Office, and a Director of Community Engagement (see Goal 5 for more information on this role). The operations manager can assist in many of the responsibilities included throughout this report, including discovery.

The Division will implement a workload assessment to begin examining appropriate workload for a prosecutor. With the partnership of an external organization, an assessment can be created to review the work of Connecticut

prosecutors and determine the proper parameters of what is expected of a prosecutor.

*Action Steps:*

- Update current and create new job descriptions;
- Compare actual job tasks and responsibilities with written tasks and responsibilities;
- Create new positions like operations managers at each jurisdiction and the Chief State's Attorney's Office;
- Partner with an external agency to evaluate expected tasks and workload of Connecticut prosecutors and determine the proper parameters of what is expected of a prosecutor; and
- Begin cushion hiring as opposed to crisis hiring.

**Objective 2C: Improve discovery collection.**

The Division will work with the law enforcement community to improve and streamline the sharing of information (e.g. documents and/or videos) through electronic means. Under the umbrella of Conn. Gen. Stat. §54-142, which established the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) Governing Board, the Division will work with other criminal justice stakeholders to increase the sharing of arrest paperwork electronically. This update in technology will allow the Division to improve the timing and quality of the disclosure of discoverable information to defense counsel in a criminal case. Currently, the Division is piloting the transfer of documents electronically from the Clinton Police Department's Records Management System to the Division's CMS. The Division and the CJIS Governing Board will take lessons learned from the Clinton pilot site to expand the system to all police departments. State's Attorneys at each jurisdiction will connect with law enforcement liaisons to meet and test out the new system.

*Action Steps:*

- Continue to work with CJIS Governing Board stakeholders to expand information and document sharing to include all municipal and state police entities;
- Seek resources from the legislature so the Division can continue to expand its use of technology to comply with its discovery obligation; and
- Seek legislation to standardize discovery procedures by all police agencies.

## GOAL 3

# Increase recruitment strategies to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion.

**Rationale:** The Division understands the benefits of diversity among its staff. A diverse group of prosecutors, reflective of their community, contribute to a thoughtful and just criminal justice system. The Division is committed to increasing and supporting prosecutorial diversity throughout the jurisdictions.

The Division will prioritize programs and outreach strategies that connect the offices to a larger pool of potential prosecutors. These programs and strategies will focus on increasing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

### **Objective 3A: Expand the fellowship program.**

The fellowship program has been successfully operating within the Division since the fall of 2019. The program allows individuals immediately out of law school to work as a prosecutor for two years, starting before their bar passage. This allows the Division to hire earlier in the process giving them access to a larger pool of law school candidates and increase their access to diverse candidates who currently take positions before the Division begins hiring. Currently, only three fellowship positions are available per year.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Increase the number of fellowship positions;
- Implement a mentoring and training program for fellows to prepare them for a potential job as a prosecutor following their fellowship; and
- Create a Criminal Justice Commission (CJC) interview preparation program available to fellows and other interested candidates.

### **Objective 3B: Create a paid internship position.**

Currently, all internship positions are unpaid. This limits the potential intern candidates to those who can afford to work for free, excluding a pool of potential candidates. Students use internship opportunities to learn more about what the day-to-day work of a potential career looks like. To increase economic diversity within the office, more students should be afforded the opportunity to intern within the State's Attorneys' Offices.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Identify funding sources, looking at internal Division budgets and exploring opportunities for paid internships that are available in local colleges and law schools; and
- Create an application process for law students to request funding.

### **Objective 3C: Eliminate requirement for bar passage before hiring.**

To be hired as a prosecutor in Connecticut, candidates must have passed the Connecticut bar exam. In many other prosecutor's offices nationwide, prosecutors are hired before bar passage, with their continued employment contingent on passing the bar. Because most prosecutors' offices hire from a pool of law students before graduation, the Division office is missing out on a pool of potential candidates. The requirement that a new prosecutor is an "attorney-at-law" is codified in the Connecticut General Statutes and would require a change in the law.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Action Steps:*

- Discuss removal of bar passage within the Division and create a working group to lobby for legislative changes; and
- Propose change to the State Legislature.

**Objective 3D: Allow for lateral hiring at various position levels.**

All newly hired prosecutors start in the same entry position as a Deputy Assistant State's Attorney (DASA). For mid-level positions, such as those in supervisory roles, only internal candidates can apply. Candidates with experience outside of the Division cannot start at a higher-level position, regardless of their qualifications. In practice, this can limit experienced candidates from moving laterally into the office.

*Action Steps:*

- Discuss changes to lateral hiring positions with the Connecticut Association of Prosecutors (CAP) union; and
- Create new policies and procedures for lateral hiring, including identifying what experience would allow candidates to be considered to start at a position other than DASA.

**Objective 3E: Partner with local law schools to increase awareness of the job of a prosecutor.**

There is a need for more connections with local law schools, colleges, and secondary schools to increase the pool of diverse candidates interested in the job of a prosecutor. In the current legal climate, a prosecutor's job is not considered as prestigious as it once was. More involvement in schools to explain the day-to-day work and the goals of Connecticut prosecutors may help to increase interest and understanding of the job.

