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# The Connecticut Juvenile Justice

## Strategic Plan:

# Building Toward a Better Future

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August 2006

A Strategic Planning Process Facilitated by the Child Welfare League of America for the Department of Children and Families – Bureau of Juvenile Services and the Connecticut Judicial Branch – Court Support Services Division in Collaboration with many Public and Private Stakeholders.

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# Stakeholders

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Special thanks and appreciation must be given to the many individuals who have worked diligently to prepare this ambitious and coordinated strategic plan. These individuals represent the following agencies and groups who have participated in this process: the Governor's Office, Connecticut State Legislature, Office of Policy and Management, Department of Education, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Office of Workforce Competitiveness, Office of the Chief Court Administrator including Court Operations and External Affairs, Office of the Chief Public Defender, Office of the Chief State's Attorney, Office of the Attorney General, Office of the Child Advocate, parents and advocates from African Caribbean American Parents of Children with Disabilities (AFCAMP), Children's League of Connecticut, Connecticut Association of Nonprofits, Connecticut Center for Effective Practice, Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, Connecticut Youth Services Association, Center for Children's Advocacy, Department of Correction, Family Advocacy Organization for Children's Mental Health (FAVOR), parents from local communities, The Tow Foundation, University of Connecticut, Yale University, the Department of Children and Families, and the Court Support Services Division of the Judicial Branch.

# Call to Action

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No juvenile justice system in Connecticut is acceptable, no matter how effective or well developed, if that system anticipates increased numbers of children whose opportunities and life prospects are lessened due to early involvement in that system. Prevention provides the most promising outcomes for children, and has been unanimously endorsed throughout this process as the most effective intervention for potential court or juvenile justice involved children. Meeting the spirit of our conviction—to prevent child and youth involvement in the juvenile justice system—requires each state agency and system partner to embrace this objective and implement programs, strategies, and measurements that support child, youth, and family success.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) Bureau of Juvenile Services and the Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) recognized the need to engage in a joint strategic planning process to expand interagency management efforts to provide greater coordination and services on behalf of children, youth, and families involved with the juvenile justice system. DCF and CSSD entered the strategic planning process with the primary goal of developing an interagency plan outlining an integrated system for planning, implementation, and evaluation of juvenile justice service delivery in Connecticut. However, during the strategic planning process, and especially during the Community Listening Sessions where over 450 parents, children and youth shared their experiences, fears, concerns, desires and needs, DCF and CSSD came to view the scope of the work differently due to honest and invaluable input from our family, provider, community, and state agency partners. The agencies realized this work cannot be done in isolation, but must be done in collaboration with parents, the State Department of Education, local school districts, the police, service providers and with other state agencies. While the plan initially focused on children already involved with the juvenile justice system, we broadened our view to include those children who are not yet involved, but are at-risk for school failure, acting out, and delinquent behavior, and deepened our appreciation for the plight of many African-American and Latino boys and young men who are disenfranchised from the education system and workforce and, as a result, have the poorest outcomes for success. We recognize the needs of those youth who require better opportunities to succeed in school, to successfully transition to the world of work, and who are at-risk or involved with the adult criminal justice system.

# Commitment to Action

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This strategic plan outlines a commitment to building a system that supports children, youth and families at-risk for system involvement, and that cares for those referred to the court due to status offenses, delinquent behavior, or child protection concerns. Goals and action strategies are designed to decrease the number of children and youth being referred to court; to demonstrate a commitment to eliminate the overrepresentation of children and youth of color in the juvenile justice system; to support interagency prevention strategies; to improve access to services through policy changes, better screening to match needs to services, and the expansion of age-appropriate and gender-specific services; to improve services and outcomes through partnerships with parents and communities and better coordinated interagency planning; to increase the sharing of appropriate information and the knowledge of services of parents, teachers, providers and staff so that all parties are well-informed and work together to best serve the child; and to develop court diversion programs to better respond to disruptive school behavior and running away so that children are provided needed services without unnecessary and sometimes detrimental court involvement.

Through the strategic planning process, the stakeholders of the juvenile justice system have developed a close partnership for building a stronger, more responsive, and more effective system grounded in planning, collaboration, and passion. We are committed to partnering with communities to develop community-based interventions that are gender-specific, age-appropriate, and culturally competent, and that focus on keeping children, youth, and families out of the system. We are committed to building a system that is based on what works; that supports families; uses strengths, natural supports, and community-based interventions to safely keep children and youth in their homes and neighborhoods whenever possible; and that invests in people.

The stakeholders of the Connecticut juvenile justice system engaged in this strategic planning process to define our vision and mission, to articulate our guiding principles, and to present our goals and strategies for the development of a more effective system that diverts children and youth from a life of court involvement. This plan does not hold all the details for achieving the goals, but provides a “best practice strategy” for building a better system and a better future for Connecticut’s at-risk children and youth. To realize the mission and vision of the strategic plan and to develop the details needed to execute the plan, the Executive Committee

will form a team to oversee its implementation. During the first six months of implementation, the Implementation Team will prioritize the goals, objectives, and action strategies, define the outcome measures for the plan, and develop a budget impact report for the full execution of the plan. Many of the strategies presented in this plan instruct agencies, providers, schools, communities, and parents in “best practice” for working together and do not require additional funding. Other recommendations in this plan are unfunded and will require reallocating existing dollars or securing new funds. The Implementation Team will develop the concrete road map for executing the plan to improve the Connecticut juvenile justice system and to achieve better outcomes for the children, youth and families served.

# The Connecticut Juvenile Justice System: Building Toward a Better Future

A child...

A family...

A community...

A system...

A plan...

## **A Child:**

Jim:

*During his young life, Jim lived with an abusive father, in several foster homes, with his mother, in a detention facility, and in a hospital. He received services at various times from many agencies. As quickly as agencies entered his life, they exited. When foster care was over, so were the services. When he left a school, his supports disappeared. Assessments and screenings to determine his needs and strengths were not performed. Only when Jim was screened by a probation officer at age 16 was it discovered that he suffers from hallucinations. A consulting psychiatrist recommended that he undergo an inpatient evaluation, but Jim was nevertheless placed in detention because there was not a hospital bed available for him. After successful advocacy, Jim was moved to a hospital where he received a comprehensive assessment and evaluation. He was provided services through the voluntary services program to finally get him the help he needed.*

Angel:

*When Angel was six years old, her mother was incarcerated and she went to live with her grandmother. While living with her grandmother, Angel was sexually abused by the son of a neighbor who babysat Angel after school. At eleven years old, Angel was reunited with her mother and they moved into an apartment in an area known for crime, poverty, and few community resources. As Angel grew into a teenager, her mother did not have the skills or resources to handle her daughter's increasingly difficult behavior and did not know where to turn for help. The school teacher told her to refer Angel to the Court. Angel was referred to the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters when she was fifteen for Falsely Reporting an Incident by calling 911 from school. One month later, her mother filed a Family With Service Needs – Runaway complaint. Angel was eventually placed on probation, spent time in detention for continuing to run away, and was committed to DCF for placement because there were no effective services to keep her safely in the community.*

The children in these stories are someone’s son, daughter, student, or client—they are each Connecticut’s future. Their stories illustrate how children need a more coordinated system of child-serving agencies, greater availability of consistent educational resources, the presence and accessibility of more community supports, and appropriate and timely assessments—some of the goals and strategies found within this strategic plan. Understanding their stories and recognizing the work required to improve children’s outcomes is the first building block in constructing an improved juvenile justice system.

## **A Family:**

To create a truly responsive and effective system, the contributions, influence, and power of families must be acknowledged and incorporated into the vision for the future. To strengthen families, their skills, and their resources is to strengthen the children themselves. Throughout the process of developing this strategic plan, emphasis was put on providing opportunities for families to share their experiences, thoughts, and solutions. Parents were invited to participate in the Stakeholder Group (see Attachment A) to offer feedback on the progress and direction of the plan. Parent representatives were members of the Executive Committee (see Attachment B), which guided the development of this strategic plan. Listening sessions were held throughout the state to ensure that the ideals of the plan reflect what family members want and need. Woven throughout this strategic plan are recommendations informed by and, in some cases, crafted by, parents themselves.

This strategic plan directs the agencies to continue to invite family representatives to participate as members of teams designed to assess, develop, and evaluate programs, policies, and practices that affect children and youth. Families are made partners in identifying the resources in their communities that should be supported and expanded. Strategies are designed to involve families in every step of planning for their child’s services and treatment, acknowledging that families are truly the experts on their own children. Furthermore, strategies designed to serve the entire family are categorized as among the highest and most immediate priorities to be addressed. These strategies, designed to involve and engage families, are the second building block in making the vision of Connecticut’s juvenile justice system a reality.

## **A Community:**

***“We cannot always build the future for our youth,  
but we can build our youth for the future.”  
- Franklin Delano Roosevelt***

The juvenile justice community is diverse and extensive. It consists of a vibrant and thoughtful collection of parents, relatives, caregivers, workers, administrators, legislators, advocates, attorneys, judges, and of course, children and youth. These were the voices represented and heard throughout the development of this strategic plan. From the passionate words of parents spoken directly to their public officials, to the dedicated network of stakeholders developing principles to guide the future of the system, the juvenile justice community came together to ensure that Connecticut’s juvenile justice system will work toward building children and youth for the future.

In the listening sessions held across Connecticut, community members outlined several areas requiring special attention (see Attachment C). Participants passionately emphasized the importance of the role of the educational system in preventing involvement in the juvenile justice system. There was a strong plea for more community supports, such as mentoring, after school programs, and vocational training. Participants emphasized the need for better evaluation procedures at all points within the system, ensuring that children with mental health, educational, and substance abuse issues are identified and offered the appropriate supports.

The commitment to be responsive to these needs is demonstrated in the guiding principles developed as part of this document. The dedicated group of stakeholders worked for nine months on three different subcommittees (see Attachments D, E, and F) to design goals and strategies to meet the identified needs. These stakeholders, a collection of experienced and thoughtful juvenile justice professionals, parents, and providers, engaged in candid and fervent discussions to identify other core issues that needed to be addressed to ensure improved outcomes within the juvenile justice system. Points of emphasis that emerged during the planning process were the commitment to address the overrepresentation of minority children and youth, the need for services addressing the unique needs of girls, the need for developmentally appropriate services for 16- and 17-year-old youth in the criminal system, the need for more community-based prevention services, and the importance of culturally competent professionals working within the juvenile justice system.

