



Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee

**2020 Education Recommendations as Adopted on January
16th and February 20th, 2020**

IV. 2020 RECOMMENDATIONS IN DETAIL FROM THE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Mission: Improve educational services for youth in an out-of-home placement.

Connecticut is committed to ensuring that youth in an out-of-home placement have access to the highest quality of educational programming available. This includes providing smooth transitions to and from the community, offering specialization and expertise, and holding the entire system accountable.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION 1	<p>JJPOC recommends that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Current legislation be amended to create a DCF administrative body and authorize it to oversee the education of youth in all juvenile justice out-of-home placements including incarcerated youth.<ul style="list-style-type: none">1. An implementation team shall be established by JJPOC to assist in the development of an operational plan to establish a DCF administrative body providing oversight for the education of all juvenile justice out-of-home placement as explained in this recommendation. This implementation team will include representatives from state and local agencies, as well as members of the JJPOC Education Committee and the JJPOC, and shall identify the implementation timeline, funding, and other measures necessary to fully implement the recommendation. The implementation team shall provide a report back to the JJPOC by September 20202. The DCF administrative body may hire its own personnel, and/or subcontract to private providers and/or other school districts for the provision of services.3. The DCF administrative body will create an advisory board of interested parties including, but not limited to, members from:<ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Judicial Branch CSSDb. DOCc. SDEd. the community; including, but not limited to, members with expertise in provision of education, mental and behavioral health services, social work services, and advocacy.
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	<ol style="list-style-type: none">4. DCF will be adequately funded and resourced to accommodate for its expansion.5. The DCF administrative body will develop and review quarterly reports on academic performance, school discipline, attendance, etc.6. The DCF administrative body will require subcontracted education providers (no less than semi-annually) to provide student performance data to ensure that reporting measures are tailored to experiences of students in short and long-term placements.7. The DCF administrative body will require education providers to develop partnerships and programs with local education agencies, non-profit cultural groups, local industries, and businesses.8. In all instances where there is a nexus, local LEAs will retain responsibility for the cost of educating their pupils.9. The DCF administrative body will be required to report student performance data, attendance, and rates of participation for all education programs. They will also be required to document transition activities and outcomes, collaborations with community service providers, and parents.10. The DCF administrative body will ensure that students earn credits toward high school graduation, have access to arts and career and technical education (CTE) courses, statewide and college prep testing, and provide alternative options for HS equivalency certificates for students who are overage and under credits.11. The DCF administrative body will enable students to have access to web-based content including credit recovery programs.
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BACKGROUND

Public Act 18-31 established an education committee to develop a detailed plan addressing concerns with overall coordination, supervision, provision and direction of all academic services and programs for youth in out of home placement.

The committee was placed into effect on July 1st, 2018 and began to meet regularly to address the following: the range of services for the justice-involved youth must include, at a minimum, a traditional high-school diploma program, an accelerated credit recovery program, vocational training, and access to post-secondary options. Additionally, a recommendation was made to submit a plan for a single agency to be in charge of a statewide system for education transitional supports for children in custody.

TYJI subcontracted with Dr. Peter Leone, a national expert on the topic and Professor at the University of Maryland, to assist with the charge of transforming the education system for youth in out-of-home placement across the state of CT in collaboration with the JJPOC Education Committee. The technical support provided consisted of policy analysis, generating options for curriculum alignment, advance placement and credit recovery coursework, post-secondary opportunities, identifying models of best practice with regards to accountability and quality control for educational services and support, and funding and administration structure of educational services for incarcerated youth.

During the scope of this work, Dr. Leone traveled to CT on several occasions to conduct site visits at various facilities in CT. In April 2019, he visited Manson Youth Institute where he toured the facility, observed the education facilities and met with DOC leadership and USD#1 administrators. In June 2019 Dr. Leone returned to CT to tour the Hartford Detention Center and meet with leadership as well as administrators from the contracted educational service provider. During this visit, Dr. Leone also met with leadership at CSSD to discuss education services and later with leadership within the State Dept. of Education. Throughout this time, Dr. Leone joined several of the Education Committee and Subcommittee meetings via video conference. In October 2019, Dr. Leone returned to CT to present his preliminary recommendations to the JJPOC.

