



CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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Find problem. Apply solution. Repeat.

From the Executive Director's Desk

Advocacy has its cycles. First comes recognition of a problem and the work to educate and rally people around finding a solution. Next we promote that solution to the people who can make it happen. If we're successful, the advocate becomes the "watchdog." Advocates can't walk away once they have claimed victory because change in the letter of the law or policy is very different from change in the lives of children and families. Right now, advocates around the state are happy to be in the watchdog phase on one reform and determined to accelerate grassroots work on two more.

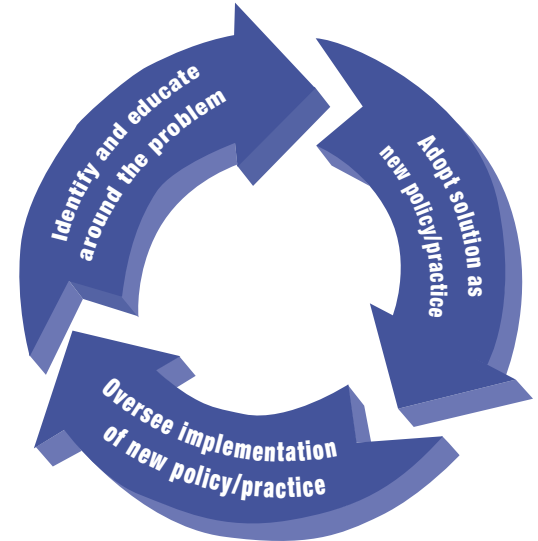
This fall, we claimed an incredible and historic victory. As of January 1, 2010, 16-year-olds will be in Connecticut's juvenile justice system. Don't worry, we're still fighting hard for the 17-year-olds now set to come into the juvenile system in 2012. But right now, we are watching the system carefully. How are the state agencies and municipalities getting ready? We'll examine how the transition goes for the 16-year-olds and their families, the providers, the lawyers and the police. We'll keep our eye on the data but also want to hear the stories. We count on you to keep us in that loop.

We're at the beginning of the cycle in a couple of other areas where local work will be crucial. Families With Service Needs reform and Raise the Age have been relatively "easy" to address on the statewide level. The entities that could change policy were the Legislature and various state agencies.

As you know, we've been looking at how to reduce the number of youth referred to the courts through schools. Each district makes rules, and each principal has leeway in how those rules are enforced. So real change must start locally. The Alliance would like to find schools that are doing fantastic work – or want to do fantastic work – in this area. We'll provide support and then shout from the rooftops about the district's great achievements.

Local activism is also critical to ensure fair treatment for youth of color in Connecticut's juvenile justice system. We know that minority youth are treated more harshly than white

Cycle of Advocacy



youth. But finding the specific sources of unequal treatment and addressing them is difficult. There are tools and methods for figuring out the complex situation and the Alliance will share those tools with communities to make sure the system treats every child and family equally, no matter what their race or ethnicity.

Local Implementation Service Teams (LISTs) are springing up across the state. These community-based groups in each of the 13 juvenile court areas will provide local parents, lawyers, judges, police, educators, advocates and service providers the chance to come together and discuss what's really going on with kids in their community. It's an opportunity to let the state know exactly how funds should be appropriated and what programs are effective, or not. The Alliance is excited to work with these LISTs. We're eager to hear how each community wants to make juvenile justice reform a reality for the people they live and work with every day. And we want to help make that happen. When enough change and reform is going on at the local level, it can't help but bubble up to statewide recognition – and another phase of the cycle of advocacy begins.

Abby Anderson



Using Data to Improve Our Juvenile Justice System

Connecticut has been steadily improving its vision of how to use data to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the juvenile justice system. In 2006, the Connecticut General Assembly initiated a new approach to measure how well all of its programs are serving CT citizens. “Results Based Accountability” (RBA) provides legislators, the public and other stakeholders with data on what is working, what is not working and what might be needed to improve programs. It asks three questions: How much is being done? How well is it being done? And, ultimately, is anyone better off?

This article will highlight the RBA efforts of the Judicial Branch and the Court Support Services Division (CSSD) in particular. CSSD has worked over the past three years to establish RBA outcome measures for many of their programs and services. In addition, CSSD has initiated a “Risk Reduction Initiative” that has one main goal—to reduce the rate at which people return to the criminal justice system or civil court after receiving services.