*Action Steps:*

- Reach out to local law schools, colleges, and secondary schools within Connecticut and identify a point person for educational and informational opportunities; and
- Select a pool of prosecutors who can be ambassadors when opportunities arise.

**Objective 3F: Streamline hiring process.**

The Division does not have a unified system for hiring new prosecutors. Local State's Attorneys screen applications and conduct initial interviews. The State's Attorney then submits a list of finalists to the CJC; the CJC interviews finalists and fills the vacancies. Neither the local offices nor the CJC are required to use prescribed questions or procedures during the interview process, and prosecutors perceive a lack of transparency within this system. Additionally, there is a substantial wait time to be interviewed by the CJC. This delay can result in qualified candidates accepting other positions outside the Division.

*Action Steps:*

- Create a list of core competencies that are necessary for a successful candidate;
- Develop a rubric for interviews that is consistent across all jurisdictions and includes mandatory questions on diversity and inclusion and space for additional questions specific to the jurisdiction; and
- Collaborate with the CJC to create a notification system for interviewing candidates to stay abreast of the interview process.

## GOAL 4

# Improve community relations.

**Rationale:** Connecticut’s prosecutors expressed a desire to serve their communities effectively and compassionately. With a robust community court and investment in expansions to early screening and intervention, the Division has likewise affirmed that they are committed to the long-term health and well-being of the communities they serve. Stakeholders now wish to embrace not just serving the community, but connecting in a meaningful and sustainable way. Community members, stakeholders, and prosecutors themselves reflected on the fact that, with all levels of prosecution staff being in appointed, as opposed to elected, roles, the public is not very aware of the platforms and priorities of the State’s Attorneys. Community members commented that the priorities of local community members are likewise not known by the prosecutors. Momentum exists to begin ongoing community engagement and to ensure meaningful community feedback that can help inform the priorities and policies of the Division.

### **Objective 4A: Hire a Director of Community Engagement.**

First among the steps required to get a robust community engagement plan implemented statewide is to have a dedicated state-level employee whose role would be to face both the community on behalf of the Division and vice versa, and to raise the voices and needs of local residents. A newly created position of Director of Community Engagement would be charged with assessing the opportunities that exist both locally and statewide for meaningful prosecutorial engagement with community members and groups. Further, they will draft office-wide policies and procedures for community engagement, organize statewide outreach activities, and be a consistent face for the State’s Attorney’s’ Offices in the public as a demonstration of responsiveness and transparency.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Create a job description for the Director of Community Engagement with input from community stakeholders;
- Hire for the position with input from community stakeholders;
- Set year-one goals, which should include identifying the best avenues for office engagement; and
- Present this new position to the community as a resource. This may be through a press release, an announcement at the monthly Connecticut Criminal Justice Reform Call hosted by the Katal Center, or other appropriate forums.

### **Objective 4B: Determine if a designated staffing position for community relations is needed in each jurisdiction.**

The newly added Director of Community Engagement will begin with assessing needs, resources, and priorities in each of the state’s geographical areas. Some areas and communities within those areas may have specific issues or barriers to effective engagement. If so, it would be the Director of Community Engagement’s responsibility, in consultation with Division leadership, to determine whether additional local assistance is needed to connect line prosecutors and staff to events and engagement opportunities with their respective jurisdictions and to ensure that effective communication with local communities can flourish.

#### *Action Steps:*

- During their first year, the Director of Community Engagement will work with all local jurisdictions to observe areas where additional community relation strategies are needed;
- The Director of Community Engagement will contact each State’s Attorney to strategize on local office practices; and
- The Director of Community Engagement will schedule regular check-in meetings with each jurisdiction to ensure prioritization of community relation goals.



**Objective 4C: Create community engagement policies, procedures, and templates; present to staff.**

Many prosecutors reported a willingness and a desire to be more engaged with their local communities, but they were unsure how to do so. Some even expressed concerns about whether or not doing so could present ethical dilemmas or be out of line with office policy. To clarify and expand staff's ability to engage with the public, a clear, written outline of policies and procedures is necessary.

*Action Steps:*

- Prioritize discussion and creation of local community relation strategies at State's Attorneys' retreat (See Objective 6A);
- Draft a policy memo about suggested and encouraged community engagement strategies; and
- Ask State's Attorneys to brief their staff on the new policy and to strategize, as an office, where they want to focus (e.g., presenting at local schools or public meetings, supporting existing local service projects, hosting community members at the court).

**Objective 4D: Pilot a restorative justice initiative as an alternative to prosecution.**

Stakeholders expressed great interest in piloting and eventually expanding the use of restorative justice practices in local courts. Restorative justice, including hosting peace circles to problem solve and promote understanding among case participants, is a practice that many communities use to great effect. Such an approach can help get to the root of negative interactions and put participants on a course towards healing and unity, strengthening both individuals and the community at large. Peacemaking practices are based on indigenous practices and could be a meaningful way to include local tribal leaders from within Connecticut in the justice system as compensated experts and advisors.