The education committee established principles which were presented at the Oct. 2019 JJPOC meeting. Those principles consisted of the following:

- Standards for education services for incarcerated youth should be consistent with those for public school children in the state.
- Funding for services and supports for the education of incarcerated youth should be driven by a formula that takes into account the mobility, academic disadvantage, and the considerable number of youth who are English learners and who are eligible for special education services.
- One agency or division within an agency should have primary responsibility and authority for education services all incarcerated youth in the state.
- Transition of youth from local schools to state agency placements should be seamless. Expectations, responsibilities, and outcomes for agencies and personnel responsible for entry and reentry should be explicit and measurable.
- The agency or division within an agency should report annually on the operations of the education programs serving youth in the justice system.

The Education committee, with assistance from Dr. Leone, identified early on how vital it is that we understand what other states are doing and identify the elements in their models that may work in Connecticut. A few states such as Oregon, Missouri and Utah are leading the nation in their efforts to educate incarcerated youth. Missouri permitted the Division of Youth Services (DYS) under the Missouri Department of Services to obtain state education funding. As a result, the DHS now operates like a local school district. DHS bills local school districts or local education agencies (LEAs) for the costs associated with youth education. DHS can also grant high school diplomas, providing more meaning behind incarcerated youth's education. In 2017, DHS operated 30 facilities which served 1,535 youth; All youth were provided education. In Oregon, through a contract with the Oregon Department of Education, education is provided in all facilities and facilitated by a local school district or education service district. In February 20, 2020 (RVD)

Utah, the Utah State Board of Education funds education services for incarcerated youth who are in detention and commitment facilities. Utah's Board of Education has a Youth in Custody Program (YIC) that provides educational administration and support services for individuals under the age of 21 who are in custody. This program is facilitated by local school districts and these districts are eligible for two annual grants. An advisory council meets monthly to review and advise the YIC program.

DATA

Improving education in youth facilities is one of the best ways to improve an at-risk juvenile's life after they are released. Who are the children impacted by this reform and where are they detained?

- Children who are accused of committing a delinquent act before turning 18 and are detained prior to sentencing in a secure, state-run juvenile detention center (Bridgeport or Hartford Detention Centers).
- There is a capacity of 52 juveniles in Hartford's Juvenile Detention Center; 52 in Bridgeport;
- Children are also placed by CSSD in various community secure or staff secured residential facilities which consist of:
 - 16 in the secure region program in Hamden; 13 in the Journey House (secure girls only), 12 in the Boys & Girls village; 8 in the CT Junior Republic in Waterbury; and 8 in the Community Partners in Action Hartford
- In the most recent 2019 JJPOC strategic goals report there was a 53.5% reduction in detention since 2014.
- Children in either of the detention centers and or community secure or staff secure facilities are educated by the school district where the facility is located and or through a contract with the Judicial Branch.
- Children who are detained at DOC MYI or YCI have been prosecuted as adults for an act allegedly committed before they turn 18, and are jailed prior to trial or imprisoned after conviction. In the 2019 JJPOC strategic goals report in FY 18-19 there were
 - 111 admissions which is inclusive of sentenced and pre-trial at MYI and have remained steady the past 3 years.
 - Annual admissions to YCI have remained at or below 10 for the past four years.
- Education at both MYI and YCI is provided by the DOC through Unified School District #1 (USD1), a district within DOC that is responsible for providing education across all DOC facilities.
- USD1 is funded through a direct appropriation from the state.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The educational committee is proposing recommendations that address concerns with overall coordination, supervision, provision and direction of all academic services and programs for youth in out of home placement. One of the recommendations addresses issues of fragmentation by recommending a singular administrative oversight body. DCF has experience with overseeing education in multiple types of settings, it is already an independent school district by statute, in addition, the USD #2 is involved with the Families First Act and emphasized preventative practices.