Those who developed this strategic plan believe that these areas of emphasis will be best addressed through the implementation of developed strategies that fall under the following categories:

- ***Resource Development*** – The planning process revealed that Connecticut is a “resource rich” state; however, significant gaps in services exist, not only in the types of services available, but also in access to services based on geography or a child’s and family’s status with DCF or the court. Waitlists for services present a formidable challenge for many families. Several of the most effective evidence-based programs, such as Multidimensional Family Therapy and Functional Family Therapy, are not available statewide or have waitlists that span weeks or months. Strategies in this strategic plan seek to improve program development and capacity building by providing mechanisms for local and state-wide groups to confer on funding priorities and the implementation of innovative programming. Additionally, strategies address the breaking down of barriers that families encounter in accessing the services that do exist.
- ***Coordination, Collaboration, and Information Sharing*** – To effectively achieve the mission and vision of the juvenile justice system, the agencies that comprise the system must work together cooperatively, seamlessly, and with knowledge and respect for each other’s unique mandates, goals, resources, and limitations. All too often, the systems charged with serving children and families and protecting communities work in isolation of one another, duplicating efforts, letting children fall through the gaps, and failing to make the most appropriate and informed decisions. Several strategies in this strategic plan support making information sharing easier, within the bounds of the law, and making interagency procedures more effective.
- ***Data Analysis and Information Management*** – Several of the most pressing problems in the juvenile justice system relate to certain populations that are not served adequately or as successfully as necessary. To design the most appropriate and effective services for all children and youth, agencies must better understand the scope of and trends in various populations. Strategies that improve the methods of gathering, analyzing, and reporting data will ensure that resources are deployed where they are needed most. Furthermore, the effectiveness of programs must be better assessed and this is possible when relevant data is easily compiled and expertly analyzed.

- ***Workforce Development and Training*** – Families and other stakeholders involved in the planning process emphasized the importance of having a workforce that reflects the population it serves and is competent to address the intricacies of cultural and gender-related issues. The planning process revealed that training, long considered of great importance in system reform, is insufficient in many essential areas, including information sharing, court procedures, cultural competence, gender-responsive services, the impact of trauma, and family engagement. Training alone, however, cannot change systems. Training with ongoing support for staff to practice the application of concepts is necessary for full understanding and effective intervention. The strategies in this strategic plan seek to create a structure for developing effective recruitment efforts and training programs to provide clients with more informed and sensitive staff.

The contribution made by the juvenile justice community through the process of identifying these key themes is another important building block for success on the path to an improved juvenile justice system. The strategies developed under these thematic categories create a roadmap for making the system itself an effective partner to the children, youth, families, and communities who are personally invested in these struggles.

## **A System:**

*“It is the intent of the General Assembly that the juvenile justice system provide individualized supervision, care, accountability and treatment in a manner consistent with public safety to those juveniles who violate the law. The juvenile justice system shall also promote prevention efforts through the support of programs and services designed to meet the needs of juveniles charged with the commission of a delinquent act.”* CGS §46b-121h

The juvenile justice system in Connecticut strives to fulfill the intent of legislative mandates to improve the lives of children, youth, families, and community members while protecting the community. In some ways the system works, in other ways it needs work. Connecticut is not alone in its desire to improve the way it serves its clients and its community. Nationally, the conversation about juvenile justice has included a candid admission that a new way of doing business within government systems must be developed in order to meet the needs of troubled children, youth, and families. Traditional programs and practices do not provide solutions to current problems in the juvenile justice system, such as the overrepresentation of children of color, the increasing involvement

of girls and the lack of appropriate services to meet their needs, the over-reliance on detention, the lack of adequate mental health services and educational supports to keep children out of the juvenile justice system, and the need for disparate systems concurrently serving children and families to integrate and coordinate their efforts. These are all emerging themes in the field of juvenile justice as a whole, and as indicated in the previous sections, they are the concerns that will drive the work of Connecticut's Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan.

***"These kids are not mine, they're not yours. They're ours."  
- Connecticut parent***

### ***System Overview***

To best utilize the strategies presented as part of this strategic plan, it is important to understand the scope and depth of the system as well as the issues that confront it. The thirteen locations of the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters heard the cases of over 14,000<sup>1</sup> children in fiscal year 2003-2004. During that period, 10,811 children were referred to court for delinquent behavior (68% boys and 32% girls), of which approximately 850 children were referred for a Serious Juvenile Offense (see Attachment G for a legal definition of Serious Juvenile Offense). In addition, 3,828 children (54% boys and 46% girls) and 1,086 youth (48% boys and 52% girls) were referred for a status offense, such as truancy, running away, or being beyond the control of a parent (see Attachment G for legal definitions of terms Family with Service Needs and Youth in Crisis). Overall, 63.5% of children referred to the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters were boys and 36.5% were girls.

### ***Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)***

Children and youth of color are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, both nationally and in Connecticut. During 2003, there were 740,378<sup>2</sup> children below the age of 16 living in the state—the age at which Connecticut's juvenile jurisdiction typically<sup>3</sup> ends. In the general population, 70% of children below the age of 16 were Caucasian, 12% were African-American, 15% were Latino/a, and 3% were Asian. However, of the children referred to court, 46% were Caucasian, 30% were African-American, 21% were Latino/a, and 0.5% were Asian. Detention was used in 13% of cases, and of those children detained, 34% were Caucasian, 40%

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<sup>1</sup> Based on CSSD data, the total number of children and youth referred to court during FY03/04 was 14,110. Some children were referred for both a Families with Service Needs or Youth in Crisis complaint, or delinquency charge, thus reflecting 15,725 unique clients. The percentages to follow are based on the total number of children and youth referred, 14,110.

<sup>2</sup> Puzanchera, C., Finnegan, T., & Kang, W. (2005). *Easy access to juvenile populations*. Available online at <http://www.ojdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezapop/>.

were African-American, and 25% Latino/a. Furthermore, a study<sup>4</sup> of children in juvenile detention from 2002-2003 found that African-American detainees were rated low-risk for violence compared to Caucasian detainees, and concluded that there may be opportunities for intervention based on the protective factors exhibited.

As children move deeper into Connecticut's juvenile justice system, the overrepresentation of children of color becomes more pronounced. During fiscal year 2003-2004, approximately 4,056 juveniles, or 29% of the children and youth referred, were placed under the supervision of a Juvenile Probation Officer: 32% were girls and 68% were boys. Forty-four percent of the children and youth were Caucasian, 31% were African-American, 23% were Latino/a, and 0.4% were Asian. Approximately 381 children were committed to the Department of Children and Families as delinquent and approximately 104 children were committed for out-of-home placement as children from Families with Service Needs. Thirty percent of these children were girls, while 70% were boys. Forty-three percent were Caucasian, 30% were African-American, 24% were Latino/a, and 0.4% were Asian. These numbers illustrate the problem, and the strategies in this strategic plan demonstrate Connecticut's commitment to addressing it at each and every level of the system.

### ***Jurisdiction***

Connecticut also faces some unique system challenges. Connecticut is one of only three states in which the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system typically ends at the child's sixteenth birthday. There were approximately 12,000<sup>5</sup> 16- and 17-year-old youth, excluding those referred for motor vehicle violations, referred to the adult criminal justice system in fiscal year 2002-2003. Of those youth, approximately 1,700 were placed on probation, and on any given day, the Department of Correction housed anywhere between 275 and 350 youth (90-95% male) either awaiting trial or sentenced to a term of incarceration. Additionally, in Connecticut, children ages 14 and 15 may be transferred to the adult criminal justice system for certain serious offenses. During fiscal year 2003-2004, fifty-two children were admitted to DOC as transfers from the juvenile justice system.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 22% of these children were charged with

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<sup>3</sup> Youth in Crisis (YIC) legislation allows 16- and 17-year-old status offenders to be referred to the Superior Court for Juvenile Matters. YIC complaints represent about 4% of referrals for FY03/04.

<sup>4</sup> Chapman, J.F., Desai, R.A., Falzer, P.R., & Borum, R. (In press). Violence risk and race in a sample of youth in juvenile detention: The potential to reduce disproportionate minority confinement. *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*.

<sup>5</sup> Connecticut Judicial Branch (February 2004). Juvenile Jurisdiction Implementation Team Report.

<sup>6</sup> DOC data, September 26, 2005.

Robbery 1<sup>st</sup> degree; 18% were charged with Sexual Assault 1<sup>st</sup> or Aggravated Sexual Assault 1<sup>st</sup>; 9% were charged with Assault 1<sup>st</sup>; and 51% were referred for other<sup>7</sup> charges.

Connecticut stakeholders are particularly concerned about the welfare of children and youth handled in the adult criminal system. In July 2005, David B. committed suicide while housed at Manson Youth Institution, which houses boys and young men age 14 to 21. Since that time the Commissioner of the Department of Correction convened an interagency task force to study the conditions, programming, and services for the transferred and youth population at both Manson Youth Institution and York Correctional Institution, which houses girls and women age 14 and older. The Department of Correction released an interagency task force report that recommends needed changes to the programming and services for children and youth in the custody of the Department of Correction.

Whether housed by the Department of Correction or supervised in the community by Adult Probation, this young population does not have access to the juvenile justice system philosophy or to services specifically designed to meet an adolescent's developmental needs. Children and youth in the adult system are not as thoroughly screened for mental health needs as juveniles and have significant difficulty accessing mental health treatment because they are too young for the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS) adult services. Evidence-based, in-home treatment models such as Multisystemic Therapy, Multidimensional Family Therapy, and Intensive In-home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS) are appropriate for older adolescents but are not available to youth in the criminal justice system. Youth need educational support and services, vocational training and job readiness skill development, and transitional housing. Adolescents cannot be properly and effectively served when mixed into programs designed for much older adult offenders; in fact, research shows that the placement of adolescents in these programs may cause more harm than good.