Juvenile Probation

Juvenile Probation gathers many different kinds of information on its clients. Through the Juvenile Assessment Generic (JAG), probation officers identify children’s strengths, their risk of reoffending, and the needs which, if addressed, will reduce their likelihood of re-offending. The assessment is completed when probation begins, and again at discharge. Officers measure the change in JAG scores over time (six to twelve months) for each young person to see the progress made in each individual case. By averaging the JAG scores collectively, CSSD also created goals for decreasing risk and increasing child “protective scores,” which represent the strengths a young person has which buffer or mitigate their risk of reoffending. In order to evaluate how well it is doing, CSSD also measures staff compliance with case plans, the quality of staff contact with kids in



their care, re-arrest rates 2 years following a child’s involvement with probation and Take Into Custody/Warrants as a percentage of intake, which is an indication of whether an officer’s use of graduated sanctions was successful.

Juvenile Contracted Services

“YES!” is a CSSD center-based program offering groups that teach such skills as anger management, moral reasoning, drug refusal, emotional regulation and self-awareness. Formerly known as Juvenile Risk Reduction Centers, these programs were renamed in July of this year to reflect their expansion to include 16-year-olds, as well as to serve more towns and cities in CT.

The four indicators to evaluate YES! effectiveness are: 1) percentage of youth who have reoffended 12-months after program completion; 2) service completion rates; 3) “Working Alliance Inventory” scores, which measure client / staff alignment on task, bond and service goals; and 4) percentage of clients successfully referred to community-based agencies. Data was collected for each of the measures in order to help CSSD staff set reasonable and attainable goals for children in the program. Risk Reduction outcomes for the YES! center programming are currently being collected and will be part of CSSD’s 2009 Quarter 3 report.



Discussions are also underway with providers regarding benchmarks for other juvenile program models such as MST, IICAPS, and Educational Advocacy. Those benchmarks will be established this winter.

Cost-Benefit Analysis

Cost-benefit analysis can be helpful in answering the ultimate RBA question, “Is anyone better off?” In Connecticut, we can look to the CSSD Clinical Coordinator position and how the Judicial Branch learned that it is a solid investment.

The first Clinical Coordinators started in early 2008, to provide expert mental health consultation to juvenile court judges. While the juvenile court judges have access to mental health evaluations of private contractors, numerous reports since 2000 have documented the inefficient and inappropriate use of these contracted evaluations, as well as unnecessary referrals for inpatient hospitalization and residential treatment. Clinical Coordinators work for the Court, not the defense or prosecution, and thereby can more easily provide unbiased advice on when it is appropriate to seek an evaluation, what kind of evaluation should be sought and how to interpret the evaluation results. Clinical Coordinators are licensed mental health practitioners who consult with the parties to determine specific evaluation questions, and can do the evaluations or refer them to a contractor, as well as provide crisis intervention if necessary.

There are currently six clinical coordinators serving seven juvenile court locations: Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, Waterbury, New Britain, Waterford, and Willimantic. The judges and staff in these courts report tremendous satisfaction with the program, including more timely receipt of clinical information, higher quality and more individualized reports, decreases in case processing time and more timely

access to treatment services. While the intake to the courts with clinical coordinators has decreased by 31%, clinical coordinators have reduced the use of contracted evaluations by 60% — resulting in a savings of approximately \$445,000.

In addition to this concrete financial savings, the clinical coordinators are also able to provide reports within one week, whereas the court waits at least 3 weeks for a contracted evaluation. As a result, children are also spending fewer nights in detention – an average of 53 fewer nights waiting for evaluation at Riverview and an average of 13 fewer nights waiting for residential placement – and they receive needed treatment sooner. The Branch anticipates hiring four additional Clinical Coordinators by the end of February 2010.

Conclusion

The Judicial Branch and CSSD have worked hard to implement RBA and the Risk Reduction Initiative throughout their operations. How much is being done? How well is it being done? Is anyone better off? We now have more answers to these questions, and the system is improving as a result.





An Evening with Charles Grodin

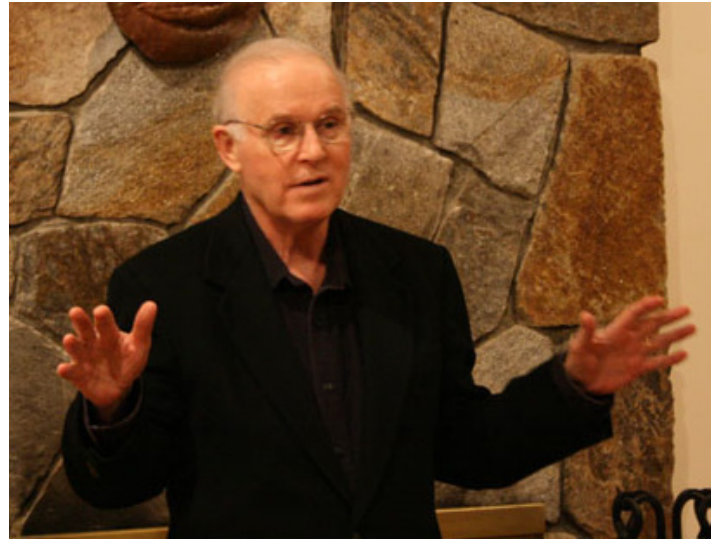
The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance hosted its first ever fundraiser on November 19, 2009, *An Evening with Charles Grodin* at a home in Redding, Connecticut.

