

Juvenile Justice Policy And Data Board: Community Based Interventions Subcommittee

“Status Offense changes, Juvenile Justice Reform
and Its Impact on Youth Serving Agencies”

April 28, 2022

Agenda

- ▶ Family With Service Needs (FWSN)- Status Offenses
 - ▶ What it used to look like
 - ▶ What it looks like now
- ▶ Why changes were made
- ▶ How it works now
- ▶ Overview of the Youth Service Bureau (YSB) System (and the Juvenile Review Board (JRB) process)
- ▶ Rollout
- ▶ Challenges/Lessons Learned
- ▶ Moving forward

Open discussion, questions and dialogue

Status Offenses-Overview

- ▶ What is a “status offense” in CT?
 - ▶ More often know as Family With Service Needs (FWSN)
 - ▶ Comprised of truancy, defiance of school rules (school based), beyond control, runaway, indecent and immoral conduct (community based)
 - ▶ Previously under Juvenile Court jurisdiction
 - ▶ Truancy and Defiance of School Rules were removed in 2017
 - ▶ (Definition of Truancy- 4 unexcused absences in a month or 10 in a year)
 - ▶ Runaway, Beyond Control and Indecent/Immoral Conduct were removed in 2020
 - ▶ All referrals now go to the Youth Service Bureau

Status Offenses, cont.

- ▶ Why were changes made?
 - ▶ FWSN cases were no longer able to be sent to detention starting in 2007
 - ▶ Juvenile Court is not the appropriate place for status offenders and data shows that contact with Juvenile Court leads to an increase in future court involvement
 - ▶ Juvenile Court programs and services were not set up for the truancy population
 - ▶ Status offense clients were co-mingled with delinquency clients in programs and services
- ▶ How were changes made?
 - ▶ JJPOC (Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee) recommendations through its Diversion Workgroup
 - ▶ Used data, research, experts in the field, and cross agency collaboration to determine best options
 - ▶ Passage of PA 16-147
 - ▶ Sec 7
 - ▶ Sec 8

Status Offense referrals-How it works now

- ▶ Referrals are sent to the YSB using a universal referral form (depending on the behavior- school vs community behavior)
- ▶ [Youth Service Bureau Referral for Truancy and Defiance of School Rules Form.pdf](#) (ctyouthservices.org)
- ▶ [COMPLAINT, NON-SCHOOL – FAMILY WITH SERVICE NEEDS](#) (ctyouthservices.org)
- ▶ Youth who get referred will have an intake and screening to help determine how the YSB can best serve the youth and family
- ▶ Case Management
- ▶ Service provision or referral to other community-based services

Role of the School regarding Truancy

- ▶ Based on the legislation that was passed (PA 16-147- [AN ACT CONCERNING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE POLICY AND OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE.](#)), schools that were designated as having disproportionately high rates of truancy were required to implement a truancy intervention model identified by CT SDE (State Dept. of Educ.) [Catalog of Truancy Intervention Models \(ct.gov\)](#)
- ▶ Additionally, schools were expected to focus on absenteeism using a tiered approach from universal approaches up to tier 1 services for chronically absent students
- ▶ In order for a school to make a referral for truancy, certain steps need to be taken and schools must do their due diligence before making a referral

How to make a referral

► School referral for Truancy or Defiance of School Rules

- Standardized form gets filled out by the school and submitted to YSB
- School must complete several actions internally before submitting referral to YSB
- **Parent must sign referral form before it can be sent to YSB**
- Only the school can make a referral for these reasons to the YSB

► Runaway, Beyond Control, Indecent/Immoral Conduct

- Standardized form gets filled out by a police officer or by a parent
- Form is available at multiple locations including police departments, juvenile court buildings, online at the CT Youth Services Association website (www.ctyouthservices.org) and at other locations depending on your community
- Form gets submitted to YSB

What happens next?

- ▶ What happens when a Status Offense referral comes to a YSB?
 - ▶ Each case goes through an intake process and gets a screening (OHIO Scales for Youth Screening Tool)
 - ▶ Work cooperatively with family to address needs
 - ▶ Could get referred to a JRB, but only if the case cannot be handled by the YSB alone - (delinquency vs status offense looks different)
 - ▶ Provide programs or services directly, or make referrals to appropriate programs or services
 - ▶ Provide Case Management and support to youth and family

What happens specifically for a truancy case?