### ***Status Offenders***

As discussed above, another area of particular emphasis among parents and community members in Connecticut is the importance of focusing on diversion—keeping children, especially status offenders and those identified as low-risk/high-need, out of the juvenile justice system. To effectively meet the needs of these children and families, additional services are needed to provide alternatives to court involvement or safe options to detention for children and youth who run away, have significant school difficulties, or are beyond the control of their

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<sup>7</sup> “Other” charges included predominantly sale of narcotics, carrying a pistol/revolver without a permit, larceny 2<sup>nd</sup>, robbery 2<sup>nd</sup> and robbery 3<sup>rd</sup>.

parents. Recent developments in Connecticut have indicated that all branches of government—legislative, executive, and judicial—are acknowledging and beginning to respond to these needs.

The 2005 legislative session saw important changes to CGS §46b-148, which will prohibit the Judicial Department from placing in detention any non-delinquent child whose family has been adjudicated as a Family with Service Needs (FWSN), or adjudicating a child delinquent solely for violating a court’s FWSN order. The legislature found that about 200 such juveniles are detained annually for an average of ten days. This significant statutory change acknowledges the importance of supporting community-based resources and diversion programs rather than relying on detention to address a family’s needs. It is imperative services be made available to families struggling with children who are beyond their control in order to effectively support them in their struggles and to divert them from court involvement.

If Public Act 05-250 is implemented on October 1, 2007, as intended, without community resources to provide safe alternatives for children who run away, supports for families struggling with severely acting out adolescents, or timely access to desperately needed mental health services, children’s safety will be jeopardized. The Court will be left with no means to protect these children, or to be responsive to parents and schools that are concerned for their safety and future. The importance of funding such intervention services cannot be stressed enough.

### ***Related Initiatives***

Connecticut stakeholders are not only concerned about diverting status offenders from court involvement, but also in more effectively treating children who have been committed by the court to the Department of Children and Families due to delinquent behavior. At the request of Governor Rell, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has worked with the Judicial Branch, the Department of Public Works, the Department of Correction, the State Department of Education, the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, advocates and others to develop a reform plan for the agency’s services for children committed delinquent. The goal and title of this effort is “Helping Children and Families Close to Home.” The plan reflects the principles voiced by the community, such as shifting resources to community and family supports, with an emphasis on treatment occurring in the least restrictive setting consistent with public safety. To this end, the plan recommends closing the Connecticut Juvenile Training School by 2008. Again, the themes of improving treatment planning and investing in the community guided this reform effort.

These system change efforts are occurring in the midst of several other important developments such as the *Emily J. Settlement Agreement*, and the publication of several Connecticut-specific reports on issues such as the needs of girls in the juvenile justice system and disproportionate minority contact. Many of these efforts are incorporated into this juvenile justice strategic plan and in tandem with this plan; they will provide the vehicle for creating true systemic reform, which is the final building block toward an improved juvenile justice system. For additional details regarding these plans, see the following web sites:

- *Helping Children and Families Close to Home*  
<http://nicic.org/Library/020738>
- *Emily J. Settlement Agreement*  
<http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/settlement%20announcement.htm>
- *Reassessment of Minority Overrepresentation in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System*  
[http://www.opm.state.ct.us/pdpd1/grants/jjac/reassess\\_final\\_report-final\\_version2.pdf](http://www.opm.state.ct.us/pdpd1/grants/jjac/reassess_final_report-final_version2.pdf)
- *Plan for a Continuum of Community-Based Services for Female Status Offenders and Delinquents*  
[http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/DCF\\_Girls\\_Services\\_Action\\_Plan\\_2nd\\_edition.pdf](http://www.state.ct.us/dcf/DCF_Girls_Services_Action_Plan_2nd_edition.pdf)

## **A Plan:**

The issues outlined above are of primary concern to the stakeholders involved in the strategic planning process. We are committed to reducing the number of children and youth coming into the juvenile justice system; to reducing the number of children and youth detained or incarcerated; to building community-based resources, not facilities; and to meeting the needs of children, youth, and families without judicial intervention, whenever possible. As a result, we will invest in our communities so they can provide effective and timely services to those in need.

Successful intervention in the lives of Connecticut's struggling children, youth, and families requires a coordinated, planned, and informed system response. The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan is crafted to assure such a response. Through this strategic planning process, the system has opened itself to inspection and critique, and is now poised to become more effective and responsive in meeting the unique needs of its citizens and in becoming an innovative leader in the larger reform of juvenile justice nationwide.

***"This is where we're going. We're not there yet."  
- Connecticut Legal Advocate***

# VISION

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*The children, youth, and families of Connecticut will live in safe, nurturing communities that provide for their needs, recognize their strengths, and support their success.*

# MISSION

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*The mission of the Connecticut juvenile justice system is to collaboratively promote and administer prevention, justice, and effective treatment in a fair, timely, and appropriate manner with dignity and respect for the individual needs of children, youth, and families.*

# GUIDING PRINCIPLES

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*The Connecticut juvenile justice system is a collaborative effort that includes families, schools, police, community organizations, service providers, advocates, municipalities, and state agencies. Every person and every agency serving children and youth has a duty to ensure that all are treated with fundamental fairness and afforded their constitutional rights. Our strategy for an effective juvenile justice system involves developing a coordinated continuum of services at both the state and local level that is guided by a common set of principles. These principles represent fundamental beliefs that guide the overall operation of the system; its services, policies, and the relationships forged with children, youth, and families. All children, youth and families are deserving of the very best efforts of a collaborative juvenile justice system that identifies and provides resources that address needs, and builds on strengths, skills and competencies.*

*We support the investment of money, staff and other resources in primary prevention efforts to promote the healthy development of our children and youth. As members of a collaborative juvenile justice system, we are committed to preventing system involvement of at-risk children and youth, as well as preventing further contact for those boys and girls already involved. The following principles will guide our best efforts to work more effectively on behalf of the children, youth and families of Connecticut:*

- 1. **The Whole Child.** We acknowledge that children and youth are more than their behavior. We are committed to serving the whole child, and to considering the physical, emotional, developmental, cultural, and spiritual aspects that contribute to a child's experience and way of interacting with the world. We acknowledge that a child's gender is fundamental in this experience.*
- 2. **Child and Family Informed Collaboration and Partnerships.** We acknowledge that families need to be involved in decision-making and treatment planning. It is our responsibility to build relationships with families, hear their concerns, learn from them, and support their strengths. We will involve parents, family members, and caregivers, as*

*well as children and youth, at every decision making level within the juvenile justice system.*

- 3. *Elimination of Disparate Responses Based on Race and Ethnicity.*** *We do not accept that the overrepresentation of minority children and youth in the justice system is beyond our control. We are committed to eliminating the disparity of response that emerges based on race and ethnicity.*
- 4. *Diversity.*** *We are committed to understanding and respecting the diverse and unique characteristics of the children, youth, and families we serve. The juvenile justice system will operate with dignity and respect for all people.*
- 5. *Community Safety.*** *We acknowledge that some children, youth, and families are particularly vulnerable due to living in poverty and in high crime neighborhoods. We are committed to promoting prevention and community safety through the development of ongoing partnerships with municipalities, community organizations, and neighborhood groups to strengthen the communities in which children, youth, and families live. At the same time, we will support children and youth in learning about responsibility and accountability for their actions.*
- 6. *Repairing the Effects of Harm.*** *We acknowledge that traumatic experiences and the effects of poverty have a significant impact on children, youth, and families. We understand the differences in how girls and boys experience and cope with trauma. We will create a trauma-informed juvenile justice system with policies, practices, and programs that acknowledge the unique risks, strengths, differences, and developmental needs of children, youth, and families.*
- 7. *Education.*** *We will ensure that court-involved children and youth receive an appropriate education within their communities, whenever possible. For those children who are placed outside their communities, we will facilitate an effective re-entry to local education systems prior to their return.*
- 8. *Coordinated Continuum of Services.*** *We are committed to interagency collaboration and partnership to develop a continuum of appropriate and effective services, including prevention, early intervention, and treatment. We will focus on identifying the strengths of children, youth, and families; serving their needs at the earliest point in time and in the least restrictive environment; and providing outreach and services in their home communities. We will intentionally provide programs and services designed specifically for girls, and programs and services designed specifically for boys.*
- 9. *Access.*** *We will continually strive to create equal and timely access to services, regardless of where a child lives or a family's financial means, so that all children and youth have the opportunity to become productive members of society.*
- 10. *Evidence-Based and Promising Practices.*** *We will use research-based principles and promising practices to effectively intervene with children, youth, and families and to concentrate on the reduction of recidivism for those children already in the system. We will invest in services that show positive outcomes, particularly the reduction of delinquent behaviors, and will evaluate programs for effectiveness.*

# Goals and Action Strategies

## Measuring Success: Suggested Focus Areas

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### Resource Development

**Goal #1: Reduce the number of children entering the juvenile justice system.**

**Action Strategy 1A: Support interagency prevention services in order to promote positive youth development and limit court involvement of children, youth and families**

CSSD and DCF should work with community organizations and families to prevent court involvement and support the expansion of non-court-based intervention programs and services. Communities should be engaged in delinquency prevention efforts and resource development. These prevention strategies should intentionally target children and youth of color in activities which will lead to less institutional and more community-based programs and services for this population.

CSSD and DCF should research and implement, where indicated, court diversion programs for status offenders, including gender-responsive truancy prevention projects for girls who are at-risk for truancy, such as those in Florida, New York, and Illinois.

DCF and CSSD should assure that prevention programs subscribe to gender responsive, trauma-informed, and culturally competent models and principles.

CSSD and DCF should work with the State Department of Education (SDE) and local school boards on efforts to address children's attendance problems and/or significant behavior issues that impact their ability to be successful in the school environment and lead to school-related referrals to court. Efforts for consideration should include:

- Educational advocacy services
- Alternative schooling/interventions
- Consultants for children with attendance problems
- Truancy prevention programs
- Clinical school interventions for early childhood problems
- School-based health and mental health clinics that include suicide risk screening and health education

DCF and CSSD should establish a collaboration with SDE to develop and pilot an alternative educational program for girls based on the PACE program in Florida.

CSSD and DCF should work with SDE, local school boards, and the Youth Services Bureaus (YSB) to expand the role of the YSB in the prevention of delinquency and the diversion of children and youth from arrest.

