



Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance: Ending the Criminalization of Youth

CTJJA often serves as a bridge taking and translating information from local to state, from community to community, from researchers to practitioners and from policy wonks to “regular” people.

Alliance staff attends local LIST (Local Interagency Services Teams) meetings in communities around the state. These meetings feature local jj stakeholders (DCF, CSSD, schools, police, providers, advocates, parents) talking about jj needs, gaps, services in their community. We listen, learn and understand what issues are coming up across the state. Can facilitate community-to-community learning, use the information to drive our action agenda, and share that knowledge at statewide tables.

Alliance staff is an appointed member of the legislatively mandated Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee — charged with overseeing jj policy and practice in CT. Five other appointed members of the JJPOC are CTJJA steering committee members and 2 of the 4 subcommittees are chaired by CTJJA steering committee members.

Key initiatives:

Centering youth voice in juvenile justice reform work

- The Alliance is in the process of completing a “report” on what we learned through an 18-month project focused on the voices of girls in juvenile justice. Our key take-away is that girls don’t feel they have voice or agency in their own cases or in the system as a whole. We will present findings and recommendations in coming months. Steps we are taking internally and externally include:
 - We know well-rounded policy has to include those that it affects: youth who have experience in Connecticut’s juvenile or criminal justice system. CTJJA is working to understand and implement ways to ensure youth voices direct our internal policy agenda.
 - In addition to centering youth voice in its work, the Alliance is pushing for a cultural change in programs and agencies across the state that will honor the experiences of young people, families and communities. The Alliance is working to develop partnerships to promote this concept through providers and agency leaders so that youth are integral to policies and programs creation, implementation and oversight

Reduce incarceration

- *Youth out of Adult Facilities:* Alliance staff championed a proposal to remove all youth under the age of 18 from adult facilities (youth currently transferred to the adult system are held pre and post trial in adult, DOC, facilities). The incarceration working group adopted this idea, included it as a 2016 recommendation and legislation is pending to house all youth under 18 in juvenile facilities beginning in 2018/9.

- *Closure of the Connecticut Juvenile Training School:* The Alliance advocates for a robust, full array of programs and services for committed delinquent youth and calls upon the state to provide as many of these services in the community as possible. For those rare youth who pose a risk to public safety, the Alliance calls for small, therapeutic, home-like, facilities.
 - Responded to DCF's closure plan with a report "Committed" which drew on recommendations from Connecticut specific reports and advice from national experts
 - Using both public and behind-closed-doors pressure for closure of the facility on the timeline the Governor has called for (by July 1, 2018)
 - Pushing for accountability around DCF's plan for closure to ensure we are changing our approach to committed delinquent youth, not simply replacing beds at CJTS with beds in a different locked location.
 - Educating the public and communities about alternatives to incarceration and encouraging them to work locally to view and work with committed delinquent youth differently.
 - Funds saved from the closure of CJTS must be reinvested into community based services for youth

Raise awareness of and end racial and ethnic disparities in juvenile justice

- Use *The Color of Justice*, from CPTV, to facilitate conversation and strategizing about how to recognize, track and reduce racial and ethnic disparities across the state and within specific court districts, regions, communities.
- Serve as part of the Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee subcommittee on Disproportionate Minority Confinement - assist in preparing an in-depth analysis of Connecticut data to determine where race/ethnicity are factors in decision-making. Use that data to raise awareness and call for action
- Actively participate at the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) meetings led by The Center for Children's Advocacy, pushing for data driven action steps to reduce RED in Connecticut's four major cities
- The Alliance contracted with Spectrum Associates to analyze arrest, court referral, and Department of Children and Families data to see if there was any indication of racial and ethnic disparities that impact girls and young women at certain decision points differently than boys and young men. The Alliance is awaiting the results of that study and will share key findings and discuss potential action steps with community groups statewide

Raise the Age to 21

- The Alliance was active in conversations with the Governor's staff around this proposal and worked closely with national thought leaders and partners to understand the intricacies of what raising the juvenile age above 18 would mean and what best practice might look like. The Alliance is working to ensure that any moves to raise the age are integrated with existing efforts to close the training school and keep youth under the age of 18 out of the system