By improving Connecticut's education system for incarcerated youth, Connecticut could see: higher education levels and overall substantially better life opportunities for incarcerated youth; a decrease in racial

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and ethnic disparities in the justice system; and decrease recidivism amongst at-risk youth. Overall, high quality education is one of the most effective crime-prevention tools.

**EDUCATION
COMMITTEE
RECOMMENDATION 2**

JJPOC recommends that:

- A. A newly created administrative body within DCF will *employ transition specialists* whose primary responsibility is to facilitate the successful transition of youth from secure facilities back to the communities. These transition specialists shall:
 - 1. Collaborate with receiving schools, youth serving agencies, employers, and other community supports to plan and manage successful transition.
 - 2. Manage to track educational credits of youth while in out-of-home placement and document the success of placements following youths' reentry into their communities.
 - 3. Be responsible for communicating with the reentry coordinators. This information will be used in reporting by the receiving district LEA or the district of nexus, if applicable.
- B. *Reentry coordinators* (established per PA 18-31 Sec. 7(q)) shall be responsible for obtaining records of youth in juvenile justice out of home placement and assisting in transfer of the records to the facility.
 - 1. The list of reentry coordinators shall be distributed to system stakeholders, including DOC, DCF, CSSD and parents of students. This list should also be made public and displayed on the SDE website.
 - 2. SDE should implement and maintain a current list of reentry coordinators. This list should be reviewed and updated concurrently with the August 1st statutory guideline. In districts under enrollment of 6,000, an alternate will be identified to coordinate the reentry process
- C. An amendment to C.G.S § 10-253 (g)(7) & (g)(8) be made to read, "(7) When a child is not enrolled in a school district at the time of a juvenile justice out-of-home placement, or upon discharge does not return to the same school where the child was previously enrolled." "(8) Upon learning that a child is to be discharged, the educational services provider for the facility shall immediately notify the jurisdiction in which the child will continue his or her education after discharge. A child shall have the right to enroll in such school district immediately upon discharge into the community, as provided in subsection (7)."
- D. Legislation to require special education students in juvenile justice out-of-home placements, when at all possible, be

	<p>provided PPT meetings upon entry and in advance of their discharge to plan for their program and placement in their receiving school district.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. For youth who are sentenced or given an order of probation supervision with residential placement, a transition PPT meeting should be held 30 days in advance of the youth's known date of discharge. Both the discharging and receiving school district shall participate in this PPT meeting and a person knowledgeable about the continuum of programmatic offerings available in the receiving district shall participate in the meeting.
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BACKGROUND

Transitioning youth back into their communities would not only be beneficial for the juvenile, but also to the community. All of the recommendations mentioned will only lead to youths' success. Designating coordinators in both settings are a vital element in creating successful transitions. Planning for transition should begin at entry into the juvenile justice setting. Youth should be involved in the discussion and planning of transition at each stage of the process. Ideally, prior to release or return to the community, youth should travel to the next placement (education, housing or treatment center, training program) and meet teachers or supervisors.

C.G.S. § 10-253 prescribes the school enrollment process for children discharging from detention into the community. Currently for children who seek to enroll in the same school district they were enrolled in at the time they entered the detention facility, the law mandates immediate enrollment. These students can start school without showing proof of prior transcripts, immunization records, special education records, or other paperwork. But for students who were not enrolled in school when they entered the detention facility, or for those whose school district changes upon discharge, the law does not provide for immediate enrollment in their new schools.

The laws concerning special education should be amended to ensure that specific transition Planning and Placement Team (PPT) meetings are provided for youth receiving special education services who are placed in the care and custody of the justice system so as to plan for a smooth and seamless transition back to the community. These meetings should include the youth's current school district or agency (the school responsible for their education during their court ordered placement, a.k.a, the "discharging" school or district.) and the school district to which the youth will be transitioning (a.k.a. "receiving" school district). These meetings are essential to ensure that special education youth in the care of the justice system receive an appropriate education upon their return to the community and do not experience any unnecessary lapse in their education.

