

Evaluation of the Implementation of Restorative Justice Programming in Connecticut's Judicial Branch and Department of Correction Secure Youth Facilities

Sept. 20, 2021

Strengths

- "Insider-outsider" partnership embedded restorative practices that are rarely seen in secure detention settings
- Buy-in, ownership, and expansion of restorative practices promoted by thoughtful implementation plan
- Positive feedback from youth and staff regarding impact: *"You can forget how much these kids have gone through in their lives. Recognizing that helps you see their behaviors in a different way."*
- Strengthen opportunities for youth engagement and partnerships (e.g., conducting Youth Councils in a circle format)

Strengths

- Development of data collection and reporting capacity
- Embedding of restorative practices in day-to-day operations with plans to expand and promote sustainability

Challenges

- The COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted the efforts underway to embed restorative practices in DOC and Judicial Branch facilities, and it significantly limited the ability to identify trends associated with the implementation of restorative practices in each facility.
- Participating facilities, and the project as a whole, could have benefitted from additional capacity for coaching and training from CCA and agency staff.

Challenges

- Consistency of implementation of restorative practices varied across facilities, emphasizing the importance of having strong leadership championing the work at multiple levels.
- Many agreed that setting firmer benchmarks and milestones could have expedited progress in implementation.
- Developing and implementing an agency-wide, sustainable training approach has been challenging.

Future Opportunities

- More rigorous assessment of impact of restorative practices on youth and facility-level indicators
- Ongoing coaching and CQI
- Expansion to more residential settings
- Integration at other youth justice system touchpoints
Resource: Impact Justice's Restorative Justice Diversion Toolkit (<https://rjdtoolkit.impactjustice.org/>)
- Establishment of benchmarks and performance indicators in written strategic plan with immediate, intermediate, and long-term goals