*Action Steps:*

- Visit existing restorative justice and/or peacemaking program(s);
- Conduct a restorative justice needs assessment, examining which community would like to

pilot a program and is asking for this type of programming, what local indigenous leaders might be willing to advise, and what types of cases should be made eligible;

- Select a pilot site based on needs assessment findings; and
- Conduct implementation planning: develop eligibility criteria, develop case flow chart and referral mechanism(s), determine policies and procedures, secure physical space, select and train circle keepers, and develop before and after surveys to assess program efficacy and receive feedback from participants.

## GOAL 5

# Increase public transparency.

**Rationale:** The Division has demonstrated a strong desire to strengthen and connect with the communities they serve. State’s Attorneys and their staff have undertaken efforts to build connections with their communities, such as attending community meetings. This has increased public awareness of their respective State’s Attorney’s Office, what they do, and how they do it. Given the recent calls for increased awareness and transparency of the “black box” of prosecution—particularly important in the wake of the murder of George Floyd and the heightened scrutiny of law enforcement agencies—these efforts are a great demonstration of the Division’s capacity to peel back the curtain of their office in a way that meets community desires for transparency without compromising the aspects of their work that must remain private. Formalizing and publicizing the Division’s work of engaging with communities will build on the existing efforts by prosecutors, provide consistency in messaging, and strengthen relations with the public.

### **Objective 5A: Develop an updated mission statement.**

Before the Division can begin sharing their work with the public, they must first tell the public who they are, what they do, and for what reasons. A mission statement will serve as a public-facing commitment to certain goals. While most people would consider the job of a prosecutor to be promoting public safety, that phrase doesn’t appear on the homepage of the Division of Criminal Justice, nor does it appear on the web pages for the Office of the Chief State’s Attorney or the State’s Attorneys. In contrast, the website for the Office of the District Attorney for Philadelphia, for example, states clearly on its homepage that its goal is “building a safer, fairer, more just Philadelphia,” with a subheading stating that “the Philadelphia District Attorney’s office is a voice for the victims of crime, a zealous advocate for justice and a fierce defender of the rights of all Philadelphians.” The website goes on to show

three priority areas of the office, namely “building safer communities, reducing mass incarceration, and public accountability,” each with further explanations of what those priority areas entail.

By explicitly stating its mission and priority areas, the Division will have a clearer public-facing message and help build consistent messaging when State’s Attorneys and their staff promote the work of their offices at community events and other public engagements.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Add a mission statement workshop to the State’s Attorney’s annual retreat (see Objective 6A);
- Receive support from an outside agency, such as the Center for Justice Innovation, to facilitate the creation of a mission statement; and
- Publish the mission statement and any objective areas on the website for the Division.

### **Objective 5B: Create an annual report showcasing to the community the work and successful initiatives of the Chief State’s Attorney’s Office.**

As mentioned above, some State’s Attorneys’ Offices across Connecticut have already developed ways of engaging with the community and communicating the work of the Division. To streamline this process and broaden its reach, the Division could release an annual report that showcases its progress in achieving the goals outlined in the vision and mission workshop at the State’s Attorneys’ retreat. This can help bridge the gap between the work of both the Division and the individual State’s Attorneys’ offices and public perception, cited as being generally negative due to broader national trends in the public’s view of law enforcement and prosecutors. The new position of Director of Community Engagement could be responsible for developing a template for these reports, including both hard data on cases resolved by the State’s Attorneys’ Offices and qualitative data about the progress toward reaching goals as identified by the Division. It can also include partnerships and other efforts of prosecutors to engage with the community in their jurisdiction (e.g., participating in community events, presenting at schools, hosting fundraisers for charities).



*Action Steps:*

- Examine existing examples of annual reports or public-facing documents that highlight the work of prosecutors;
- Create a template for annual reports (either by the Director of Community Engagement or another position within the Division);
- Develop a mechanism for collecting data from State's Attorneys' Offices that provide support for the areas chosen for the report; and
- Identify platforms for disseminating the report.

**Objective 5C: Review and revise the victim outreach process.**

Community members noted the lack of understanding of the victim outreach process and an inconsistency in the treatment of victims from one jurisdiction to another. One victim advocacy group went so far as to say that they dissuade victims from reporting certain offenses in their jurisdiction because of a lack of trust in how the case will be handled by the respective State's Attorneys' Office. The concern begins at the point of victim outreach—who conducts it, how is it conducted, and what explanation is given for the result of the case. To address these concerns, broader input from victim advocacy groups must be solicited and synthesized into an actionable plan to revise the victim outreach process.