Charles Grodin is best known for his contributions to the world of film and television through acting, writing, producing, and directing; however, he is also a strong advocate for criminal justice reform. Mr. Grodin generously donated his time to the Alliance to entertain the attendees through inspiring stories of his fight for justice to help others and charming personal anecdotes.

Connecticut State Troubadour and

Alliance Senior Policy Analyst Lara Herscovitch also lent her talent to the event by performing her beautifully captivating contemporary acoustic / folk music.

The Alliance is excited about the success of this event. We would like to specially thank our hosts Jim and Louanne Lang, Charles Grodin and the CTJJA Steering Committee.



Charles Grodin entertains his audience.



An additional thank you to all event sponsors / donors: Adam Broderick Salon, Ash Creek Enterprises, Dava, Deborah Ann's Sweet Shoppe, Greens Farms Spirit Shop, Harpoon Brewery, Harry's Wine and Liquor Market, J. Cravata, Nivea, The Organic Market, Silver Ribbon, Silver Touch Jewelry, Stew Leonard's, Take Time Relaxation Center, and Trader Joe's.

And of course, thank you to all those who came and generously contributed to the Alliance. If you were unable to

join us, there is still an opportunity to donate to the Alliance. Thank you and we look forward to seeing all of you at next year's fundraiser!

Every donation helps make a difference and enhances to our ability to continue to fight for juvenile justice reform for Connecticut's youth and families. Please send checks to:

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance
2470 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605

The CTJJA Poetry Corner

The following poems were contributed from three programs in Connecticut where youth write poetry to help engage in self-expression. GRACE ADP is a residential alternative to state or community-based detention for girls in Hartford. STEP (the Support Team for Educational Progress) in Bridgeport provides educational transition, clinical, and vocational skill building services to parole and Families with Service Needs youth. Touchstone is a residential treatment facility for girls in Litchfield. (Note: all poems appear in their original form).



Mother

*This is a poem to a mother
To who is beautiful and
Whose love is true
Im stressing here
Because I miss you
You've done things to
Try to save my life
This being on
Sometimes it's not alright
Realizing what your love means to me
I know you're gone
But I never wanted you to leave
Tears falling down my face
My mother she has passed away
At the end of the day
It's for you I pray
Mom is the only thing I want to say
Hearing the kids talk about what they did with their mothers
Makes me cry
I hope with you watching me from the sky
Everything is gonna be all right*
—Kerri*, GRACE ADP

Alone

*in the world alone
who knows who's by my side
who knows who will be there
from start to end?
think and think...and wonder...
who? will he be there?
will she be there?
I ask myself am I alone?
I wonder where life would take me
on my own...
will it take me far
or will it take me nowhere?
at the end I ask
am I alone?
no where to go...
all alone
is there somewhere to go?
is there somewhere to stay?
so I ask myself
am I alone?
—Yolanda*, Touchstone*

JUST BECAUSE I PUERTO RICAN

DOESN'T MEAN IAM A "MIRA MIRA"
DOESN'T MEAN I EAT RICE AND BEANS EVERY DAY
DOESN'T MEAN I WEAR SANDALS IN THE WINTER
I AM PRIDE OF MY RACE AND MYSELF
JUST BECAUSE IAM CHUBBY
DOESN'T MEAN I EAT ALOT (LOL)
DOESN'T MEAN I SLEEP A LOT (LOL)
DOESN'T MEAN I DREAM OF FOOD (LOL)
IAM JUST HEALTHY
JUST BECAUSE I SLEEP A LOT
DOESN'T MEAN IAM LAZY
DOESN'T MEAN I EAT AND THEN GO TO SLEEP
DOESN'T MEAN
—Natalie*, STEP/Bridgeport

*Names have been changed to preserve confidentiality



Research Finds



CJJ Report – A Pivotal Movement: Sustaining the Success and Enhancing the Future of the JJDP

Based on survey responses from 53 distinct U.S. states and territories, the Coalition for Juvenile Justice explores the current state of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) and argues for a recommitment by the federal government to support nationwide delinquency prevention and justice reform efforts.
http://www.juvjustice.org/media/resources//resource_265.pdf

ACLU White Paper – Policing in Schools: Developing a Governance Document For School Resource Officers In K-12 Schools

This white paper has been published to provide policy recommendations for police in schools to ensure a safe environment that respects students' rights. Relying too heavily on police to maintain order and discipline in schools exacerbates the "school-to-prison pipeline" by pushing students out of school and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.
http://www.aclu.org/pdfs/racialjustice/whitepaper_policinginschools.pdf