DATA

Currently, legislation requires eligible school districts to "designate and maintain at least one employee as a liaison to facilitate transitions between the school district and the juvenile and criminal justice systems" and this information should be sent to CSSD yearly by August 1. By requiring the list of reentry coordinators to be distributed to DOC, DCF, CSSD, and parents of the students, the ability to communicate in the best

interest of the child will be expanded and improved. By directing a supervisory authority (SDE) over implementation and maintenance of this list, updated information and will be provided on a yearly basis to further ease communication.

Studies show that excess free time is a leading factor in predicting reentry success. Studies also show that children engaged with school have less free time, more access to positive peer and adult supports, and increased internal motivation for successful reentry. Staff at the Department of Children and Families, juvenile probation officers, and attorneys at the Center for Children’s Advocacy have all expressed their concern that school enrollment delays are a major contributing factor in unsuccessfully reentry.

National data has clearly established that nearly 70% of the juvenile justice population have a disability; it is no secret that the vast majority of these youth have complex educational needs and require IEPs. It is therefore only best practice to ensure that identified special education youth have the benefit of advance education planning to ensure a smooth transition upon their re-entry to the community. Without this Transition PPT requirement, many youth are left without appropriate supports when attempting to transition back into their home school district. Enacting a proactive measure such as this, will help to ensure that special education students receive the supports that they need immediately upon their discharge from the care and custody of the justice system.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

The role of both transition specialists and reentry coordinators needs to be explicit, as they are responsible for obtaining records and ensuring credit for work completed while in juvenile justice school programs. By clarifying the roles, expanding avenues of communication, and encouraging collaboration, the student will be more supported as they ease into a transition. Schools that fail to comply with reentry provisions should receive notice from the OAG about their statutory obligations. Among other things, delaying reentry to youth who may be required to return to school as a condition of their probation or parole jeopardizes youths’ successful reentry and contributes to their vulnerability to continued justice system involvement. It will be beneficial to recognize the need for these roles in smaller school districts as well. An alternative designee to assist in transition and reentry for students can be, but is not limited to, a guidance counselor.

With this recommendation, support is ensured for immediate school enrollment for all students returning from to the community. Support will also be provided to the detention facility’s educational service provider, reentry coordinator, and the school district liaison. Transition PPT meetings for special education youth in the care and custody of the justice system, particularly those youth who are post-adjudication/conviction, would help to ensure the free and appropriate education to which these youth are entitled pursuant to state and federal law is not interrupted or suspended after their discharge.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION 3	JJPOC recommends that: A. A newly created administrative body within DCF will ensure that sending and receiving schools and programs provide services and supports that maximize student’s success. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Use a uniform system of state-wide electronic record transfers (i.e. Powerschool, PSIS) for maintaining and sharing educational records for all students, including
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	<p>court-placed youth in educational programs, to be overseen by a Directory Manager and align with the IEP Task Force.</p> <p>B. A student's home district should be mandated to offer home district diplomas earned by students 17 and above graduating while in educational programs for court-placed youth who meet the statutory graduation requirements. If no nexus district can be determined, the DCF administrative body will participate in the determination of credits and facilitate in the issuance of a diploma. There should be flexibility and collaboration in this process with the student's home district and special school districts.</p> <p>C. State-wide expectations should be established for ensuring credit transfers/partial credit transfers.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Classroom hour-to-credit conversion should be standardized.2. Credits should be awarded as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days of the transfer to the home district.3. At intake, it is recommended that a review be done of the student's transcript and attendance records to determine educational requirements up to graduation. Credits should be transferred from the home district within 5 school days of students' placement <p>D. A timeframe should be established for updating educational records pre-discharge.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. At a minimum, educational records should be up-to-date per marking period, as well as immediately upon discharge.
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BACKGROUND

Quality education is essential in order to successfully integrate youth into their communities and prompt them to be productive members of society. In general, youth in the justice system tend to be the least academically competent, yet there is a substantial amount of evidence supporting the notion that higher education decreases rates of recidivism and re-arrests. It is essential that all of the programs and departments work together to improve the lives of juveniles after they are released.