- ▶ Trajectory of a case:
 - ▶ Absenteeism that meets criteria of Truancy definition
 - ▶ School must do their due diligence in scheduling a meeting with parent, determining if a PPT is necessary, follow Child Find guidelines, make referrals to community services, etc.

Child Find is part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, or federal special education law. The purpose of the law is to serve the education needs of kids with disabilities. Each state and its public schools must have policies and procedures for finding these kids. They must also develop practical methods to identify which kids qualify for special education and related services

- ▶ Once they have completed all steps AND RECEIVED PARENT SIGNATURE, the form can be referred to the YSB
- ▶ Once the referral has been made and accepted, an intake and screening is completed and a plan for services created (could be referrals to other services or in-house services)

About the Youth Service Bureaus (YSBs)

- ▶ 103 YSBs receive funding serving 142 communities (out of 169 towns in CT)
- ▶ Codified in [statute](#) through Public Act No. 75-487
- ▶ CGS 10-19m
- ▶ A youth service bureau shall be the “coordinating unit of community-based services”
- ▶ Previously supported by CT SDE, assumed by CT DCF in FY19

About the YSBs

- ▶ Birth to age 18 years
- ▶ Coordination and implementation of services:
 - ▶ Prevention and Intervention programs for:
 - ▶ “Delinquent, predelinquent, pregnant, parenting and troubled youth”
- Continuum of prevention and intervention services
- Referral sources: police, schools, community agencies, parents, self referral

YSBs, continued

- ▶ Statute states:

- ▶ “a YSB shall be responsible for development and maintenance, either directly, or contractually or by referral, of services that respond to”:
 - ▶ “Youth who are, or potentially could be, in contact with the justice system”
 - ▶ “Youth who manifest behavior which is potentially detrimental to themselves”

YSBs, continued

- ▶ All YSBs vary in program offerings
- ▶ Some YSBs offer mental health services, while others do not directly provide those services
- ▶ Each YSB is required to determine the needs of their own community and then plan programming and services accordingly
- ▶ If a YSB does not provide a program or service, their role is to know where that program or service can be accessed and help to refer youth and their families to that service
- ▶ Each YSB must have an Advisory Board per state statute that helps with oversight and policy

Services Offered by YSBs

% of YSBs reporting services offered directly or indirectly

▶ Positive Youth Dev	95%	▶ Outreach	70%
▶ Prevention	92%	▶ Counseling	69%
▶ Recreation/Youth Dev	85%	▶ Employment	45%
▶ Juvenile Review Board	83%	▶ Community Service	44%
▶ After School Program	81%	▶ Birth to 5 services	31%

▶ *data is from 2019

Rollout of new legislation-Truancy

- ▶ In order to rollout the new legislation for Truancy, the YSBs needed to be informed as did schools, parents and communities.
- ▶ A flyer was created in multiple languages for parents about Truancy referrals [Truancy/Defiance of School Rules Referrals \(ctyouthservices.org\)](http://ctyouthservices.org) and distributed widely
- ▶ Trainings were conducted for all YSB Directors
- ▶ Memos were sent from CT SDE Commissioner to all Superintendents with the new legislation and new process
- ▶ Schools with high rates of truancy had to begin to look at specific truancy intervention models to put into place the following year

Gaps, Barriers and Challenges regarding Truancy

- ▶ More challenging since COVID
- ▶ All schools are struggling with attendance and behavior
- ▶ Some schools are making referrals, others aren't making as many
 - ▶ Some schools have programs in place in school to address absenteeism
- ▶ Some school personnel believe having a “stick”/”teeth” is necessary
 - ▶ However, Juvenile Court had no “teeth” either as programs were voluntary with no additional sanctions allowed
- ▶ Challenge with parental signature
 - ▶ Working on an option for a “permission form” for beginning of school year to make a YSB referral when child becomes truant - some pushback/concern

Gaps, Barriers and Challenges for community based status offenses

- ▶ For Community Based Status Offenses (Runaway, Beyond Control, Indecent/Immoral Conduct), the rollout was during Covid in 2020
 - ▶ Have very little data around this legislation and how much it is being utilized
- ