

# DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

## *Connecticut Innocence Project*

### *Program Report Card*

2009

#### **Quality of Life Result:**

- To ensure that factually innocent defendants in the State of Connecticut are not wrongfully convicted of crimes, and to identify innocent inmates wrongfully convicted of serious Connecticut offenses so that their release and exoneration may be effectuated.

#### **Program Purpose:**

- To provide quality legal representation to factually innocent indigent prisoners wrongfully convicted of serious Connecticut offenses, in post-conviction proceedings in order to establish their innocence through DNA or non-DNA evidence, or through other means of establishing actual innocence.

#### **Major Customers:**

- Indigent prisoners who have been wrongfully convicted of serious crimes in Connecticut, including murder and sexual assault.
- Victims and families of crime victims

#### **Measures used to tell if program is delivering services well:**

- All eligible indigent prisoners wrongfully convicted of crimes who apply for assistance throughout the State are given an opportunity to have their cases reviewed, and where new evidence exists to establish innocence, to have competent legal counsel pursue the inmate's release and exoneration through the demonstration of innocence.
- Inmates are satisfied with the way they are treated, and in cases where the Connecticut Innocence Project undertakes representation of the inmate, he/she is satisfied with the representation.

#### ***How are we doing?***

- CTIP is reviewing approximately 100-120 cases in various stages of review of inmates asserting that they have been wrongfully convicted and are innocent.
- Since its inception in 2004, CTIP has secured the release and exoneration of three innocent inmates who were wrongfully convicted, each of whom served approximately 20 years in prison before post-conviction DNA testing established innocence.

#### **Measures used to tell if program's customers are better off:**

- Numbers of inmates who contact CTIP for assistance.
- Numbers of inmates whose cases contain new evidence of innocence.
- Numbers of inmates who are represented by CTIP.
- Numbers of CTIP clients who are released and exonerated.

## **Major Partners:**

- Division of Criminal Justice
- The Judicial Branch
- Department of Correction
- Office of the Chief State's Attorney
- State's Attorneys in each Judicial District
- Division of Public Safety
- State of Connecticut Forensic Laboratory
- Office of Chief Medical Examiner
- Connecticut State Police
- Municipal Police Departments

## **What Works in Difficult Financial Climate:**

- Establish reforms (eye-witness identification, informant testimony, forensic science competent legal counsel, etc.) to reduce the numbers of wrongfully convicted inmates.
- Encourage post-conviction review of claims of innocence by stake-holders in the criminal justice system.
- Encourage collaboration of stake-holders to expedite processing of actual innocence claims.

## **Proposals for next 2 years:**

- No reductions should be made to the existing personnel at the Connecticut Innocence Project.
- Continue to pursue availability of grant money from the Department of Justice, as with the recently awarded Connecticut Post-Conviction DNA Grant Program, which was jointly awarded to the CTIP, the Office of the Chief State's Attorney and the State of Connecticut Forensic Laboratory.
- Continue the cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders in the criminal justice system to ensure that innocent inmates are identified, released and exonerated.