DCF and CSSD should jointly consider supporting programs and services designed to prevent juvenile delinquency, some of which are supported by other organizations including the Department of Public Health (DPH), SDE, and the Governor's Prevention Partnership. Such programs and services for consideration include:

- Recreational and positive youth development activities, including Youth Services Bureaus, Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Municipal Parks and Recreation Departments, and after school recreational programs
- Support services for parents, such as parenting skills training, information about services (social and prevention) and rights (education, medical, mental health), and respite
- Model programs such as Midwestern Prevention Project (drugs/alcohol), Quantum Opportunities Program (educational success), Prenatal and Infancy Home Visitation by Nurses, Bullying Prevention Program, Life Skills Training, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (emotional competence), Incredible Years: Parent, Teacher and Child Training Series (social competence and conduct problems), and Teen Parenting Programs
- Transitional living programs
- Clinical services, such as clinical day schools, extended day programs, intensive outpatient programs, and inpatient mental health and substance abuse services

CSSD and DCF should develop, in conjunction with local school districts and JRBs, a collaborative FWSN Diversion program to divert status offenders referred to court from the formal court process, with an emphasis on urban locations.

CSSD and DCF should work together, in conjunction with the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC), to educate the public, particularly parents, providers, teachers, school administrators, and police youth officers, about alternative responses to arrest.

A joint CSSD/DCF workgroup should revise the current *Step by Step through the Juvenile Justice System* handbook on the juvenile court process to ensure clarity relative to parental rights and to reflect the joint strategic plan's Guiding Principles.

DCF and CSSD should improve and enhance access to gender-responsive, culturally competent programs, including respite, staff secure group homes, and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care for acting-out children who cannot safely return home.

DCF and CSSD should improve and enhance access to gender-responsive, culturally competent services targeted toward "beyond control" and "truant" children such as educational assessments, educational advocacy, alternative school placements, vocational training and family-centered behavioral health services.

**Action Strategy 1B: Improve access to services through statutory, regulatory, and policy changes in order to provide early identification and intervention for children, youth and families in need**

DCF and CSSD should address whether statutory and/or policy changes are necessary to ensure the court is not used as a means of accessing services for children, youth and families in need who could be otherwise served without court involvement. This issue is of special concern with children who have a high level of need, but a low level of public safety risk, especially girls and children and youth of color.

CSSD and DCF should meet quarterly with families, advocates, administrators, line staff, the Department of Correction (DOC), the State Department of Education (SDE), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and legal counsel to review, revise, develop, and promote as necessary policies, statutes, and regulations of mutual interest. This work should build upon the findings of the Data and Information Management and Legal Analysis Subcommittees, as summarized in Attachments E and F.

DCF and CSSD should each review their policies to ensure that referrals to court are not encouraged as a means of managing acting-out behavior when more appropriate community-based interventions should be accessed, and should clarify what steps must be taken before a FWSN referral is made.

## **Goal #2: Eliminate the overrepresentation of children and youth of color in the justice system.**

**Action Strategy 2A: Eliminate disproportionate minority contact (DMC) through the establishment of Juvenile Review/Diversion Boards in urban areas in order to divert referrals from the court, and by implementing other statewide efforts to address the systemic causes of Disproportionality.**

CSSD and DCF should dedicate time and resources to the elimination of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system. Objective and comprehensive criteria should be utilized to make decisions regarding risk and need to ensure that children and youth of color are provided equal and appropriate access to quality programs and services.

CSSD and DCF should work with family representatives, advocates, state and local educators, law enforcement, and DOC, at a minimum, to review the recommendations of the two existing reports on DMC in Connecticut: *A Reassessment of Minority Overrepresentation in Connecticut's Juvenile Justice System* and the *Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparity in the Criminal Justice System's 2003-2004 Annual Report and Recommendations* (see Attachments H and I for a comprehensive summary of the relevant recommendations from both reports), and to consider budget options and/or statutory proposals.

CSSD should lead an interagency effort to work with the Youth Law Center or similar organization to collect accurate data on children in the juvenile justice system and to reduce DMC at critical decision points in the system.

DCF should integrate the work of the *Casey Family Programs Disproportionality Breakthrough Series Collaborative* project for child protection into the joint efforts in this area, and should use information and strategies gained to inform juvenile justice planning and operations.

To achieve this work, CSSD and DCF should assign a management level staff person to be responsible for overseeing each agency's efforts to eliminate DMC, and to convene family representatives, advocates, state and local educators, law enforcement, and DOC, at a minimum, to review the recommendations of the two previously mentioned reports on DMC in Connecticut (see Attachments H and I) and to consider budget options and/or statutory proposals. The responsibilities of the designated staff should include:

- Developing consensus among the various juvenile justice system stakeholders around a course of action to eliminate DMC
- Exploring the implementation of proven effective models such as the Annie E. Casey Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative and the work of the W. Haywood Burns Institute (see Attachment J for information on such models)
- Identifying baseline measures from which to compare outcomes and data
- Reviewing contracts for alignment with efforts to eliminate DMC, including staff development and training to ensure cultural competence
- Investigating criteria used for decision making at each point in the system to identify opportunities to replace subjective criteria with objective measures, including the consistent use of a Risk Assessment Instrument for decisions made at each stage in the juvenile justice system, including, but not limited to, diversion, arrest, detention, release, and placement decisions
- Managing the outcome study of the Hartford Juvenile Review Board to determine its effectiveness as a diversion program to reduce the number of children of color referred to Superior Court for Juvenile Matters, and promoting efforts to expand this program to other urban areas
- Overseeing the development and provision of an education program for staff of both agencies addressing the contributing factors to DMC within the juvenile justice system, as well as the findings and recommendations of the reports listed above
- Calculating the "Relative Rate Index" (RRI) at each decision point within the juvenile justice system on an annual basis to determine if DMC is increasing or decreasing over time and at which specific contact points and placements, including clinical treatment programs, CJTS and TRECS

### **Goal #3: Improve outcomes for those children and youth already involved in the juvenile justice system through the development and enhancement of programs, policies, and procedures.**

**Action Strategy 3A: Expand the continuum of services through interagency program planning and development to ensure that services are driven by the needs and strengths of children, youth, and their families.**

**DCF and CSSD should expand the continuum of services for court-involved children, youth and families. Program planning and development should continue to include the review of best practices. Services should be based on developmental needs and the child's, youth's and family's strengths. Services should also be grounded in research and promising practices that are trauma-informed, culturally and linguistically competent, and gender-responsive.**

DCF and CSSD should work to expand the availability of core services for all age groups and developmental levels, including:

- Community-based mental health and substance abuse treatment, including psychotropic medication management
- Community and home-based parenting training/supports
- Wraparound supports, including the availability of non-clinical programs and the support of grass-roots efforts and non-traditional programs to serve court-involved children
- School-based screening and evaluation services for mental health issues and learning disabilities
- Educational advocacy and consultation
- Single sex, gender-specific services
- Care coordination and case management services
- Respite services
- Trauma treatment
- Community-based treatment for children and youth exhibiting problem sexual behavior

DCF and CSSD should work to expand the availability of core services needed for boys and girls ages 8-11, including:

- Development of a protocol by CSSD and DCF for specialized case reviews of young children referred to court or detained in order to divert such children from the delinquency process, whenever appropriate
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)
- Family Support Teams (FST)
- Intensive In-home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS)

DCF and CSSD should work to expand the availability of core services needed for girls and boys ages 12-15, including:

- In-home family therapy, including evidence-based models and promising practices such as: Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family

Therapy (MDFT), Functional Family Therapy (FFT), Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), Intensive In-home Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Services (IICAPS), and Family Support Teams (FST)

- Mentoring programs
- Job readiness skill development opportunities and summer employment
- Structured after-school programs and recreational activities
- Inpatient substance abuse treatment
- Transition case management and support services for children returning to the community/school from detention, residential, training school
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC)
- Group homes
- Small secure placement facility for highly aggressive girls

DCF and CSSD should work to expand the availability of core services needed for boys and girls ages 16-18, including:

- Life skills training
- Vocational training
- Mentoring programs
- Job readiness skill development and employment opportunities
- In-home family therapy, including evidence-based models such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Functional Family Therapy (FFT), and Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)
- Developmentally appropriate pre-trial alternatives
- Mental health and substance abuse evaluations
- Inpatient substance abuse treatment
- Independent and transitional living options
- Case management services and transitional supports, including housing upon release from jail, residential programs, prison, and other out-of-home placements

CSSD and DCF should establish an *Interagency Program Management Team* consisting of managers responsible for program development and operations of juvenile justice, child protection, behavioral health, education and adolescent services. Families, consumers, advocates, and representatives from other public and private organizations should be invited to participate. The initial work should be informed by the previous statewide listening sessions conducted jointly by CSSD and DCF (see Attachment C). CSSD and DCF should seek consultation services from the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice (CCEP) to bring an independent perspective to facilitate the planning efforts. The team should:

- Meet quarterly
- Convene ad hoc workgroups, consisting of supervisory and field staff, parents, consumers and other stakeholders, to discuss service needs and program development
- Develop a report on the target populations in need
- Conduct research on the efficacy of age-differentiated programs (e.g. 11-13 only, 14-16 only) to ensure that age-differentiated services within current and future facilities and programs are appropriate
- Engage parents, families, and consumers in the planning process through inclusion on the Team

- Develop and enhance programs and services for 16- and 17-year-old Youth in Crisis
- Work with Adult Probation and DOC to develop and enhance programs and services for 16- and 17-year-olds referred to the criminal justice system
- Review the utilization and quality of current programs to include a focus on the ability to meet the diverse needs of current clients such as culture, ethnicity, and gender
- Investigate and implement, as appropriate, promising programs that provide gender-specific services for girls who are pregnant and parenting
- Provide gender-specific education and treatment regarding sexuality and sexual health in a non-judgmental setting, including gender-specific services for females and males whose sexual or gender identity is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender, and work with system partners on this effort
- Track referrals to court by the use of geographic mapping and examining resource availability by program type and target populations to determine the local neighborhoods in most need of intervention, resources, and community building efforts
- Collaborate on program planning to provide an appropriate and comprehensive continuum of services and to maximize the use of dollars across state agencies
- Develop funding and program implementation strategies, including joint budget options, for approval by an interagency leadership team
- Make recommendations to CSSD and DCF leadership for service development or expansion
- Review the work regarding Quality Assurance and Best Practices (see below)

A ***Local Interagency Services Team*** should be established for each geographical area and consist of parents, families, the Parole Supervisor, Area Office Director, Behavioral Health Program Director, Probation Regional Manager, Probation Supervisor, Detention Superintendent, and representatives from the local school districts, police departments, and Community Collaboratives. Consideration should be given to partnering with the Community Collaboratives for this purpose as appropriate. Each Team should do the following:

- Meet on a monthly basis
- Include parents, families, and consumers in the development and implementation of plans through involvement on the Team, partnering with parent advocates to convene local listening sessions, and providing reports to local parent advocacy groups
- Review and discuss pertinent issues, such as information sharing, interagency relationships, access to services, service coordination, project development, training needs, prevention strategies, and troubleshooting
- Address and plan for the provision of programs, policies, and services to meet the diverse needs of the area's clients including culture, ethnicity, and gender
- Review the use and staffing of current treatment and discharge planning meetings to determine coordination and efficiency
- Communicate with the Interagency Program Management Team regarding identified gaps in services, program development and expansion needs, and policy recommendations

CSSD and DCF should assign existing Quality Assurance and Best Practices staff members to inform the work of the Interagency Program Management Team. These staff members should work to align and enhance services across the juvenile justice system in accordance with the guiding principles of the joint strategic plan. They should work to do the following:

- Convene workgroups that include representation from families, consumers, advocates, DCF, CSSD, and others as needed to focus on QA, Clinical Best Practice, and other issues as identified
- Work with the CCEP, the CSSD Center for Best Practices and the DCF Best Practices staff to establish quality assurance measures
- Implement a joint quality assurance program for all existing and new gender-responsive services and programs
- Evaluate individual program adherence to a QA program model
- Evaluate adherence to respective QA curricula
- Work with providers to develop internal quality assurance measures and enhance individual programs, as well as overall service delivery
- Conduct a systemic review of best practices to include a study of how these can be best selected, implemented, and adapted to Connecticut, including the need for improved culturally competent and gender-responsive practice
- Implement a joint quality assurance program for Court-based Assessments, Juvenile Justice Intermediate Evaluations, and Riverview Hospital evaluations
- Recommend provider training and provide staffing to the Training Academies of both agencies (see Workforce Development section)
- Seek input and consultation from stakeholders, clinical organizations, universities, and the CCEP to review national best practices for forensic evaluation services and to inform provider training and quality assurance monitoring
- Develop monitoring tools to ensure clinical recommendations are realistic, culturally competent, gender-responsive, and appropriate to the needs of children, youth, and families
- Share findings and recommendations quarterly with each Local Interagency Services Team

**Action Strategy 3B: Improve the use of screening instruments by Probation and Parole staff, develop support for clinical decision-making by the Court, provide quality assurance for clinical evaluations, and increase access to behavioral health treatment in the community.**

CSSD and DCF should enhance the use of reliable, standardized, and validated screening instruments and clinical evaluation services to determine the level of risk, need, and appropriate treatment, and should improve access to behavioral health treatment to ensure that children and families are being referred and connected to recommended services that best meet their needs.

DCF and CSSD should assign existing staff to improve the use of screenings, clinical evaluation, and access to behavioral health treatment. The staff members should represent the following areas: Best Practices, Juvenile Probation, Juvenile Detention, Juvenile Parole, Child Protective Services, and Behavioral Health. These staff members should:

- Develop and enhance, as needed, the use of screening and assessment tools for the following: strengths, natural supports, substance abuse, mental health, educational needs and learning disabilities, objective decision making, and trauma

- Ensure that assessment tools are both culturally competent and gender-responsive, and that parents and families are informed of screening and evaluation results
- Evaluate the JAG for gender-responsiveness (until that research is complete, a specific supplement for girls should be added to the assessment process for short-term use)
- Review and implement, as appropriate, the recommendations regarding the use of screening and assessment in the juvenile justice system as outlined in the *Not Just Child's Play Report*, prepared by the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice
- Identify opportunities during the case flow process (see Attachment K) for both DCF and CSSD to coordinate the use of assessments in order to best inform decisions
- Accommodate the individual family's cultural and linguistic needs, as well as the child's gender, especially in regard to evaluations and treatment
- Review and recommend changes as necessary to the Interagency Program Management Team regarding current policies and training for the use of and response to screening and assessments. The following issues should be addressed:
  - Appropriate initial and ongoing training for DCF and CSSD staff (detention, probation and parole officers, and social workers), contract providers, educators, and judges regarding the administration and interpretation of assessment instruments
  - Ongoing training on motivational interviewing and strength-based treatment planning
  - Implementation of procedures to allow for coordinated assessments between CSSD and DCF

CSSD and DCF should enhance as needed access to clinical consultation for families, consumers, detention, probation, parole, and social work staff to assist with the review of screening results and appropriate referral determination. Specific enhancements to explore include:

- Local System of Care/Community Collaborative and contracted evaluators providing culturally competent, gender-responsive, and developmentally-appropriate clinical evaluation services, and assisting families and consumers in understanding the evaluations to empower them to participate in treatment planning decisions
- Institution of CSSD clinical coordinator positions to provide clinical consultation to probation and the court
- Provision of clinical consultation through the DCF Area Office Resource Group to parole officers and social workers
- Assurance that all clinical consultation provided is both culturally competent and gender-responsive

DCF and CSSD should provide behavioral health services in a timely and accessible manner. This should be achieved through the following steps:

- CSSD probation and DCF parole staff should participate in the weekly Managed Service System meeting at each DCF Area Office, as well as regularly scheduled local Community Collaborative meetings

- DCF behavioral health staff should participate in Probation and Parole Case Review Team meetings
- The System of Care/Community Collaboratives effort should receive additional support from the State to provide staff, training, and local infrastructure development
- DCF and CSSD should submit joint budget options to increase the capacity of behavioral health services for court-involved children as identified through Court-based Assessments, Juvenile Justice Intermediate Evaluations, and Riverview Hospital Evaluations

**Action Strategy 3C: Increase the availability of mentors, in-school supports, after school programs, and life skills and vocational training opportunities in the community.**

**In response to the demonstrated desire of families and other stakeholders for increased access to community-based supports, CSSD and DCF should develop strategies to increase the availability of successful, strength-based, non-clinical programs such as mentoring, in and after-school programs, educational advocacy, life skills and job skills training to support positive child and youth development.**

In collaboration with the System of Care/Community Collaborative Care Coordinators, CSSD and DCF should do the following:

- Partner with families, consumers, and communities, including local education agencies (LEAs), in the identification, development, and provision of community-based non-clinical programs with an emphasis on in-school and after-school programs for adolescents, ensuring that such prevention programs are gender-specific
- Develop funding strategies in conjunction with SDE and municipalities to support natural community supports (e.g., YMCA/YWCA, Boys/Girls Clubs, YSB, faith-based supports, town recreation programs)
- Expand community-based probation and parole efforts to work with families, consumers, local communities, and interest groups to develop and access natural wrap-around supports for court-involved children and their families
- Provide appropriate probation caseload structure to allow time for community outreach and family engagement
- Investigate and implement, as appropriate, gender-specific probation and parole caseloads
- Ensure that existing and newly developed community-based services are both culturally competent and gender-responsive
- Ensure that staff are competent in the unique developmental needs of boys and girls
- Work, in conjunction with CSSD and DCF program development staff, volunteer coordinators, and the Local Interagency Services Team, to recruit mentors and tutors from local colleges who reflect the unique culture and gender of the identified population, and to gain access to recreational and cultural facilities

In partnership with the Interagency Youth Vision Team and the Interagency National Governor's Association Policy Academy on Youth with Disabilities, CSSD and DCF should partner with families, consumers, SDE, LEAs, local Chambers of Commerce, DOL, and regional workforce boards to identify and develop apprenticeship programs and access to vocational/technical training for at-risk and juvenile justice involved children and youth (e.g., MST Apprentice Model, Youth Vision Team, Our Piece of the Pie, Work and Learn Model, vocational probation, job placement, career/educational counseling, behavioral health supports to job placement). These programs should develop and promote self-sufficiency skills and connections to non-traditional-gender job exploration. Programs should include job training and vocational education services for girls that give them access to educational and occupational success.

**Action Strategy 3D: Increase the knowledge of parents, schools, staff, and the courts regarding existing community and agency resources and services through the designation of a resource management coordinator to make such information readily accessible.**

**While Connecticut is a “resource-rich” state, it is challenging to stay informed of all potential services and programs. Organization and education about available resources should be improved to ensure the utilization of the most appropriate option for each child and family.**

DCF and CSSD should designate a *Resource Management Coordinator* to create and maintain an interagency program and services clearinghouse for the collection of research-based resources and natural community supports. The Coordinator should ensure that information is made available to families, DCF and CSSD staff, schools, police, and community providers through a mechanism that utilizes both the Internet and hard copy. Information gathered for this clearinghouse should do the following:

- Identify state agency contracts for appropriate services, applicable InfoLine information, current websites, current directories of public services (federal, state, and city), and private non-profit directories
- Address categories by service type, agency, and location
- Provide information on those programs proven effective in working with specific cultures, ethnicities, and genders
- Include target populations, service eligibility criteria, and provider contact information
- Have the capacity for weekly updates on current availability and length of wait by service type, provider, and location

The Resource Management Coordinator should work to identify additional sources of funding to support this effort.

### **Action Strategy 3E: Increase gender-responsive programming for girls.**

Gender responsive programs are those that intentionally use research and knowledge of female development, socialization, risks, strengths, and needs to affect and guide all aspects of service design and service delivery.<sup>8</sup> Competency in gender specific services, as defined in the “Plan for a Continuum of Community-Based Services for Female Status Offenders and Delinquents” (12/2004) acknowledges that gender, culture, class, race and ethnicity make a difference. It requires an approach that is relational and strengths-focused, community-based and family-centered, and addresses substance abuse, the effects of trauma, and behavioral health needs in the lives of girls. Therefore, it is critical that gender-specific services for girls be implemented across the continuum of care, from prevention to aftercare and transitional programming, and that the Connecticut juvenile justice system remains committed to serving girls equitably.

