

**CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford**

TO: State Board of Education

FROM: Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: September 5, 2018

SUBJECT: Update: Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC)

Executive Summary

Purpose

This presentation will provide an update on the progress made by the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) to reform the Connecticut juvenile justice system and provide supports for youth diverted from or involved with the juvenile justice system. The role of the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) in the JJPOC and in developing and providing supports for districts and students will be emphasized.

Background Information

In 2014, the Connecticut General Assembly established the JJPOC to oversee the continued reform of the State's juvenile justice system. This Committee was tasked with a comprehensive set of responsibilities regarding identifying issues and recommending reforms.

The work of the JJPOC has been largely conducted through its four work groups: Diversion, Incarceration, Recidivism, and Cross Agency Data Sharing. These work groups are comprised of state, local, private, non-profit, and advocacy agencies that collaboratively develop systemwide and research-driven strategies to improve youth justice in the State of Connecticut. Starting in 2016, the JJPOC established three strategic goals to guide juvenile justice reform efforts by mid-2018:

- 1) Increase diversion of children and youth from juvenile court by 20 percent.
- 2) Decrease the number of children and youth confined (incarcerated) in state-run facilities by 30 percent.
- 3) Decrease the rate of recidivism among juvenile offenders by 10 percent.

Over the course of the past two years, and through a number of implemented reforms, the JJPOC has met or exceeded these benchmarks. The CSDE has been specifically engaged in addressing youth involvement with the juvenile justice system, in favor of school and community-based supports. These efforts, through the Diversion work group of the JJPOC, include the development of the Community-based Diversion System Framework; the School-based Diversion System Plan; and the implementation of youth risk screening tools.

As a result of statutory changes in 2017 that eliminated truancy and defiance of school rules as reasons for a Family with Service Needs (FWSN) referral to court, the CSDE has lead the effort in facilitating supports for youth who are truant; developed resources for districts regarding truancy intervention; and worked with partners to reduce school-based arrests and divert youth away from the juvenile justice system.

Follow-up Activities

New legislation regarding the future work of the JJPOC, requires the CSDE’s participation in a JJPOC working group to develop a plan concerning the overall coordination, oversight, supervision, and direction of all educational and academic education services and programs for children in justice system custody. The plan must further address the provision of education-related transitional support services for children returning to the community from justice system custody.

Finally, the JJPOC is in the process of embarking on a new three-year strategic plan. As a member of the committee, the CSDE is engaged in this strategic planning process. In addition to continuing the efforts identified above, the new strategic plan will seek to assess the quality of diversionary programs; determine appropriate ages for youth involved in the juvenile justice system; reduce incarceration of youth; and address racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.

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CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Update:
**Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight
Committee (JJPOC)**

**State Board of Education
September 5, 2018**

The Need for Juvenile Justice Reform

- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system have a much higher than average prevalence of behavioral health issues;
- Youth of color, and youth with disabilities including behavioral health issues, experience much higher rates of juvenile justice system involvement than their peers; and
- Youth who are diverted from the juvenile justice system and into community-based behavioral health services experience better outcomes, including lower rates of future criminal behavior.



Alignment with Comprehensive Plan

Ensuring Equity and Excellence for All Connecticut Students

The Connecticut State Board of Education's
Five-year
Comprehensive Plan
2016-21

At the Connecticut State Department of Education,
students are at the core of everything we do.

OUR PROMISE TO OUR STUDENTS

- Ensuring their non-academic needs are met so they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn. (Mental health, nutrition, after-school programs)
- Supporting their school and district in staying on target with learning goals. (Education Cost Sharing - ECS, Alliance Districts, Commissioner's Network, School Choice)
- Giving them access to great teachers and school leaders.
- Making sure they learn what they need to know to succeed in college, career, and life.



[The Connecticut State Board of Education's Five-year Comprehensive Plan 2016-21](#)

JJPOC History and Charge

Established in 2014, the JJPOC is a committee of state agencies, advocates, legislators, service providers created and charged by the General Assembly with:

- ...evaluating policies related to the juvenile justice system and the expansion of juvenile jurisdiction to include persons sixteen and seventeen years of age.
- ...providing recommendations for reforming the juvenile justice system to:
 - *improve public safety;*
 - *promote the best interests of children and youth involved in the juvenile justice system;*
 - *improve transparency and accountability with respect to state-funded services for children and youth involved in the juvenile justice system; and*
 - *promote the efficient sharing of information.*



Working Groups and Goals

1) Diversion Work Group:

Goal: Increase Diversion by 20% by July 2018

2) Recidivism Work Group:

Goal: Decrease Recidivism by 10% by July 2018

3) Incarceration Work Group:

Goal: Reduce Incarceration by 30% by July 2018

4) Data Sharing Work Group:

