

## Color of Justice Fact Sheet: Student Arrests

In the 2015-2016 academic year, 20 percent of youth referred to court for delinquency originated in schools. Connecticut students have been arrested for offenses such as “possession of tobacco by a minor”; the highest percentage is for “breach of peace.” While schools have an obligation to maintain safety and order, the courts are not the appropriate place to handle everyday school discipline matters.

### How Does This Affect the Racial Imbalance of the System?

Schools are a major feeder to the juvenile justice system; and they are sending children of color to the system at a high rate. In Connecticut schools, black children are over four times more likely to be arrested than white children; Latino students are nearly three times as likely to be arrested than white students. Together, on average, black and Latino students experienced school arrest rates 3.4 times higher than white students in 2014-15 (Connecticut Voices for Children).

### What can be done?

Communities, activists and state agencies are all working on programs that have **proven success** in reducing student arrests.

**The Judicial Branch** is returning arrests (for clearly trivial causes) back to schools for alternative handling. They returned nearly 3,000 cases since 2011, the majority of which were for “normal adolescent behavior.”

**Police-School Partnerships:** A police chief and superintendent of schools can sign a memorandum of agreement stating when police should and should not get involved in student behavior. This is accompanied by community-wide collaboration to identify needs and offer services that improve student behavior. After Manchester embraced the program, the arrest rate at its high school fell 78 percent. [rightresponsect.org](http://rightresponsect.org).

**Training:** The Office of Policy and Management offers one-day trainings for police officers and school staff to help them interact with youth more effectively. [ctjuststart.org](http://ctjuststart.org)

**The Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)**, from the Child Health and Development Institute, helps schools address behavioral health needs without referring to the juvenile justice system. Among participating schools, arrests dropped 45% and referrals to EMPS Mobile Crisis Intervention Services increased by 94%.

[chdi.org/our-work/mental-health/school-based-mental-health/sbdi/](http://chdi.org/our-work/mental-health/school-based-mental-health/sbdi/)

**Using data to target high-arrest schools for intervention:** The Center for Children’s Advocacy is working in Bridgeport, Hartford, New Haven and Waterbury to reduce school-based arrest rates in each city. CT Voices for Children released a comprehensive report, Arresting Development: Student Arrests in Connecticut, examining school discipline data from CT. You can read it and search for local data at: [ctvoices.org](http://ctvoices.org).

