

JJPOC Recommendations Relating to Ensuring Educational Excellence and Opportunity for Students in Connecticut’s Juvenile Justice System

JJPOC Education Recommendation #1	
Reduce Chronic Absenteeism by Initiating Truancy Intervention Models, Addressing Exclusionary School Discipline Practices, and Adopting Restorative Justice Practices	
<p>The Diversion, Incarceration, and Recidivism workgroups forwarded goals relating to the limited use of detention and the need for an extensive array of additional community based alternatives. Addressing chronic absenteeism with appropriate focus, monitoring and resources will help facilitate the implementation of these proposals. This recommendation takes on increased importance in light of the adoption by the JJPOC of the recommendation to remove truancy and defiance of school rules from the juvenile court. Consequently, Education Recommendation No. 1 has the potential to contribute directly to all three of the stated JJPOC goals to increase diversion by 20%, reduce incarceration by 30% and reduce recidivism by 10%.</p>	
Target of Change	<p>Juvenile Review Boards Child and Youth Family Support Centers Local Educational Agencies</p>
Problem	<p>Chronic absenteeism (when a student is absent for 10% or more of total school days) is a <u>primary gateway</u> to involvement in the juvenile justice system</p> <p>Truancy as well as exclusionary discipline practices, such as out of school suspensions and expulsions, contribute to academic disengagement. They push a student who could use intervention and support out into the community, often unsupervised and even more at risk of arrest and system involvement.</p>
Recommendation Summary	<p>It is recommended that chronic absenteeism be reduced by initiating truancy intervention models, addressing exclusionary school discipline practices, and adopting restorative justice practices. Truancy Intervention models as well as restorative justice practices should be evaluated and implemented to address chronic absenteeism. Increased measures to address exclusionary discipline practices in the schools which push students out can prevent students from entering into the juvenile justice system.</p>
Potential Impact	<p>Data shows that almost 70% of juvenile justice involved students were chronically absent in at least one grade and 33% were chronically absent in more than one grade. In addition, chronically absent students were admitted to detention twice as often as students who were not chronically absent., Research also shows there is a strong association between absenteeism and recidivism.</p> <p>Implementation of this recommendation can help to reduce these disturbing statistics.</p>

Rationale	There are currently national and Connecticut models which are showing promise at reducing truancy. See CCA 2015, http://www.kidscounsel.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/rKM-Truancy-Programs-book-2015-R.pdf . There are also national models with evidentiary support including Youth Advocate Programs (YAP); Becoming a Man (BAM); New York City Truancy Reduction Pilot. (Report p.18) which adhere to restorative justice principles and demonstrate a reduction in chronic absenteeism.
Recommendation Detail	
Policy/Legislative Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that SDE monitors implementation of Public Act 15-225, (An Act Concerning Chronic Absenteeism), particularly for schools and districts that are feeders to the juvenile justice system and negative outliers and reports to JJPOC annually
Program Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate Connecticut-specific and national truancy reduction models and expand availability to schools whose students are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system 2. Ensure educational opportunity for <i>all students facing expulsion or expelled</i> by: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Making available an attorney or advocate for any student without financial means to secure one b. Requiring access to appropriate alternative education programs substantially similar to non-expelled youth in alternative programs c. Requiring individualized learning plans for expelled students.
Practice Change Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop appropriate entrance and exit requirements for the referral of students to alternative education placements, and ensure the transfer of any special education student to an alternative school is in compliance with federal and state law 2. Develop, through a collaborative process with SDE, schools and districts, a remediation plan for the negative outliers in terms of out of school suspension and expulsion rates and racial disparities in rates, or that have a disproportionate number of students involved in the juvenile justice system. These remediation plans must include, at a minimum, restorative justice models.
Implementation Implications	Addressing chronic absenteeism is an important prophylactic intervention to stem involvement of youth into the juvenile justice system.

JJPOC Education Recommendation #2

Provide the Appropriate and Necessary Menu of Educational Supports for all Students at each stage of the juvenile justice system including those diverted from Court, placed on probation, incarcerated, or re-entering the community in order to maximize their academic success.

The Diversion, Incarceration, and Recidivism workgroups each forwarded proposed actions relating to the need to improve access to supports for youth. Since education is one of the most fundamental in the hierarchy of needs that youth have, these must include educational resources to address students' lack of educational attainment. Consequently, implementing Education Recommendation # 2 has the potential to contribute to all three of the stated JJPOC goals to increase diversion by 20%, reduce incarceration by 30% and reduce recidivism by 10%.