OJJDP Bulletin – Reducing Disproportionate Minority Contact: Preparation at the Local Level

This bulletin was written by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to assist in local preparation of DMC reduction efforts. In addition to useful "how to" information, the bulletin presents important background on the context in which local preparation takes place —media coverage and public attitudes about crime, race, and youth.
<http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/218861.pdf>

The Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Joblessness and Jailing for High School Dropouts and the High Cost for Taxpayers

Northeastern University's new research paper was prepared to outline the employment, earnings, incarceration, teen and young adult parenting experiences and family incomes of the nation's young adult high school dropouts and their better educated peers in 2006 to 2008.
http://www.njjn.org/media/resources/public/resource_1358.pdf

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids Report – From America's Front Line Against Crime: A School and Youth Violence Prevention Plan

Fight Crime: Invest in Kids offers four strategies to reduce school and youth violence, including engaging at-risk youth in evidence-based programs and providing after-school youth development programs. The plan calls on local, state, and federal governments to invest in these programs now in order to prevent future violence and associated costs.
http://www.fightcrime.org/sites/default/files/violence_reports/FCIKPlan2009.pdf

Poly-victimization Among Girls in the Juvenile Justice System: Manifestations & Associations to Delinquency

This study, published by the Center for Child and Family Studies, shows considerable evidence that victimization is pervasive in the backgrounds of delinquent girls. Findings illuminate the need for education and services addressing alcohol and drug use among traumatized girls, as well as the need for skill-building to develop alternative coping mechanisms to address violence, loss, and other stressors in girls' lives.
http://www.njjn.org/media/resources/public/resource_1379.pdf

Confronting Disproportionate Minority Contact in Connecticut



Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) is a term used by policy-makers and researchers when youth are not treated equally; when kids of color receive different consequences for their actions and are treated more harshly than white kids because of their race or ethnicity. There is DMC in juvenile justice systems across the country – including Connecticut’s.

The philosophy of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance is that all youth involved with the juvenile justice system should be treated equally, regardless of their race or ethnicity. The system must be sensitive and responsive to a child and family’s culture when designing and providing treatments and services. At the same time, the system cannot allow the race or ethnicity of a child to play a role in the severity of the sanctions placed on the child. The Alliance is committed to working with local and statewide partners to ensure Connecticut’s system is fair for all.

Connecticut’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) conducted a comprehensive study of DMC in the state for three different time periods. The study looked across the system at “decision points” where individuals working in the juvenile justice system have choices about the next step for a young person (for example, the decision by a patrol officer whether to place a youth in detention, or the decision by a probation officer whether to send the case to a judge, and so on). The study found that at many points in the system, youth of all races have similar experiences. However, at other points, black and Hispanic youth were treated more harshly than their white peers. The study ends with recommendations about how to eliminate DMC at those points.

DMC is a very complicated and tough issue. Kids of color make up the majority inside the juvenile justice system when they are the minority outside the system. This doesn’t necessarily have to be ONLY the result of systemic racism. Common questions answered by the JJAC research include:



Q: If minority kids make up the majority of the juvenile justice system, doesn’t that simply mean that kids of color commit more and/or more serious crimes than their white peers?

A: No; when kids of all races and ethnicities are surveyed, they report committing the same crimes at very similar rates.

Q: Couldn’t this be an economic and not a racial issue? Are these kids treated differently because they are poor?

A: No; coming from a low-income neighborhood does negatively affect how a youth is treated, but does not fully account for the difference. In other words, a poor minority youth is likely to be treated more harshly than a poor white youth, and a rich minority youth is likely to be treated more harshly than a rich white youth.

Q: Doesn’t this disparity exist because most minority youth in Connecticut live in the cities, where there is more crime and where there are more police officers?

A: No; we actually see a greater disparity in the treatment of minority youth in rural and suburban Connecticut than in the state’s cities.

The good news is that DMC is something we can change. Because we know exactly where in the system these problems exist, we can target those decision points and demand accountability and equality.

You can expect to hear more about the work underway by the JJAC, the Alliance and others to address DMC in the coming year. A two-fold strategy is underway: (1) building public awareness and supporting local efforts through this year’s community breakfasts and providing support to groups addressing this issue, and (2) supporting state policy reform, including the JJAC’s “Just Start” campaign which is leading the change to require a court order for all detention admissions (a place where DMC occurs) and require better state data collection.



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*a program of RYASAP
Regional Youth Adult
Social Action Partnership*

**2470 FAIRFIELD AVENUE
BRIDGEPORT, CT 06605
TEL. 203.579.2727
FAX 203.333.9118
WWW.CTJJA.ORG**