*Action Steps:*

- Host a forum with victim advocacy groups to better understand key areas for improvement;
- Convene an internal working group to review the feedback and existing protocols, matching emerging themes to specific points in the victim outreach process;
- At the State's Attorney's retreat propose modifications to the victim outreach process to determine the viability of changes;
- Pilot the revised process in one jurisdiction to test for the applicability of new protocols; and
- Expand new protocols to all jurisdictions through staff training and revisions to the Prosecutor's Deskbook.

## GOAL 6

# Improve cohesion across all State's Attorneys' Offices.

**Rationale:** The Division consists of 13 State's Attorneys' Offices operating independently in their respective local jurisdictions. Prosecutors and staff at each jurisdiction expressed feeling siloed from other State's Attorneys' Offices with limited communication. With the heavy workload and requirements of the job, prosecutors have finite opportunities to work with colleagues from different jurisdictions. Prosecutors are interested in improving cohesion across all State's Attorneys' Offices and increasing cross-collaboration.

### **Objective 6A: Implement an annual retreat for State's Attorneys.**

Each State's Attorney's Office operates independently at the discretion of the State's Attorney. In addition to meeting on a monthly basis, implementing an annual retreat for all State's Attorneys will create opportunities for information sharing across offices, as well as to and from the Chief State's Attorney's Office. An annual retreat will allow for more robust communication between the State's Attorneys and the Chief State's Attorney's Office for information sharing and discussing new ideas. Additionally, the Division may coordinate with an external agency, like the Center, to facilitate the retreat.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Survey State's Attorneys to learn what topics are of interest to staff;
- Select a location, date, and time for the annual retreat<sup>6</sup>; and
- Coordinate with an external agency to facilitate the retreat.

### **Objective 6B: Encourage State's Attorneys and supervisors to convene in person regularly.**

To foster cohesion and cross collaboration, it is vital to host regular and consistent meetings for supervisors across Connecticut. These meetings will allow all supervisors to come together in person and engage in professional development and educational opportunities. One option for in-person collaboration is having State's Attorneys and supervisors travel to other offices for observation. During these observations, State's Attorneys and supervisors will see how other offices operate and will get to ask questions about the current practices. This cross-collaboration will expose State's Attorney's and supervisors to new ideas for potentially different practices to incorporate into the office.

Adding in-person trainings to the training calendar will improve cohesion across all jurisdictions. As a result of COVID-19, many trainings went online, which is cost-effective and improves time management, but it has impacted the connection between staff from different jurisdictions.

Having in-person trainings allows staff to meet colleagues from different jurisdictions and expand their networks. With in-person trainings, prosecutors can meet each other, build connections, and identify colleagues to use as a resource during their tenure.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Create a survey to solicit information from supervisors on potential topics and areas to discuss for statewide supervisor meetings;
- Determine a rotating schedule for where the supervisory meetings will occur;
- Create and distribute a memo to all jurisdictions about the observations across State's Attorneys' Offices;
- Develop policies and procedures on how to host observations and questions to ask host State's Attorneys;
- Meet internally as a State's Attorney's Office to gauge staff input;
- Determine what trainings can become hybrid and include both remote and in-person options;
- Coordinate with IT to determine if the current technology can host a hybrid training method or if new technology needs to be purchased;
- Create a schedule for regional in-person trainings

that local staff can attend; and

- Set topics and dates in advance so staff can accommodate being out of the office.

**Objective 6C: Create temporary transfer opportunities for new and experienced prosecutors across different jurisdictions.**

Prosecutors are hired by the Division and are assigned to a particular jurisdiction, where they work for a single office under one State's Attorney. Prosecutors are interested in learning from their colleagues across jurisdictions and having the opportunity to practice in other locales. Temporary transfers will also allow prosecutors to see different court types, like habeas and appellate. Creating opportunities for both new and experienced prosecutors to work temporarily at different State's Attorney's offices can foster new ideas, and experiences and improve knowledge-sharing.

*Action Steps:*

- Coordinate with the CAP, the prosecutor's union, to develop guidelines and policies for prosecutors to temporarily transfer to a different State's Attorney's Office; and
- The Chief State's Attorney's Office will create a policy to encourage and support prosecutors and State's Attorney's Offices to facilitate temporary transfers.

**Objective 6D: Update the employee directory to include photos of staff.**

The Division has an employee directory that includes all staff from each State's Attorney's Office and the Chief State's Attorney's Office. Adding photographs to the employee directory will improve the connection between staff. The size of the Division makes it impossible for staff to know everyone, and having photographs in the employee directory will allow for networking and improved relationships.

*Action Steps:*

- Coordinate with IT to update the employee directory to include photographs; and
- Write instructions on what photographs should look like for submission and/or hire a photographer to take headshots.

## GOAL 7

# Improve data collection and reporting.

**Rationale:** Statutorily, the Division is required to report data annually concerning three main areas: 1) the last best offer, 2) prosecutorial diversion, and 3) victim engagement. To facilitate reporting requirements, many jurisdictions have adopted “yellow sheets” which flag the information that prosecutors, or other end users, need to enter into the case management system, eProsecutor. However, compliance with these minimum requirements can fall short of the broader goal of incorporating data into the daily practice of the prosecutor.