DCF and CSSD should create policies and processes for the certification and credentialing of gender-responsive programs for girls, including the following:

- Establish gender-responsive standards
- Create, through the work of the DCF and CSSD Directors of Girls, a gender-responsive certification program for all service types, including residential facilities, to ensure that they are, by definition, gender-responsive and have specialty services in substance abuse, trauma and other behavioral health topics

DCF and CSSD should develop and implement gender-specific assessments for all court-involved girls.

- The DCF and CSSD Directors of Girls’ Services, working in conjunction with the Quality Assurance and Best Practice staff, should develop and implement gender-specific assessments for all court-involved girls

DCF and CSSD should create new programs and expand access to existing programs as necessary through the following:

- Expansion of respite care to develop the capacity for girls in transition and in need of supportive and emergency services
- Expansion of the current mentoring partnerships to enable girls in the juvenile justice system to use a matching program that can be accessed at any point during a girl’s involvement in the juvenile justice system
- Assessment of the need for, and opening as appropriate of, gender-specific and trauma-informed therapeutic group homes for girls
- Assessment of the need for residential capacity for high public safety risk girls and working with providers to realign existing beds as needed
- Assessment of the need for, and establishing if necessary, a girls’ unit at Riverview Hospital for Children and Youth that is gender-specific and trauma-informed
- Certification of care coordinator agencies in gender-specific principles to inform the Managed Service System and Community Collaboratives in the identification and development of appropriate services and supports for successfully transitioning and/or maintaining girls in their communities
- Expansion of the Community Housing Assistance Program (CHAP) program to serve girls in the juvenile justice system

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<sup>8</sup> Benedict (2004) adapted from Maniglia (2000).

- Expansion of access to Family Support Teams for girls in the juvenile justice system and their families

DCF and CSSD should enhance and continue the interagency work begun by the DCF and CSSD Directors of Girls Services, including but not limited to coordination with Quality Assurance and Best Practice staff to ensure the following:

- Quality Assurance and Best Practice efforts include gender-responsive practice for girls
- Existing and newly developed community-based services are, by definition, gender-responsive
- Quality assurance monitoring measures the effectiveness of gender-responsive programming to support girls' progress in treatment
- Continued reduction of restraint and seclusion of girls in secure detention and other facilities by collecting baseline data, and developing strategies to reduce the use of restraint and seclusion
- Evaluation of the FWSN Protocol for effectiveness in reducing the number of girls charged as delinquent due to a FWSN violation

**Action Strategy 3F: Address programmatic needs of 16- and 17-year-old youth by ensuring access to age-specific services.**

**In response to the need for age-specific and developmentally-appropriate services for 16- and 17-year-old youth referred to court as Youth in Crisis or on criminal matters, CSSD and DCF should develop strategies to provide services specific to the needs of this age group.**

DCF and CSSD should work with parents, advocates, and providers to assess the unique needs of this population and develop new or expand on existing programs to meet the demand. This population would likely benefit from the following kinds of services:

- Life skills training
- Vocational training
- Mentoring programs
- Job readiness skill development and employment opportunities
- In-home family therapy, including evidence-based models such as Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Multidimensional Family Therapy (MDFT), Functional Family therapy (FFT), and Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)
- Developmentally-appropriate pre-trial alternatives
- Mental health and substance abuse evaluations
- Inpatient substance abuse treatment
- Independent and transitional living options
- Case management services and transitional supports, including housing upon release from jail, residential programs, prison, and other out-of-home placements

CSSD and DCF should expand the Hartford Adult Probation pilot program to other locations. This program assigns specially trained adult probation officers to work with transferred children and youth in the criminal justice system, and provides access to evidenced-based treatment programs, such as those offered through the Hartford Youth Project, to other locations.

CSSD should assess its continuum of contracted services to ensure that youth in the juvenile and/or criminal justice system have access to age-appropriate pre-trial and post-disposition programs.

DCF should assess its continuum of contracted adolescent services to ensure that youth in the juvenile and/or criminal justice system have access to age-appropriate programs and services.

## **Coordination, Collaboration, and Information Sharing**

**Goal #1: Partner with parents in service planning and collaboration in order to improve decision making and create better outcomes for children, youth, and families.**

**Action Strategy 1A: Increase the involvement of parents, families, and parent advocacy groups at the individual case, agency, and system levels.**

Services and treatment are often provided in isolation from the family. CSSD and DCF recognize that positive parental and family involvement is essential for the success of children in the juvenile justice system. Families should be engaged in all levels of planning and parent advocacy groups should be made partners in delinquency prevention and resource development.

DCF and CSSD should invite and empower parents and/or families to take an active role in service planning at all meetings where their children's cases are discussed, including but not limited to discussions regarding detention services, recommendations for program referrals, aftercare and transitional planning.

Each *Local Interagency Services Team* (as referenced in Resource Development, Action Strategy 3A) should regularly review and address barriers to family involvement, both case specific and systemic, including but not limited to the following issues: transportation, child care, flexible hours, culture, and language.

DCF and CSSD should ensure that meetings and conferences that parents and family attend are facilitated in the language of the parents, or translators should be available to assist the parents.

CSSD and DCF should work with parent advocacy groups to engage consumers and families in identifying effective ways to share knowledge with one another about available resources to

meet their unique cultural, ethnic, and gender-responsive needs for service. Possible engagement activities and opportunities include listening sessions, surveys, and focus groups.

## **Goal #2: Partner with education professionals to develop strategies for the appropriate exchange of information and the handling of problematic behaviors so that children have access to a full range of services to support their success in school.**

### **Action Strategy 2A: Develop policies and procedures to facilitate the appropriate exchange of information between schools and juvenile justice agencies.**

**In order to ensure that both schools and juvenile justice system agencies provide children with the full range of available supports and services, DCF and CSSD should work with the State Department of Education and the local education agencies to improve information sharing and the coordination of services for children involved with the juvenile justice system.**

CSSD and DCF should invite representation from the State Department of Education to the monthly DCF/CSSD Interagency Leadership meeting.

Each *Local Interagency Service Team* (see Resource Development, Action Strategy 3A) should invite representatives from the Local Education Agencies (LEA) to participate as team members.

Each Detention Center should assign a liaison to the LEA to ensure understanding of the role of detention, the LEA's educational responsibilities for detained children, and the transfer of educational records between LEAs and Detention Centers.

CSSD and DCF managers of juvenile probation, juvenile detention and juvenile parole, and juvenile service administrators should meet quarterly with families, advocates, administrators, line staff, the Department of Correction (DOC), the State Department of Education (SDE), the Department of Social Services (DSS), and legal counsel to review, revise and develop new policies and agreements, and propose statutory change where necessary, to facilitate the appropriate exchange of information between schools and juvenile justice agencies. DCF and CSSD should lead the effort to do the following:

- Invite family and community members to participate in the development process
- Educate and train parents, community members, and agency staff regarding the implications and effects of statutory and policy changes
- Develop interagency agreements to ensure that educational records are requested and received in order to make informed decisions without duplication when the court orders juvenile justice evaluations and agency case/treatment plans
- Ensure appropriate education programming, information sharing, and interagency collaboration to support successful reintegration of girls and boys returning from

CJTS, detention, residential treatment centers, or moving between foster homes in different districts

- Develop protocols for school visits by probation and parole officers
- Ensure that Individual Education Plans (IEPs) accompany each girl and boy eligible for special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act who enter CJTS, detention, residential treatment centers, or move between foster homes in different districts
- Ensure that all children in CJTS, detention, and residential treatment centers are working on the same curriculum goals that are consistent with the relevant grade state standards
- Develop agreements at the local level to establish a contact person for each school district, probation office, parole office, and DCF area office to ensure effective information sharing

**Action Strategy 2B: Partner with local education agencies to develop alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as educational advocates and alternative education programs that serve the child, the school, and the community.**

**Parents, advocates, attorneys, judges, providers, staff and educators have consistently expressed throughout the planning process their concern that schools are a significant referral resource to the juvenile justice system. DCF, CSSD, the State Department of Education and local education agencies should work together to develop alternative strategies to court referral to address disruptive behaviors.**

CSSD and DCF, in conjunction with the State Department of Education, should study the rate of FWSN referral to the court by school district and the outcomes of such referrals, including the impact on a child's future involvement in the juvenile justice system.

CSSD and DCF, in conjunction with the State Department of Education, should study the role of school resource officers in various school districts to understand how this resource may prevent or provide referrals to the juvenile justice system.

CSSD and DCF should lead an effort with the State Department of Education and local education agencies to develop alternative strategies to suspension and expulsion that serve the child, the school, and the community. The use of educational advocates, early learning disability screening, school-based mental health clinics, and alternative education programs should be considered.

### **Goal #3: Assess the system response to Family with Service Needs (FWSN)-referred children and their families, and ensure effective protocols and programming to increase interagency coordination and access to services.**

**Action Strategy 3A: Review and modify as needed the implementation of the FWSN protocol.**

Statewide implementation of the FWSN Protocol should be supported through training and education efforts. Local planning and coordination should occur to ensure that FWSN services meet the needs of families. Efforts to reduce FWSN referrals of at-risk girls should be an intentional focus of this strategy.

The *Interagency Program Management Team* (see Resource Development, Action Strategy 3A) should review the implementation of the FWSN Protocol in conjunction with CSSD and DCF managers of juvenile probation, juvenile detention and juvenile parole, and juvenile service administrators. DCF and CSSD should lead the effort to make modifications as needed.

Each *Local Interagency Services Team* (see Resource Development, Action Strategy 3A) should assess the local effectiveness of the FWSN Protocol. They should develop a plan to address sections of the protocol that are not being followed or are not effective, and submit this plan for review to the *Interagency Program Management Team*. In addition, they should establish regular, local meetings for probation officers, FWSN liaisons, and social workers to ensure smooth operation of the FWSN protocol.

Each *Local Interagency Services Team* should develop effective responses to acting-out behavior to provide alternatives to court involvement.

**Action Strategy 3B: Implement a FWSN Diversion Demonstration Program that diverts FWSN referrals from the court to the community for intervention services.**

Public Act 05-250, effective October 1, 2007, will prohibit the detention of status offenders who violate court orders. The best way to prevent a child from escalating in their involvement with the court is to provide early and effective intervention.