Currently, there are discrepancies between the way Hartford and Bridgeport Detention Centers handle educational services as well as the differences between districts and their methods of unit testing. There is also inconsistency school district to school district about what districts will accept partial credit and how much.

DATA

A uniform system of state-wide electronic record transfers, such as, Powerschool, will allow for easier maintenance and sharing of educational records for all students. Powerschool, used by a majority of school districts in Connecticut, has the ability to accomplish this goal with the appropriate license/version. Every
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student is given a state ID (SASID), which can be used as the universal record identifier to facilitate easy transfer of information across districts. Similar to other districts, this system will be overseen by a Directory Manager as designated by the school district. This work is already being done specific to special education records and this work should be aligned with the IEP Task Force.

POTENTIAL IMPACT

There are many benefits to increasing educational opportunities toward graduation for court-placed youth. Many incarcerated youths would like to receive their diploma from their home district compared to a state diploma because it brings deeper meaning to the youth and their community. To successfully accomplish this, it is necessary that the home school districts work seamlessly and collaboratively with the special school districts. By standardizing classroom hour-to-credit conversion and establishing timeframe expectation, transferring credits between districts will be simplified for all. The timeframe of credit transfer to the home district within 30 days reinforces the current legislation. Credits should be awarded as soon as possible, but no later than 30 days of the transfer to the home district.

However, there are some challenges recognized by this workgroup. One challenge is that there are different graduation requirements across school districts which makes consistency difficult. There are challenges to FERPA, HIPPA, and funding. Luckily, these challenges are not different from those that other students face within Connecticut which means that these challenges should not hinder to strides being made. To combat this challenge, there are new graduation requirements starting with the class of 2023 students which provides a window to standardize requirements across all districts.

Education Committee Membership

Co-chairs: Rep. Robyn Porter and Amy Vatner

<u>Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>
Rep. Robyn Porter	Legislature
Amy Vatner	Children's Community Programs (CCP)
Ann Smith	AFCAMP
Kenneth Gradowski	Bridgeport Public Schools
Marisa Mascolo Halm	Center for Children's Advocacy (CCA)
Dan Rezende	Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR)
James Obst	Connecticut Junior Republic (CJR)
Agata Raszczyk-Lawska	Connecticut Legal Services (CLS)
Joshua Perry (Resigned Oct. 2019)	CT Office of the Attorney General
Lauren Ruth	CT Voices for Children
Maria Pirro Simmons	Department of Correction (DOC)
Veron Beaulieu	Department of Correction (DOC)
Gabe Riccio	Department of Correction (DOC)
Mike Nunes	Department of Correction (DOC)
Craig Baker	DOMUS Kids
Mike McGuire	DOMUS Kids
Lilian Ijomah	DOMUS Kids
Joanne Jackson	Hartford Public Schools
Karen Lawson	Hartford Public Schools
Patricia Nunez	Judicial Branch - Court Support Services Division (CSSD)
Glen Worthy	New Haven Public Schools
Glen Peterson	State Department of Education (SDE)
Gavin Craig	Torrington Public Schools
Rashanda McCollum	Tow Youth Justice Institute (TYJI)
Lisa Ariola Simoles	Waterbury Public Schools

Acknowledgements

In the creation of this year's recommendations, special thanks go out to the members of the Education Committee, Incarceration Workgroup, and Executive Committee, who have spent significant time over the course of the year in getting to this conclusion. This work would also have not been made possible without the expertise and assistance from the Co-Chairs of all workgroups, including those who served in that capacity previously, including Josh Perry, Special Counsel for Civil Rights at the Office of the Attorney General. We would also like to thank Carl Jiang and Dr. Lauren Ruth from Connecticut Voices for Children for their extensive research. Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the dedication, partnership, and expertise brought forth by our consultants, Dr. Peter Leone, Jason Szanyi, and Jennifer Lutz, in an effort to improve our state's systems and communities for youth.