<p>Target of Change</p>	<p>Juvenile Review Boards (JRB) Child and Youth Family Support Centers (CYFSC) Juvenile Detention Centers (JDC) Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) and Pueblo Congregate Care Facilities (residential treatment centers, group homes, respite centers, substance abuse treatment facilities) Local Education Agencies (LEAs)</p>
<p>Problem</p>	<p>Students in the juvenile justice system exhibit tremendously poor academic performance. Many are two or three grade levels behind. Others, such as those at CJTS are even further behind, but have been socially promoted year after year without properly being identified as special education or being given the academic supports they need to improve their educational performance. Some are counseled to withdraw from school on the grounds they are too old and too far behind to graduate on time; others are “reassigned to “alternative schools” with radically reduced hours, curriculum and expectations.</p> <p>Students diverted from court, on probation, in detention or committed to CJTS or other congregate care facilities often represent the highest-need students in Connecticut, with the most complex educational trajectories. There is no robust menu of academic supports to ensure their success. Even if they receive some educational assistance when incarcerated, upon release, they often encounter significant challenges in re-enrollment, gaining credit and maintenance of grade level.</p>
<p>Recommendation Summary</p>	<p>It is recommended that the Appropriate and Necessary Menu of Educational Supports be provided for all Students at each stage of the juvenile justice system including those diverted from Court, placed on probation, incarcerated, or re-entering the community in order to maximize their academic success.</p> <p>An array of academic supports will provide an opportunity to ensure that the students who have gotten off track are receiving the educational interventions that they will need to be successful.</p>

Potential Impact	Implementation of this recommendation will provide a strong and seamless safety net to treat these young people as the serious and talented students they are or can become and to invest fully in their education. These supports can be the catalyst to prevent further academic failure and increase the students' level of engagement in school.
Rationale	<p>The research shows that quality education linked to employment is viewed, unequivocally, as the most powerful tool in recidivism reduction. (Report, p.7)</p> <p>While it is estimated 40-50% of juvenile detainees have special education needs (and youth at CJTS even higher), only 10% had been identified.</p> <p>There are many national Models with evidentiary support of the kind recommended in the sections below. These include AMIKids Day Treatment and school programs in Florida, recognized by OJJDP, and PACE Center for Girls in Florida.</p>
Recommendation Detail	
Policy/Legislative Action	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Amend the suspension statutes to eliminate out-of-school suspensions for students in locked facilities 2. Amend the current educational stability law (Conn.Gen. Stat. 17a-16) to include youth returning from juvenile justice placements.
Program Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expand the School-based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) specifically ^{to} schools and districts that are negative outliers in school-based arrest rates, DMC, or absolute number of juvenile justice referrals, and track and report data regarding the effectiveness of this expansion to the JJPOC. 2. Equip Juvenile Review Boards, CYFSCs, Probation Department with sufficient resources necessary to secure for students: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. an independent evaluation that would determine the availability, access, and quality of all educational services currently offered to diverted students and recommendations for improvement; b. educational services including tutors, educational surrogates, educational advocates, CSSD's Educational Support Services, educational coaches 3. Establish an "education reintegration" or "transition" team/coordinator

	<p>assigned to each student upon arrival at a detention or other congregate care facility</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Develop at CJTS and congregate care facilities a menu of educational services to include access to on line credit recovery and remediation courses, tutoring and academic support services; summer and after-hours academic enrichment programs, SAT preparation courses, vocational and other career-oriented programming 5. Conduct and publish rigorous, independent evaluations every three years of the educational programming in DCF and CSSD run or contracted schools, 6. Provide an Educational Advocate (with parental consent) for any student returning to the community from a juvenile justice facility and enable the Educational Advocate to determine the necessary academic supports 7. Upon a student’s return to the community, make available a menu of concrete academic and vocational supports based on national models (e.g.: PACTT), including tutoring, after hours programs, summer school, credit recovery, extracurricular support and attendance services opportunities 8. Explore the establishment of a pilot high-quality “school” for students under juvenile justice supervision, (e.g. Maya Angelou School in Washington D.C., Rancho Cielo School in California, Pace Program for Girls in Florida.)
<p>Practice Change Actions</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement Memoranda of Understanding by Juvenile Review Boards, CYFSC and the LEAs, the purpose of which is to collaborate on the review of educational records of each diverted student and provide necessary educational supports 2. Ensure youth and parent voice by soliciting and incorporating their input regarding academic and other supports needed for success into an education plan developed and monitored by JRB, CYFSC, CSSD or DCF; solicit their feedback regarding the quality of educational services in detention, CJTS, congregate care; develop policies to encourage family engagement (e.g.regular teacher-parent conferences and “family nights”) 3. Develop a system for all Juvenile Review Boards and CYFSCs to track and make public data regarding the educational progress and outcomes of participating students 4. Implement measures for SDE to develop a remediation plan with schools and districts that are negative outliers in terms of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. school arrest rates b. racial disparities in school arrest rates c. absolute number of students arrested