CSSD and DCF should establish a FWSN Diversion Demonstration Program in at least one court location to test the efficacy of early intervention efforts to divert court involvement. A model program has been implemented in Orange County, New York, that should be considered for replication. The model includes probation screening and diversion to a community-based organization that provides crisis intervention, assessment, family counseling, case management, and access to Multisystemic Family Therapy.

## Goal # 4: Ensure that statutes, agency policy, regulations, and procedures support a coordinated juvenile justice system.

**Action Strategy 4A: Submit legislative proposals and review and develop as necessary policies and procedures that support coordination and collaboration in service delivery.**

**The establishment of a coordinated juvenile justice system begins with an infrastructure of statutes, policies, and procedures. The work begun in the joint strategic planning process should be continued and supported by both agencies in order to ensure that juvenile justice system partners are working together to meet the needs of children and families.**

CSSD and DCF should meet quarterly with families, advocates, administrators, line staff, the Department of Correction (DOC), the State Department of Education (SDE), the Department of Social Services (DSS) and legal counsel to review, revise, develop, and promote as necessary policies, statutes, and regulations of mutual interest. This effort should build upon the work of the Legal Analysis Subcommittee (see Attachment L for a preliminary summary of relevant statutes).

CSSD and DCF should examine the statute that classifies escape from a treatment facility and propose, as appropriate, an amendment or a policy change ensuring children are not charged with escape when they run away from a non-secure or staff secure facility.

CSSD and DCF should convene an annual Juvenile Justice Summit that includes a broad group of stakeholders to consider suggesting further revision of agency policies and procedures, as well as possible legislative proposals on behalf of children and families involved in the juvenile justice system.

- The invited stakeholders shall include families, children and youth, advocates, the Office of the Chief Public Defender, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, the Department of Public Safety, the Department of Correction, the Department of Social Services, the Office of the Child Advocate, members of the Principals Association, members of the Superintendents Association, special education administrators, providers, hospitals, the Chiefs of Police Association, members of parent associations, and members of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

CSSD and DCF should review, and address as necessary, the efficiency and effectiveness of the current Central Placement Team (CPT) process, Case Review Teams (CRTs), and Girls Network.

DCF and CSSD should expand the weekly CPT-Detention meeting to review all referrals from the court pending at the DCF Central Placement Team. Probation management should be represented at the weekly meeting.

**Action Strategy 4B: Identify a demonstration venue to test changes to policy and procedure prior to statewide implementation.**

A Demonstration Venue is a selected catchment area in which new programs, protocols and procedures developed through the strategic planning process can first be implemented and evaluated. Such a venue can help to effectively identify successful collaboration, protocols and procedural change and can address potential challenges to promoting improvement in the juvenile justice system as a whole. In particular, strategies employed through a demonstration venue should be geared toward reducing the number of children entering the court system, eliminating overrepresentation of children and youth of color, and implementing appropriate strategies for identifying at-risk girls and boys.

The *Interagency Program Management Team* should establish one or more demonstration venues.

The *Local Interagency Services Team* from the selected catchment area should invite families, community members, advocates, the Office of the Attorney General, the Office of the Chief Public Defender, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney, the State Department of Education, and the appropriate Local Educational Agency to partner in the development and evaluation of the Demonstration Venue.

The *Interagency Program Management Team*, in collaboration with Quality Assurance and Best Practices staff members from both agencies and the *Local Interagency Services Team*, should identify and implement models for collaboration, protocols, and procedural change. These models should ensure that development of the Demonstration Venue includes an assessment and evaluation component and incorporates culturally competent and gender-responsive practice into the demonstration project.

**Goal #5: Ensure that all parties within the juvenile justice system are educated on confidentiality, information sharing restrictions, and available and sharable data in order to increase knowledge, understanding and effective working relationships between stakeholders.**

**Action Strategy 5A: Clarify agency policy and train staff regularly on information sharing.**

CSSD and DCF should clarify policies and procedures in order to support the necessary and appropriate sharing of information, as determined by law, in order to promote informed decision-making on behalf of clients and families.

DCF and CSSD should establish formal interagency agreements regarding information sharing and the development and joint review of interagency policies and protocols pertaining to information sharing.

CSSD and DCF should work with families, advocates, the Department of Correction (DOC), the State Department of Education (SDE), the Department of Social Services (DSS) and legal counsel to review and revise, where necessary, agency policy regarding information sharing so that it clearly states what information may or may not be shared, with whom, and under what circumstances, according to the law. Furthermore, they should address information sharing issues through the following:

- Review of the results of the Legal Analysis and Data and Information Sharing survey conducted as part of the strategic planning process (see Attachment M)
- Administration of the survey on an annual basis throughout the life of the strategic plan to measure progress and determine areas of continued need for training and/or increased data sharing. Consideration should be given to utilizing DCF's electronic survey structure

CSSD and DCF should promote understanding of policies and protocols through the development and dissemination of an information tool for staff, such as a field guide to information sharing. See Attachment F for an example of a format for such a tool.

DCF, CSSD, and other agencies as identified should design and deliver ongoing training to agency staff, families, and providers regarding data and information sharing. Topics to be included are the following:

- Confidentiality and legal restrictions regarding data sharing and case-specific information
- Availability, accessibility, and ability to share information

The training should be:

- Available on the websites of DCF, the Judicial Branch, and others as identified
- Incorporated into each agency's training policy
- Provided and distributed in both manual and Internet format

## **Goal #6: Develop and implement a uniform release form to facilitate the exchange of necessary and appropriate information between agencies/providers.**

**Action Strategy 6A: Develop a uniform release of information form to facilitate the exchange of necessary and appropriate information between agencies/providers.**

**DCF and CSSD should create a uniform authorization for release of information form in order to reduce the challenges for families that result from each public agency using a different authorization for release of information form to obtain or share client specific information.**

Building on the work of Action Strategy 5A, CSSD and DCF should develop a uniform release form to be used by both agencies. CSSD and DCF should invite other state agencies to participate on an interagency team to develop a uniform release form to be used by all state

agencies. The other state agencies to be invited include the Department of Correction, Department of Social Services, the State Department of Education, the Department of Public Health, and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services.

These state agencies, working in collaboration with families and advocates, should consider recommendations for legislative action, or other means, to ensure the use and adoption of this form, including the proposal of statutory language that grants qualified immunity to those who use the form in good faith.

DCF and CSSD should invite private agencies to use the uniform release via adoption by organizations such as Connecticut Association of Nonprofits and the Connecticut Children's League.

*The Local Interagency Services Team* should work with parent advocacy groups to develop staff/parent training and parent information to ensure that parents understand the implications of signing a release of information, the intended use of the information, and where the information may end up.

**Goal #7: Information should pass seamlessly and promptly among parties involved with the child or family in the juvenile justice system. Parties should be made aware of the child's or family's involvement with other agencies, to the extent permitted by law, in order to facilitate coordinated and collaborative efforts.**

**Action Strategy 7A: Develop statutory recommendations, policies, and procedures for appropriate information sharing between agencies in order to facilitate coordinated and collaborative decision making and service delivery.**

Agencies and other participants in a child or family's case are not always notified of previous involvement with other agencies. Such notification and the sharing of information that is legally available about a child or family's history can assist involved professionals in making informed decisions on behalf of their clients.

DCF and CSSD should work with parents and advocates to develop and propose an amendment to the Connecticut General Statutes to create a mechanism, consistent with the child's rights, to identify for the court and counsel those children and youth appearing in criminal court who have received or are receiving services from DCF or Juvenile Probation or Detention.

DCF and CSSD staff should share records that are legally available about a child or a family's history and involvement in prior services in order to inform current treatment planning, and

should examine and clarify the need to obtain a court order for the release of mental health and substance abuse information contained in the coCSSD and DCF should develop protocols for sharing pertinent information, as permitted by law, with the Department of Correction (DOC). This work should specifically seek to accomplish the following:

- Develop policies and practices to require Juvenile Probation and Detention staff to share pertinent information with DOC, as permitted by law, on juveniles transferred to the criminal system and in the custody of DOC
- Provide DCF liaisons to DOC at Manson Youth Institution and York Institution to ensure notification and information sharing about client history and needs
- Work with DOC to develop policy and practice to screen admissions under the age of 18 for Probation or DCF history and develop a protocol to request case information from the appropriate agency
- Develop a memorandum of agreement to provide a discharge protocol for DCF-involved youth
- Work with DOC to propose a revision of CGS §46b-124 and 17a-28 to include DOC as an entity to which juvenile records can be released for the purposes of transition planning

**Action Strategy 7B: Develop the technological capacity for DCF and CSSD staff to share case specific information electronically, as allowed by law.**

**The current interface between CMIS and CONDOIT allows for the sharing of information from CSSD to DCF regarding committed delinquents. This technology should be expanded to increase information sharing as allowed by law.**

DCF and CSSD Information Technology and program staff (probation, parole, area office social workers, supervisors, and managers) should work together to accomplish the following:

- Develop a Memorandum of Agreement, service level agreements, user agreement letters, or other necessary documents as needed to facilitate the work related to information sharing
- Building on the work of the Data and Information Sharing workgroup, review information that is currently available electronically
- For information that is available electronically:
  - Identify where the shareable data elements are housed and the format in which the data is stored
- For information not available electronically:
  - Outline the necessary steps to make the information available electronically, and create an interim policy for a process to request information, including an accountability mechanism
- Identify the system needs (security protocols, read only capability, technology requirements, connectivity protocols) necessary to electronically provide the shareable information to the related agencies (Phase 1: DCF, CSSD; Phase 2: DOC, SDE, DMHAS, and others)

DCF and CSSD should work together to enhance and develop the technological capacity to improve information sharing. The system should be designed to create the following:

- A screening process to allow DCF and CSSD staff to identify children involved with both agencies

