

New Services Planned To Help Hartford's Young Offenders Upon Release

Rebecca Lurye
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When children's advocates interviewed a group of young inmates in Cheshire recently, many of the offenders cited similar challenges returning to their communities — accessing education, housing and employment.

These basic needs became obstacles for the interviewees, ages 18 to 21, upon past releases from Manson Youth Institution, according to the Center for Children's Advocacy, which interviewed inmates who had been rearrested and confined again to the high-security facility. The advocates also found that many former inmates failed to seek support on their own, or lacked services that were developmentally appropriate.

Now, the Hartford-based nonprofit is using that information and a \$260,000 grant to support young people in their transitions back to the community from custody by the juvenile system and the Department of Children and Families.

The Center for Children's Advocacy received the three-year grant from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving to expand its services for Greater Hartford adolescents and young adults leaving justice system confinement.

The Center for Children's Advocacy plans to offer legal rights training for inmates ages 16 to 23 at Manson, as well as legal services screenings, community clinics and other services for youth at the new re-entry welcome center in Hartford.

Hartford Re-Entry Center To Open At City Hall This Summer

A grand opening for the center, located in an annex at Hartford City Hall, will be held Sept. 12. It was originally scheduled to open its doors in early July.

Nearly 600 Hartford County youth ages 16 to 23 are confined to detention facilities each year, according to the Hartford Foundation.

Young offenders also have a higher recidivism rate in Connecticut — 52 percent of first-time offenders ages 15 to 25 return to prison, compared to 32 percent of adults ages 26 to 30, according to a February report from the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

"The Hartford Foundation has long recognized that at-risk youth require a wide range of support specifically tailored to their needs in order to successfully reintegrate back to school, the workforce and the community," said Judy McBride, director of grants and partnership investments for the Hartford Foundation. **"The Center for Children's Advocacy has a proven record of success developing community-based collaborative efforts to address the unique needs of young people transitioning from juvenile justice and DCF confinement."**

Part of the \$260,000 grant will also support the center's administrative advocacy work with DCF, the Court Support Services Division, school districts, the Department of Correction and other agencies.

The Hartford Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$720 million since its founding in 1925.