	<p>5. Ensure collaboration between an, educational surrogate or attorney if applicable, the facility’s transition team/coordinator and LEA to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Conduct individualized educational assessments b. Ensure immediate on-line access to the electronic educational records c. Conduct timely ppts for special education students <p>6. Establish “reintegration” or “transition” teams, to help youth plan for eventual reentry to school in the community <i>upon arrival in the facility</i>, and require such teams to ensure that the student upon return to his home school:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. is immediately re-enrolled in appropriate courses; b. receives credit for all work completed; c. has access to all educational records and educational “passport” d. is released to an alternative school only if parental consent; or is required by a previous expulsion decision and a ppt e. if special ed, receives a PPT with relevant staff, a functional behavior analysis (F BA) , and Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) <i>before</i> the transfer from congregate care facility other than detention; <p>7. Ensure school districts designate a liaison for youth returning to the community and require immediate enrollment and academic credit for the work performed in the juvenile justice facility</p>
<p>Implementation Implications</p>	<p>In the absence of enhanced focus coupled with appropriate resources on the academic outcomes of juvenile justice involved students, the academic failure of this vulnerable population will persist and they will be at tremendous risk of dropping out of school and further engaging with the juvenile and eventually the criminal justice system.</p>

JJPOC Education Recommendation #3

Increase Interagency Collaboration, Monitoring, and Accountability among SDE, DCF, CSSD, DOC to Address the Educational Deficiencies of the Juvenile Justice Population

The Diversion, Recidivism, and Data sharing work groups each forwarded goals relating to the need for cross collaboration of agencies to focus on outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. Consequently, Education Recommendation No. 3 has the potential to directly contribute to these three stated JJPOC goals to increase diversion by 20%, reduce recidivism by 10% and increase data sharing and planning among agencies.

Target of Change	Department of Children and Families,, Court Support Services Division, State Department of Education, Department of Corrections
Problem	<p>The information sharing and collaboration among agencies regarding the educational outcomes for students in the juvenile justice youth is at its infancy stage. There are still many unanswered questions including what % of students involved in the system graduate from high school, are likely to drop out, go on to post-secondary education, etc.</p> <p>There are inconsistent measures used by the different agencies so it is difficult to measure any academic success. While “Raise the Grade” accountability measures have been enacted into law, there is no rigorous quality assurance system to ensure compliance.</p>
Recommendation Summary	It is recommended that SDE, DCF, CSSD and DOC address the educational deficiencies of the juvenile justice population by increasing Interagency Collaboration, Monitoring, and Accountability. By increasing collaboration and monitoring among agencies, service delivery and evaluation of system outcomes will be more reliable and data driven and such accountability measures will result in program improvements
Potential Impact	Increased collaboration among agencies will result in data-driven policy making.
Rationale	Research indicated that if students do not receive all the necessary evaluations and enhanced educational supports they deserve through necessary interagency collaboration, they often fall through the cracks of the different systems set up to protect them..
Recommendation Detail	

Policy/Legislative Action	
Program Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that SDE, CSSD, DCF and LEAs collaborate in creating a menu of educational support services noted above (including the “education coach”, tutoring services, summer academic enrichment, support for extracurricular activities, etc.) that would be made available to students at all stages of juvenile justice system post-assessment
Practice Change Actions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ensure that SDE, CSSD, DCF, and LEAs collaborate on assessment tools, so that skill levels, education gaps, and progress can be measured accurately and efficiently across systems. 2. Ensure that SDE, CSSD, DCF and LEAs collaborate on professional development specifically designed for educators who work with students in the juvenile justice system. 3. Ensure that DCF and CSSD, in collaboration with SDE establishes a quality assurance system to implement “Raise the Grade” statutory provisions including rigorous compliance with Child Find obligations (Conn. Gen. Stat. 17a-64) and report to the JJPOC 4. Ensure that SDE, CSSD, DCF and DOC collaborate on developing a data gathering and information sharing system to determine graduation and drop-out rates, engagement in post-secondary education, employment: 5. Ensure that SDE, CSSD, DCF, and LEAs collaborate to create a mechanism by which full educational records can be accessed electronically in a timely fashion with one single parental consent, and students have full access to their educational records, credit summaries, (“educational passport”).
Implementation Implications	<p>In the absence of collaboration and focused monitoring, the educational failure of students in the juvenile justice system will continue unabated which can lead to increased recidivism.</p>