- A notification process whereby each agency should be informed when a child or youth has current involvement with the other agency (DCF, CSSD). The notification should include the contact information for the appropriate staff person and supervisor responsible for the case (name, email, address, phone, and facsimile)
- A mechanism whereby the notified agency (see above) provides a response confirming receipt of the information and contact information for the appropriate staff person and supervisor (receipts should not be prompted when non-critical information (FYI) is communicated)
- The capacity for both agencies (DCF, CSSD) to have “read only” access to all appropriate and legally shareable information held in the other agency’s data system (CMIS, CONDOIT, LINK) relevant to a specific case
- The capacity to notify the other agency (DCF, CSSD) when case information, such as an address, is out-of-date or incorrect, or regarding case closure of joint case
- An incident alert capability to inform the other agency (DCF, CSSD) of a significant incident, such as an escape, runaway, or injury

DOC, SDE, local education agencies, Department of Mental Health and Addictive Services (DMHAS), counsel and the court should develop the technological capacity to improve information sharing. The system should be designed to create the following:

- A screening process to allow staff to identify children involved with multiple agencies
- A notification process whereby each agency should be informed when a child or youth has current involvement with another agency. The notification should include the contact information for the appropriate staff person and supervisor responsible for the case (name, email, address, phone, and facsimile)
- A mechanism whereby the notified agency (see above) provides a response confirming receipt of the information and contact information for the appropriate staff person and supervisor (receipts should not be prompted when non-critical information (FYI) is communicated)
- The capacity for all agencies to have “read only” access to all appropriate and legally shareable information held in the other agency’s data system relevant to a specific case
- The capacity to notify the appropriate agency when case information, such as an address, is out-of-date or incorrect, or regarding case closure of joint cases
- An incident alert capability to inform the appropriate agency of a significant incident, such as an escape, runaway, or injury

**Action Strategy 7C: Pilot a joint case management protocol and procedures for the more effective coordination of services between DCF and CSSD.**

The FWSN Protocol and the Hartford *Emily J.* Project serve as models for joint case management procedures between DCF and CSSD. The formalization of interagency procedures clarifies roles and responsibilities and reduces problems created by lack of communication and interagency planning. The expansion of joint case management protocols and procedures for all cases of mutual interest will benefit the children, families and staff involved.

CSSD and DCF should develop joint case management protocols and procedures for those cases that cross agencies, using the FWSN Protocol and the Hartford *Emily J.* Project as models.

DCF and CSSD should develop joint case management protocols and procedures with other state agencies and school districts as necessary to create stronger working relationships, more efficiencies, and better outcomes for children and families.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Goal #1: Develop a data-driven infrastructure that uses research to inform policy management and service delivery.**

**Action Strategy 1A: Enhance analytical capacity of agencies to use data to inform program development and determine the impact of initiatives on targeted outcomes.**

In order to ensure the most successful outcomes for children and families, it is necessary to promote the use of research, data collection, and analysis. CSSD and DCF should expand capacity to better understand the state of the juvenile justice system and the children and families served.

DCF and CSSD should collaborate with families, advocates, the Office of Policy and Management (OPM), and state academic researchers with an established record in the field of juvenile justice and/or other relevant fields (e.g. gender theory, child welfare) to do the following:

- Provide policy guidance for access to inquiry/research datasets
- Develop policy-relevant questions related to topical state and national themes concerning the social organization of the juvenile justice system, including the use of gender-responsive programming principles
- Develop an Inquiry/Research Data set for CSSD and DCF to use to facilitate the use of consistent information for planning purposes
- Develop a combination of internal and external staff resources or consultants to address the research agenda
- Evaluate current internal analytic capacity to produce and absorb policy-relevant research studies and make recommendations for enhancement

- Identify methods for internal analysis that may be needed, e.g. conducting meaningful surveys
- Identify strategies to create analytical thinking and increase analytical capacity, including but not limited to journal club, methods presentations by external experts, and training for managers

The joint strategic plan Implementation Team should commission an annual data report. The report should:

- Establish a baseline, and yearly thereafter, monitor progress in meeting the strategic goals
- Quantify progress made through plan implementation based on identified outcome measures related to the goals outlined in this plan
- Include the data elements identified in the suggested measures document (see Attachment N)
- Specifically identify by race, ethnicity, and gender: referrals to court, dispositions, and risk and needs
- Be distributed to advocacy groups, families, communities, and other stakeholders through a series of public forums and Internet postings

## **Workforce Development and Training**

**Goal #1: Strengthen and support DCF and CSSD staff and their contracted providers in order to improve the delivery and effectiveness of services.**

**Action Strategy 1A: Increase the number of bilingual, bicultural, and multicultural staff in state and private agencies.**

**DCF, CSSD and contracted providers should recruit culturally competent and experienced workers in order to establish and maintain an integrated multicultural service delivery system.**

CSSD and DCF should assess the capacity of staff to meet the multicultural needs of children and families involved in the system including:

- The number of bilingual, bicultural staff
- The languages and cultures represented by staff
- Staff proficiency in speaking other languages
- Under-representation of staff from the predominant cultures served

DCF and CSSD should work with parent advocacy groups to identify and implement strategies designed to increase the cultural competence of state and contractor staff.

CSSD and DCF should collaborate on staff recruitment efforts.

DCF and CSSD should provide support and training for contracted programs and grassroots organizations to assist in the recruitment of culturally competent staff.

**Action Strategy 1B: Increase the cultural competency and gender-responsiveness of current staff.**

**CSSD and DCF are committed to providing staff who are culturally competent and have knowledge of gender-specific needs and resources. Therefore, the agencies should enhance training provided to current staff in order to meet the multicultural and gender-specific needs of children, youth and families.**

DCF and CSSD should assess the quality and extent of the current training program and the ongoing training needs of staff and the organization, including the following:

- Current levels of organizational cultural competence and gender-responsivity, through the use of tools including evaluation, focus groups, and surveys
- Employee self-evaluation to raise consciousness of their cultural and gender behaviors and assumptions and their effects on others (peers, clients, and the families served), and their own capacity to function in a multicultural, gender diverse environment

CSSD and DCF should hire consultants, as necessary, with expertise in cultural competence, gender-responsiveness, and organizational metrics to assist the agencies in evaluating cross-cultural and gender responsive performance, including knowledge, awareness, sensitivity, and overall competency of employees.

DCF and CSSD should enhance, as needed, the current cultural competence and gender-specific competency training, including providing ongoing, quarterly training for staff, and the potential for certification in cultural competence and gender-responsivity.

**Action Strategy 1C: Develop relationships with local universities and communities to increase the pool of qualified candidates for hiring.**

**DCF and CSSD should develop relationships with local universities and communities to increase the pool of qualified candidates with the knowledge and skills to work effectively with juvenile justice populations, including girls, children age 12 and younger, and families in crisis.**

CSSD and DCF should work with local universities and communities to increase the skills and qualifications of the workforce. Activities should include the following:

- Outreach and program planning with local universities and communities to increase the pool of candidates qualified to work in community behavioral health and juvenile justice programs
- Collaboration with universities to review and enhance school curricula to provide students with appropriate knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding culture, gender, socio-economic status, child and adolescent development, family function, and effective engagement
- Development of specific curricula for interns, including the opportunity for participation in select trainings available to staff

- Establishment of certification requirements for state employees and private providers, and for various types of jobs serving children, youth, and families involved in the juvenile justice system

**Action Strategy 1D: Develop and implement cross-training to build relationships and understanding between agency and provider staff, and to create efficiencies.**

**In order to function as an effective and coordinated system, juvenile justice agencies must promote an understanding of each other's mandates, goals, and limitations, and work together to build relationships across agency lines. DCF and CSSD should work together to improve training for state and contractor staff and provide opportunities for relationship-building.**

The Directors of the DCF and CSSD Training Academies should establish the following:

- An interagency trainers bureau
- Interagency pre-service and in-service training for probation, detention, parole, area office social workers and service providers
- Equal access to training for CSSD, DCF, and contractor staff
- Standards of care and/or recommendations for appropriate certification requirements for providers

Training should include all relevant topics for working with children and youth involved in the justice system, including but not limited to:

- Impact of poverty on human development
- Working with families
- Psychopathology in children and adolescents
- Child and adolescent brain development
- Learning disabilities and special education law
- Suicide and suicide risk reduction
- Substance abuse
- Risk and protective factors
- Case management
- Trauma
- Sexual victimization
- Domestic violence
- Gender responsive programming for girls
- Culturally competent service provision
- Sexuality and sexual health, including gender-specific services for girls and boys whose sexual or gender identify is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender
- Individual prejudice
- Understanding of high-risk behavior, including but not limited to, running away, self-mutilation, sexual promiscuity
- Strength-based approaches to adolescent and family engagement
- Wraparound process
- Juvenile law
- Delinquency court process and purpose of detention
- Neglect court process and the handling of a bench Order of Temporary Custody

- DCF case process (different types of cases, court handling, visitation standards, Exit Plan Outcome Measures, and area office access to programs and expenditures, Local Managed Service Systems)
- Agency roles, responsibilities, and mandates
- Information sharing guidelines

The CSSD and DCF training academies should invite other agencies including, but not limited to, Public Defenders, Prosecutors, Police, SDE, LEAs, DOC, DMHAS, DMR, and DSS to participate in training on an ongoing basis.

DCF should collaborate with the Judicial Branch Judge Support Services Division to make training available to judges regarding what services and supervision DCF can provide and where DCF is limited in its ability to provide services.

DCF and CSSD should regularly provide judges with updated information regarding available resources, program changes, best practice literature, adolescent development literature, and other useful tools. This information should be developed through agency training academies and be available to judges in a bench book. Consideration should be given to the work completed by the National Council of Family and Juvenile Court Judges.

**Action Strategy 1E: Provide additional legal support to DCF and CSSD staff to assist them in the interpretation of statute and the application of policy, and to represent them in court proceedings as necessary.**

**In order to build a more informed and confident staff, DCF and CSSD should seek additional legal support for parole, area office and probation staff.**

DCF should pursue additional legal support for staff by doing the following:

- Working with the Attorney General’s office to increase the number of Assistant Attorney Generals available to represent DCF workers in delinquency and FWSN matters
- Providing additional access to staff attorneys to advise juvenile parole officers on matters of legal concern (e.g. parole revocation hearings), and to review policies and statutory changes on a regular basis with staff

CSSD should develop a mechanism for providing legal consultation for juvenile probation staff and other court personnel.