

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

Social Work Program Report Card

2009

Quality of Life Result:

All Connecticut residents will benefit from the fair, equal, and constitutional administration of justice.

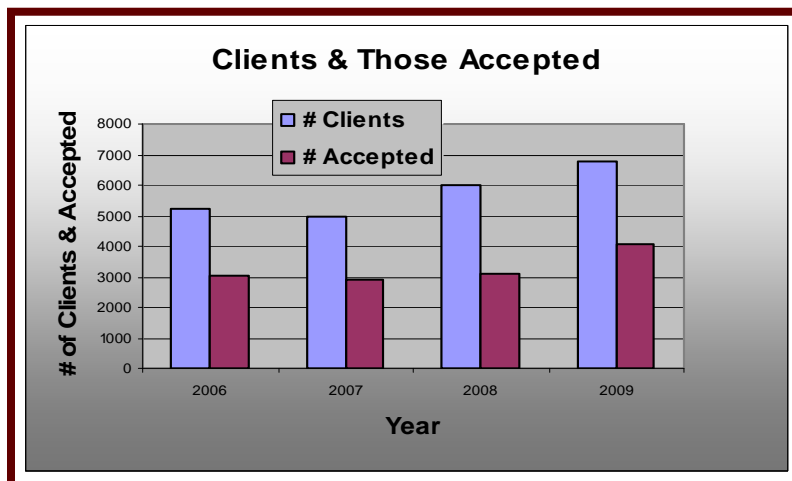
Contribution to Results:

Public Defender Social Workers assist adult and juvenile public defender clients with in-house social work services and referrals to program alternatives to incarceration in order to resolve social problems that lead to criminal involvement. Clients are interviewed, evaluated, and diverted to community programs at the earliest opportunity. Alternative incarceration plans which include treatment recommendations and community resources are presented at arraignment, pre-trial, and sentencing thus facilitating successful reentry, increased public safety, and greater justice for all.

Major Partners:

The Judicial Branch; CSSD Re-interview Program; Adult and Juvenile Probation; The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services; The Department of Corrections; UConn Health Center Correctional Managed Health, DOC Clinical Social Workers in the correctional facilities, DOC Discharge Planners; DOC Counselors; Department of Social Services; Department of Developmental Services; Department of Veterans' Affairs; Department of Children and Families; Statewide Legal Aid Services; School Systems – Statewide; Reentry Councils – New Haven, Bridgeport; Community Providers and Non-profit Agencies.

Performance Measure 1: Number of Public Defender Social Worker plans for adult clients that are accepted in part or in whole by the G.A. and Judicial District courts.



Story behind baseline:

2006 – 58% clients accepted; 2007 – 58% clients accepted;
2008 – 52% clients accepted; 2009 – 60% clients accepted.

In spite of the documented increase in the rate of incarceration post events of July 2007, the number of Public Defender Social Worker plans accepted as alternatives to incarceration has remained stable. By stating that 60% of the clients have recommendations accepted, we mean that the court accepted a sentencing plan prepared by the Public Defender Social Worker which allowed the client to remain in community treatment rather than remain in prison pre-trial or be sentenced to a term of incarceration. Social Worker involvement with indigent defendants, particularly those with mental health and substance abuse

issues, helps clients to stabilize their behavior, become more productive citizens, reduce further criminal involvement, and provides restorative justice to the community.

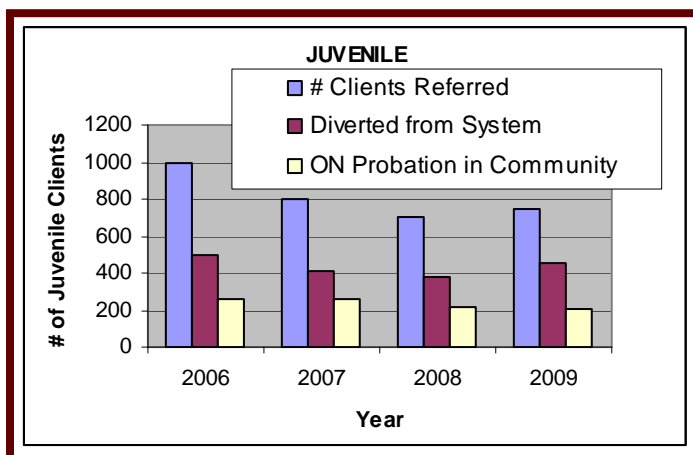
Proposed actions to turn the curve:

Better data collection needs to be developed to demonstrate the success and cost savings that these alternative recommendations provide in contrast to the cost of incarceration. The first improvement involves collecting additional data on the number of cases associated with each client. This has not been collected by social workers, but its inclusion will allow for comparison within the agency and to other criminal justice agencies. Another benefit of collecting data about both number of client and number of cases is having the ability to examine the correlations between number and types of cases and successfully accepted social work plans and how that analysis compares across jurisdictions.

The second data collection improvement for the social work program will include identifying the maximum total exposure of each client based on the cases for use in comparison to total effective sentence. These two data collection improvements will assist the Division of Public Defender Services in demonstrating our social workers' roles in providing a large percentage of successful alternative incarceration plans to the Court and how those directly impact incarceration costs.

An increase in the number of Public Defender Social Workers, especially in major city offices, would result in increased services to indigent clients who are appropriate for both pre-trial diversion and alternative sentencing plans. These plans, client referrals to CSSD jail re-interview, and to DMHAS jail diversion programs assist attorneys and judges work more efficiently in the courts and insure that the most appropriate resources are utilized for each client. The Public Defender Social Workers also have knowledge and access to additional programs in the community beyond those that are contracted through the Court Support Services Division of Judicial Department (CSSD). This allows them to facilitate the diversion of many clients in collaboration with CSSD, DCF, and community providers.

Performance Measure 2: Number of juvenile clients who are diverted from the delinquency docket or placed on probation in the community.



Story behind baseline:

2006 – **50%** diverted; **26%** on probation

2007 – **52%** diverted; **33%** on probation

2008 – **54%** diverted; **31%** on probation

2009 – **60%** diverted; **28%** on probation

The numbers show that the percentage of juveniles who are completely diverted from juvenile court has increased over the last four years. The data also shows a smaller number of juveniles are placed on probation. When a client is diverted from the court process and into an appropriate service, resources are

saved and service is provided more efficiently. For children who become our clients, the trend in Juvenile Court is to utilize community based programs that work with the client in their homes and schools. When these programs are community based, they not only help the juvenile who was arrested but provide the entire family with services. Research indicates that such involvement may prevent siblings from entering the juvenile or criminal justice system. The Public Defender Social Workers work closely with the probation officers and CSSD contracted community providers to identify the most appropriate services for the client. They also have the clinical expertise and community contacts to refer the juvenile for beneficial programs outside of those that are state funded. They work with the attorneys to create recommendations for the court and for probation which reserves more services for clients who need more intensive support and supervision.

Proposed actions to turn the curve: The Public Defender Social Workers, because of their expertise and training, are uniquely able to assess and identify juveniles' presenting social and mental health problems. They are able to make appropriate recommendations for early intervention and immediate treatment options. They often have access to community services that probation officers may not be aware of, because they are outside those available through state funding. By working together with juvenile probation and community providers, Public Defender Social Workers are able to facilitate effective diversion of many clients. Such diversion reserves critical court resources for clients in need of more intensive treatment and monitoring. All partners working together provide a continuum of services throughout the juvenile court process to maximize client success in treatment and to promote public safety.