
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 5508 (as amended by House “A”)*

AN ACT CONCERNING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.

SUMMARY

This bill makes various changes in laws related to youth gender responsiveness, human trafficking data analysis, and the reentry success plan for juveniles being released from the Department of Correction (DOC) and the judicial branch’s facilities and programs.

Specifically, regarding youth gender responsiveness and human trafficking data, the bill does the following:

1. requires the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) to establish a gender responsiveness subcommittee by January 1, 2025 (§ 1);
2. requires the subcommittee to work with the Trafficking in Persons Council to, among other things, develop a framework for reporting, collecting, and distributing human trafficking police data to generate annual reports and make legislative and policy recommendations (§ 1); and
3. requires the Trafficking in Persons Council and the Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee (see BACKGROUND) to collaborate with the JJPOC gender responsiveness subcommittee in carrying out its responsibilities (§§ 3 & 4).

Regarding the reentry success plan, the bill extends by one year, to November 1, 2024, the deadline for the judicial branch’s Court Support Services Division (CSSD) executive director, the DOC commissioner, and the commissioners of the Children and Families (DCF) and Education (SDE) departments to develop the plan. It also requires the

plan to include youths being released from programs that are contracted with the judicial branch, not just programs under the branch's jurisdiction or DOC facilities as current law requires. It also:

1. establishes requirements for job readiness and career training programs;
2. expands the principles that the plan must incorporate; and
3. delays a related reporting requirement by 11 months, until December 1, 2024 (§ 2).

Lastly, the bill also makes technical and conforming changes.

*House Amendment "A" (1) extends, by one year, current law's deadline for developing the reentry success plan and (2) eliminates the underlying bill's requirement that the officials that develop the plan also initiate it.

EFFECTIVE DATE: Upon passage

§ 1 — JJPOC'S GENDER RESPONSIVENESS SUBCOMMITTEE

The bill requires JJPOC to appoint members to a gender responsiveness subcommittee to carry out the responsibilities the bill charges it with and any other task the committee directs.

Subcommittee's Charge

Under the bill, by January 1, 2025, the subcommittee must work with the Trafficking in Persons Council to (1) complete a landscape analysis and gap assessment of gender responsive work in the state and (2) develop a framework for reporting, collecting, and distributing human trafficking police data to generate annual reports on the data.

The bill also charges the subcommittee with developing policy and legislative recommendations based on the human trafficking data for JJPOC's and the Trafficking in Persons Council's consideration.

Landscape Analysis and Gap Assessment

Under the bill, as part of the landscape analysis and gap assessment,

the subcommittee must:

1. define “gender responsive” and “gender responsive practice”;
2. receive and consider input from youth, families, and communities directly impacted by any gaps in gender responsive work;
3. review national best practices, including approaches and types of services provided and system considerations;
4. review previous work and legislation concerning gender responsive work;
5. identify any gaps in gender responsive work resulting from system or programmatic changes;
6. review existing work and practices on gender responsiveness among agencies and community providers; and
7. review data, broken down by race, ethnicity, gender, age, location, and level of system involvement, including the type of offenses committed by youth and how the offenses are handled in the juvenile justice system.

Policy and Legislative Recommendations

The bill also requires the subcommittee to develop policy and legislative recommendations based on the human trafficking police data that it distributes and reports to JJPOC and the Trafficking in Persons Council for their consideration.

Under the bill, the recommendations must (1) address improvements to the range of care to youth who identify as girls and are impacted by the juvenile justice system and (2) provide for culturally- and trauma-informed approaches, services, treatment, and permanency models for the youth.

The recommendations must include the following:

1. continuity of clinical support across a range of placement and treatment settings;
2. specialized treatment in foster care for the youth who have experienced sexual abuse or sex trafficking, including youth with intellectual and other developmental disabilities;
3. specialized training for care providers and treatment providers;
4. consistent and constant sources of support, including peer mentoring and therapy for the youth;
5. programs and practices developed with input from individuals who are survivors of sexual abuse or human trafficking;
6. service and treatment setting options that specifically address the needs of children with intellectual and other developmental disabilities;
7. successful treatment and support models from other states to inform service enhancement in Connecticut;
8. supports for youth who identify as transgender or gender non-conforming;
9. diversion options, such as using a juvenile review board or other diversion models; and
10. a monitoring framework to ensure quality of the continuum of care provided.

Information Sharing

The bill requires the gender responsiveness subcommittee and the Transforming Children's Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee (see below) to share information with JJPOC on gender responsive practices and policies for youth involved with the child welfare system.

§ 2 — REENTRY SUCCESS PLAN FOR YOUTHS RELEASED FROM DOC FACILITIES

Plan Development and Initiation

Current law requires the CSSD executive director and the DCF, SDE, and DOC commissioners, or their designees, by November 1, 2023, to develop a reentry success plan for youth released from DOC and the judicial branch's facilities and programs. The bill (1) extends this deadline by one year, to November 1, 2024, and (2) specifies that under the plan, the judicial branch's facilities and programs also include those that are contracted with the branch. Under existing law, unchanged by the bill, the plan's purpose is to successfully reintegrate youth into their communities.

Restorative and Transformative Justice Principles

Under existing law, the reentry plan must incorporate at least seven specific restorative and transformative justice principles, including use of credible messengers as mentors or transition support providers. The bill specifies that the use of credible messengers must be for up to 24 months after the youth's release from DOC facilities and programs under the judicial branch's jurisdiction or contract.

Job Readiness and Career Training

Current law requires that the plan include a proposed quality assurance framework and information on federal and state funding sources. The bill further requires that the plan ensure that:

1. youth released from DOC facilities and judicial branch programs have started or, whenever possible, completed job readiness or career training programs with imbedded industry-recognized credentials, certifications, or licenses and
2. DOC and the judicial branch programs collaborate with the youth and a transition support provider is given to support the youth in seeking and, whenever possible, finding employment before he or she is released from the facility or program, and sustaining employment after release.

Report to JJPOC

The bill also extends, by 11 months, the deadline for the CSSD

executive director and the commissioners, or their designees, to report the reentry plan to JJPOC, from January 1, 2024, to December 1, 2024.

BACKGROUND

Trafficking in Persons Council

By law, among other things, the Trafficking in Persons Council coordinates human trafficking data collection and consults with government and nongovernment organizations in developing recommendations to strengthen state and local efforts to prevent trafficking, protect and help victims, and prosecute traffickers (CGS § 46a-170).

Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee

By law, the Transforming Children’s Behavioral Health Policy and Planning Committee is charged with (1) evaluating the availability and efficacy of prevention, early intervention, and behavioral health treatment services and options for children (birth to age 18) and (2) making recommendations to the legislature and executive branch agencies on the governance and administration of the mental health care system for children (CGS § 2-137).

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 35 Nay 2 (03/26/2024)

Appropriations Committee

Joint Favorable
Yea 37 Nay 16 (04/25/2024)