Additional challenges surrounding data remain. There is still ambiguity around how to best define and categorize some of the information that is entered and reported. More significant structural issues surrounding data collection and reporting also exist. Despite launching a comprehensive statewide case management system, adoption and data entry have been slow and inconsistent. Improving data collection and reporting will require not only technological advances and overhauling of data systems but new investments and data prioritization and transparency. Data can and should be considered the cornerstone of this Blueprint’s goals and objectives.

### **Objective 7A: Prioritize data entry and use of eProsecutor.**

Despite new legal requirements concerning data reporting, eProsecutor has not been uniformly adopted and implemented across jurisdictions. The inconsistent adoption is largely attributed to limited capacity and understanding of the case management system and the need for greater communication of data as a Division priority. Efforts are needed that will help to ensure widespread buy-in and integration of eProsecutor into day-to-day work.

Prioritization of data entry and use of eProsecutor will require actions steps related to two general areas: 1) promoting buy-in at all organizational levels

and sending a clear message that data is a priority and 2) improving training surrounding eProsecutor with emphasis on applied training that closely relates to use cases of the system.

### *Action Steps:*

#### **Buy-in**

- Improve messaging about why the case management system is in place and necessary;
- Foster data literacy and awareness across jurisdictions by adding data to the Supervisory Assistant State’s Attorneys’ training agenda;
- Provide jurisdictions with snapshots of their data, such as through periodic reports, *and* the state of their data (e.g., percent of cases missing from the system); and
- Formalize the importance of data entry performance as an area of discussion at CJC interviews.

#### **Improve training for eProsecutor**

- Leverage the Office of Ethics and Professional Standards to strategize and coordinate training;
- Implement a working group to target training content with a special emphasis on pain points in the case management system as experienced by prosecutors;
- Offer accessible and frequent training (e.g., online guides, video recordings) on common eProsecutor tasks;
- Develop written protocols and manuals that are specific to the end user; and
- Work with each jurisdiction to map case flow to best determine when data should be entered into eProsecutor and by whom. Building on the progress made by the “yellow sheet” system, consider creative means of ensuring systematic and comprehensive data entry.

#### **Objective 7B: Expand and improve regular internal reporting of prosecutor data.**

The first step to making data a part of an ongoing conversation driving the work of the prosecutor is to make data readily available. Recent progress has already been made toward this goal in the form of monthly indicator reports provided by the manager of research and planning. These reports reflect a combination of data received from the Judicial

Branch and data entered into eProsecutor and give jurisdictions a general overview of case processing by typologies, such as seriousness and disposition tract. While the content and form of these monthly reports will evolve over time, such reporting will only be as good as the underlying quality of the data upon which it relies. Thus, the first step is to develop a supporting system of data cleaning and audits to ensure that these reports are as accurate and comprehensive as possible.

*Action Steps:*

- Continue and expand monthly indicator reports;
- Continue and expand monthly data entry scorecards that indicate how much data is missing;
- Conduct a widespread audit of data currently entered into eProsecutor. Develop a plan to improve data collection so that it can be useful, collecting informative data that helps explain the role of the prosecutor in case processing. Develop an ongoing system of regular audits and cleaning protocols;
- Develop a data dictionary to document fields in the database for front-end users; and
- Work with each jurisdiction to map case flow to determine who should be responsible for data cleaning.

**Objective 7C: Operationalize key data points and define data priorities that serve the new mission statement.**

Each State’s Attorney’s Office must provide data on the last best offer, diversion, and victim contact, however, the exact nature of this data is not specified in the statute. Work has already begun on improving data entry related to these three areas by flagging data fields that need to be entered in eProsecutor. Additional discussions have taken place on updating fields in eProsecutor to better reflect diversion practice.

Clearly defining data related to these three topic areas is a necessary precursor to the broader goal of using data to support the work of prosecutors and demonstrate that the Division is progressing toward its new mission statement (see Objective 6A).

*Action Steps:*

- Convene a working group reflecting diverse roles

and voices within the State’s Attorney’s Office to find effective ways to use the data that is statutorily required and determine how that will be presented and disseminated;

- The working group should then move on to defining data priorities more broadly, beginning with a comprehensive review of how other states and jurisdictions present the prosecutor’s work in public-facing dashboards;
- Continue to convene the above working group to propose data priorities, including what metrics best serve the new mission statement;
- Update fields and dropdowns in eProsecutor to reflect the operationalization that the working group defines;
- Update the diversion dropdown in eProsecutor to include a comprehensive and mutually exclusive list of diversion options. The suggested list includes global dispositions, motor vehicle compliance, theft/restitution needed, dispute resolution/unruly behavior, family violence cases, compliance with behavioral health treatment, and lack of evidence/uncooperative witnesses;
- Update guides, training, and monthly reports with data points generated by the working group; and
- Transition this group into a resource for operationalizing and thinking through data requests as they occur in real-time. Consider growing the Department of Research and Planning to better address mounting data needs.

