



# Hartford Foundation

FOR PUBLIC GIVING

Together for good.®

## **Center for Children's Advocacy Receives \$260,000 Grant to Support Services for Young People Transitioning Back to the Community from Juvenile Justice and DCF Custody**

August 28, 2018

In an effort to clearly understand the overwhelming challenges faced by young adults transitioning back to the community from the criminal justice system, the Center for Children's Advocacy interviewed young adults 18 to 21 who were released from Manson Youth Institution, rearrested, and returned to confinement.

Youth interviewed discussed significant issues they faced with access to basic needs, education, housing, and employment. While many issues could be addressed through legal services and other supports, the child welfare system ceases to provide legal services when a youth turns 18, unless he is connected to education programming. Many of these young men said they failed to seek support on their own, and that available services are often not developmentally appropriate.

Nearly 600 Hartford County youth ages 16 to 23 are confined in detention facilities each year. Youth transitioning out of the justice or Department of Children and Families (DCF) systems have limited access to developmentally appropriate supports. The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving has awarded a three-year, \$260,000 grant to the Center for Children's Advocacy to expand its services targeting adolescents and young adults from Greater Hartford who are transitioning from justice-system confinement or Department of Children and Families involvement.

The recidivism rate for youth 15 to 25 is 52 percent, higher than the 32 percent rate for adults 26 to 30. Many youth discharged from confinement or foster care are on their own and at high risk of poverty, homelessness, and continued justice system involvement.

**"Youth who are in transition – leaving the justice system or aging out of foster care – are at great risk of a critical misstep in successful community reintegration,"** said Martha Stone, executive director of the Center for Children's Advocacy. **"Our legal support provides the groundwork that can help youth reestablish important connections, find a safe place to live, get back into school to finish credits needed toward graduation or get a job that leads toward future security. This is our chance to help – and to keep youth with serious support needs on track for a self-sufficient adulthood."**

The Center's plan seeks to offer targeted services to Greater Hartford teens and young adults ages 16 to 23 transitioning from confinement or DCF involvement. Plans include legal rights training for youth at Manson, legal services screening, community clinics, and work with youth at the new Reentry Welcome Center in Hartford.

The Center offers legal services for youth that include case management, and will seek to expand access by training pro bono attorneys. A portion of the grant will also support the Center's administrative advocacy work. The Center has a record of effective administrative advocacy with DCF, Court Support Services Division (CSSD), school districts, the Department of Correction (DOC), and other agencies. The Foundation funds would support a portion of two project attorneys, a case manager, and other program costs.

"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 Hartford Foundation Director of Grants and Partnership Investments Judy McBride. "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."