Goal: Enhance Data-Sharing between State Agencies

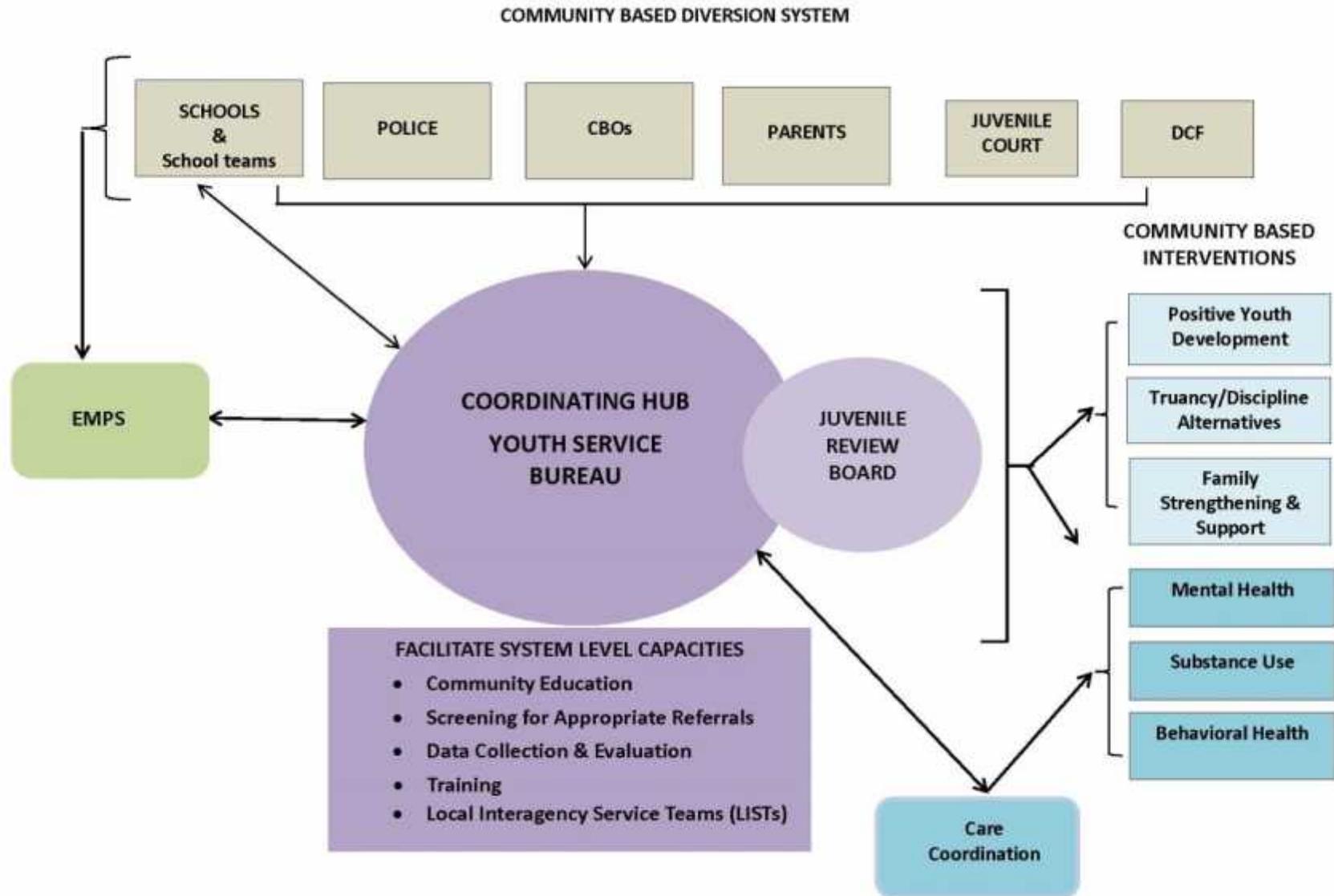


Diversion Work Group

- Develop a Community-based Diversion System plan that addresses issues concerning mental health needs and juvenile justice
 - 80% of juvenile court referrals come from community sources
- Develop a School-based Diversion System Plan to reduce juvenile justice system involvement among children with mental health needs
 - 20% of juvenile court referrals come from schools
- Provide for the elimination of truancy as a Family with Service Needs (FWSN) referral to juvenile court



Community-based Diversion System



School-based Diversion System

- Support Restorative Practice models in schools, reducing exclusionary discipline and behavior escalation
- Support school-level assessments of mental health services and supports
- Expand the CT School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)



Addressing Truancy

- Develop a community referral process to support students who are truant:

[Youth Service Bureau Referral Guide](#)

- Identify Truancy Intervention Models for use by schools with high rates of truancy:

[Catalog of Truancy Intervention Models](#)



JJPOC Draft Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Goal 1: Increase and assess both the quality and availability of diversion programming

- *...preventing youth from entering the formal justice system by appropriately serving them by alternative means or systems (e.g., community-based diversion, restorative justice approaches, mental/behavioral health services, etc.) in order to achieve better outcomes for youth.*

Goal 2: Reduce Incarceration

- *...ensuring that youth who are committed to confinement are held accountable through individualized rehabilitative services, treated with fairness and dignity, and offered the support needed to mature into healthy and productive members of our communities.*



JJPOC Draft Strategic Plan 2019-2021

Goal 3: Reduce racial and ethnic disparities of youth in Connecticut's juvenile justice system

- *...eliminating racial and ethnic disparities of justice-involved youth to ensure fairness and equity for all youth.*

Goal 4: "Right-size" the juvenile justice system by setting appropriate lower and upper age limits

- *...focusing its juvenile justice system to the appropriate age range of youth to provide developmentally appropriate and effective services for both the youngest youth (lower age of jurisdiction) and the older youth (including emerging adults) in order to improve individual outcomes and increase public safety.*