**Objective 7D: Update and improve eProsecutor.**

eProsecutor offers great promise for achieving larger data goals, such as being data-informed and ensuring greater transparency. However, the system's current functionality needs to fully align with the day-to-day work flow of end users. While a large-scale system overhaul should not take priority over other objectives in this Blueprint, and may not be possible, careful consideration of how to optimize the system is warranted. Improvements to eProsecutor are suggested throughout this Blueprint, but there are additional specific action steps to increase usability.

In addition to addressing specific concerns about the system overall, it would be helpful to use the data entry for the ESI (see Objective 1A) as a case study; the roll out of the ESI module and its implementation into the larger database can yield greater insight into how to improve the system as a whole.

*Action Steps:*

- Identify pain points in the system that can be easily modified to enhance the end-user experience;
- Bring on additional eProsecutor consultants, or other relevant personnel, to address functionality issues where necessary;
- Accelerate the alignment of ESI and eProsecutor to capture data discussed in Objective 1A; and
- Generate a lessons learned document from the experience of using eProsecutor in diversion work.

**Objective 7E: Use data to explain work externally.**

The desire to increase public transparency is a theme throughout this Blueprint. Thoroughly complying with statutory data reporting requirements is a crucial first step in data use and reporting. Development of public-facing materials, such as reports and data dashboards, can further the goal of public transparency. While there is room for improvement in how data is collected and reported within the State's Attorneys' Offices, much information is provided by the Judicial Branch. It may be possible for the Division to leverage this data to begin a conversation with external partners, stakeholders, and the public at large. It is important to begin this planning process early, as public-facing dashboards can be complicated and require

coordination from various departments to develop, launch, host, and maintain.

*Action Steps:*

- Explore the annual Office of Policy and Management reports, and other mechanisms, as opportunities to provide rich data and context beyond what is statutorily required;
- Investigate and pilot different software and platforms for public-facing dashboards;
- Plan for and develop the infrastructure for public-facing dashboards; and
- Roll out public-facing dashboards using a phased approach beginning with aggregate level data from the Justice Branch, next adding statewide prosecutor-specific data, and finally advancing dashboards to highlight different jurisdictions and specific diversion efforts, including the ESI.



## GOAL 8

# Improve how pro se litigants move through the court system.

**Rationale:** The Connecticut court system, as with others across the country, faces a large number of pro se litigants. Many states see pro se litigants in non-criminal court contexts, such as civil or housing proceedings, and prioritize providing legal representation to defendants in criminal court proceedings. However, many pro se litigants in Connecticut represent themselves in criminal court settings. They must conference their cases directly with prosecutors without a judge's oversight or mediation. While many of these cases are for low-level offenses, pro se litigants are still accepting plea agreements that have potentially adverse consequences should they fail to meet their obligations—obligations they do not always fully understand before accepting them. In multiple instances, prosecutors cited pro se litigants discussing details of their case that should not be shared with prosecutors for reasons of self-incrimination.

Furthermore, the volume of pro se litigants in court for low-level offenses creates an excessive demand on the time of prosecutors. Prosecutors spent significant time answering questions that fall outside of the scope of their mandate for case conferencing. Prosecutors across offices shared the concern that the current pro se landscape is unsustainable and expressed a desire for it to change while at the same time understanding that such change would require engaging other key stakeholders.

### **Objective 8A: Form a stakeholder coalition to address pro se litigants.**

Addressing the high volume of pro se litigants is essential to decreasing the workload and increasing the capacity of prosecutors, who spend a significant amount of time addressing questions from defendants. While states across the country are grappling with the issue of pro se representation in

their courts and have developed several potential solutions, one common thread to all such efforts is a multi-stakeholder approach. Finding solutions requires engaging judges, the defense bar, other court staff, and the state legislature.

While the solution to Connecticut's pro se litigant population will be necessarily unique to the needs and circumstances of the state, stakeholders can draw on lessons and suggestions that have arisen from similar efforts. Ideas tested in other states include increased educational materials for self-representation, providing more robust resources through automated forms and court filings, granting accommodations for court processes, increasing funding for public defenders or other pro bono representation, reexamining the role of judges and clerks as potential resources, diverting lower-level offenses, and the elimination of adversarial proceedings solely in cases involving pro se litigants.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Identify representatives from relevant agencies (e.g., judicial, defense bar, state legislature) to participate in pro se taskforce;
- Collect information on practices and policies adopted by other states;
- Convene the stakeholder group to explore potential changes to Connecticut's pro se litigant process; and
- Develop a set of potential changes to make within the respective agencies and departments represented.

### **Objective 8B: Develop pro se engagement guide for prosecutors.**

Given that the task of reevaluating Connecticut's approach to pro se litigants will take time and effort from multiple parties, there remains a need to address the ability of prosecutors to engage with pro se litigants efficiently and in a way that minimizes potential harm or self-incrimination. No formal training currently exists for prosecutors who regularly speak with defendants who are representing themselves. And yet, the potential is high for pro se litigants to disclose information that could incriminate them in their case. Since the nature of these conversations is highly sensitive and nuanced, it would be beneficial for prosecutors,

particularly newer staff, to have training or guidance on how to conduct themselves with pro se litigants.

*Action Steps:*

- Collect information on trainings and resources available to prosecutors who interact with pro se litigants; and
- Develop a quick guide for frontline prosecutors that covers the best practices for engaging with pro se litigants.



## GOAL 9

# Address the burden of high workload for prosecutors.

**Rationale:** There is no recommended caseload standard for prosecutors at the state or national level. However, research shows that higher prosecutor workloads are associated with case processing delays, backlogs, and a less efficient criminal justice system.<sup>7</sup> Such outcomes can also lead to additional harm for victims and further compound disparate outcomes for people of color. At an individual level, prosecutors with heavy caseloads often report less job satisfaction and more stress-related burnout.<sup>8</sup> Overworked prosecutors have less time for family and personal interests and are less likely to engage with professional associations, specialized trainings, and other career development activities. Higher than average caseloads can also have an office-level impact. Overburdened teams have less time for onboarding and mentorship and often see high turnover and attrition rates. Accordingly, addressing this burden will improve team morale, cohesion, and performance.

### **Objective 9A: Normalizing health, wellness, and self-care for prosecutors.**

Persistent staffing and operational challenges can make prosecutors feel like long hours and heavy caseloads are part of the job. This type of work/life balance, however, can result in “demoralization, anxiety, helplessness, exhaustion, somatic problems” and social withdrawal.<sup>9</sup> As such, organizational culture must allow time for prosecutors to rest and attend to their physical and mental health needs. Prosecutors also tend to work closely with victims and the graphic details of tragic cases and heavy workloads mean less time to attend to the emotional burnout and vicarious trauma resulting from such cases. The cumulative toll of this work can affect a prosecutor’s judgment, professionalism, and decorum. Outside of work, a prosecutor’s personal relationships and overall health can be impacted

just the same. Prosecutor health, and wellness, and self-care should be prioritized and formalized at the district and state level.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Conduct a statewide survey to identify prosecutor health, wellness, and self-care needs and preferences;
- Use the survey to identify case type or operational issues that contribute to stress and burnout;
- Establish and codify baseline health and wellness protocols at the state level;
- Create easy-to-understand printed and online materials on how to access support;
- Review existing Employee Assistance Program resources, and address any notable gaps (e.g., specialized trauma support, sabbaticals)
- Incorporate the topic of health and wellness into statewide conferences or trainings; and
- Seek funding for gym membership and exercise equipment/clothing reimbursements.

### **Objective 9B: Increase prosecutor hiring and expand prosecutor office workforce.**

Widespread retirement and backlogs from the COVID-19 pandemic have compounded Connecticut’s already-high workloads. Prosecutors in Connecticut also have a significant amount of extra work that is not standard in other states. This includes assisting pro se defendants and helping them navigate the criminal justice system without an attorney, significant discovery scanning duties, and reviewing body-worn camera footage. Additionally, too few of the state’s prosecutors have trial experience meaning these cases fall to a select few. Interviewed prosecutors stated that they strive to do their job efficiently and effectively, but high workloads limit prosecutors’ time on each case.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Establish a workforce subcommittee to identify statewide prosecutor office staffing needs, set hiring targets, and engage with the legislature to increase allocations for hiring;
- Establish a dedicated recruitment working group to focus on recruitment strategies for more specific needs (e.g., temporary staff, interns, non-

- legal support staff);
- Hire support staff and/or interns to assist with body camera footage review;
- Develop a strategic hiring schedule based on turnover and retirement trends to help avoid lengthy job vacancies and “crisis” hiring;
- Hire a digital litigation support specialist to help implement digital discovery statewide;
- Explore alternative court models for handling pro se cases to help reduce backlog;
- Establish fellowships for a class of 3Ls who can assume per diem roles until they pass the bar; and
- Develop incentives, or additional benefits, for prosecutors to move to Part A.

**Objective 9C: Conduct a statewide workflow assessment.**

An essential first step toward reducing Connecticut’s heavy caseloads involves reviewing the state’s workflow and operations. For ease, this could take the form of an electronic survey each prosecutor’s office could complete as a team. Results would be primarily used in the aggregate to help identify workflow efficiencies, deficiencies, and dysfunction. The survey could also be used to gauge interest in developing a case weighting system and caseload “standard” for the state.

*Action Steps:*

- Work with a technical assistance provider to help develop and circulate a statewide workflow survey;
- Use survey results to create interactive data reports, workflow maps, and trends;
- Use survey results to inform the establishment of a statewide caseload standard<sup>10</sup>; and
- Use survey results to identify the full range of existing alternatives to incarceration, diversion, and pro se case processing models;

## GOAL 10

# Enhance and improve prosecutor training.

**Rationale:** The Division of Criminal Justice provides some formalized training for all prosecutors. New prosecutors attend a six-day Deputy Assistant State’s Attorney (DASA) training bootcamp, which is required within two years of being hired. Experienced prosecutors attend an annual training hosted by the Division of Criminal Justice. Most offices also have an informal mentoring program for new prosecutors, allowing them to get advice from experienced prosecutors who are not their direct supervisors. Training is currently offered both in person and virtually. Additional, targeted training will allow the Division to enhance the skills and values that they want to see in their prosecutors.

### **Objective 10A: Revise DASA Bootcamp**

The Division provides a six-day DASA training bootcamp for all new prosecutors. Traditionally, this bootcamp focused on the basic skills a prosecutor must know. The Division can also use the DASA bootcamp to instill the values that the Division expects all prosecutors to uphold.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Revise bootcamp agenda to include additional interpersonal skills such as mediation, communication with victims, and communication with pro se individuals;
- Enhance trainings on implicit bias, procedural justice, and trauma; and
- Expand the bootcamp model into bootcamps for second and third-year prosecutors.

### **Objective 10B: Create a Training Plan for all Prosecutors**

The DASA bootcamp should be the first stage of training for prosecutors that continues through their careers. By creating a targeted training plan for all prosecutors, the Division will ensure that the prosecutors continuously hear the same messaging

about fairness and efficiency within the office. This ongoing training will include instruction on crucial topics for prosecutors to understand their role and impact on the overall system. Examples of training topics include, but are not limited to, prison conditions, post-conviction life, community impacts, trauma, and vicarious trauma. Training around prison conditions and post-conviction life should include visits to prisons and conversations with individuals post-release. Training should include victim and community impacts, allowing prosecutors to hear what their local community wants to see from prosecutors. Many involved in the criminal justice system—including defendants, victims, and witnesses—have a history of trauma, and prosecutors must be prepared to work with these individuals. Prosecutors should also receive training in vicarious trauma to ensure that the events they witness in their job do not lead to personal burnout.

#### *Action Steps:*

- Create a training plan for prosecutors that continues throughout their career as a prosecutor; and
- Include training topics such as prison conditions, post-conviction life, community impact, victim experience, trauma, and vicarious trauma.

### **Objective 10C: Create Varied Methods of Training**

To ensure that training reaches all prosecutors the methods of training should be varied. For annual, in-person training, the courts should be advised well in advance that prosecutors will not be available to staff court. If possible, these trainings should be scheduled at the same time as judicial conferences to lessen the burden on the court system. Training should be provided in-person both in large group settings, and smaller regional trainings, as well as virtually to ensure that all prosecutors are able to benefit from the offered training. The recently created Office of Ethics and Professional Standards Director will work with the defense bar to create combined trainings for prosecutors and defense counsel. These combined trainings will allow defense and prosecutors to engage in discussions about shared values and strengthen professional relationships. Prosecutors will also continue training for law enforcement partners and expand the pool of prosecutor lectures

available for law enforcement trainings.

*Action Steps:*

- Create a yearly in-person training schedule that can be shared with all court system stakeholders;
- Inventory available online trainings and identify training gaps;
- Identify a contact person for scheduling defense counsel and prosecutor trainings;
- Select regions and central training locations; and
- Survey the available senior staff and determine their areas of expertise for the purpose of engaging them as lecturers.

**Objective 10D: Formalize a Mentoring Program**

In some offices, a formalized mentoring program exists; in others, the mentoring happens informally. New prosecutors benefit from having a non-supervisor senior attorney to mentor them. Mentoring can include a person to answer day-to-day questions and a support for learning how to balance workload and life.

*Action Steps:*

- Determine experience level required for mentors;
- Identify interested mentors;
- Create a protocol for assigning mentors to mentees; and
- Provide support for mentors.

# Conclusion

It is apparent that Connecticut has numerous assets to implement the goals set out in the Blueprint. There is willingness and eagerness with all stakeholders to share information and devote time to the Moving Justice Forward project. This Blueprint offers information and concrete suggestions for the long-term enhancement of Connecticut's Division of Criminal Justice.

# Footnotes

1. Previously the Center for Court Innovation.
  2. The definition of a severe nature is determined by each jurisdiction.
  3. EProsecutor is the case management system currently used statewide in the State's Attorneys' Offices.
  4. Connecticut diversionary programs include the Family Violence Education Program (FVEP), Accelerated Rehabilitation (AR), Drug Education Program (DEP), and Alcohol Education Program (AEP), School Violence Prevention Program, Bias Crimes Education Program, Supervised Diversionary Program (SDP), Suspended Prosecution for Firearms, and Suspended Prosecution for Drug/Alcohol Dependence (CADAC).
  5. Conn Gen Stat § 51-278a.
  6. The first State's Attorney's retreat will be held in March of 2023 and focus on implementation of this blueprint.
  7. *An Examination of Prosecutorial Caseloads*. Center for Justice Research, Texas Southern University. <https://www.centerforjusticeresearch.org/reports/prosecutor-workload>.
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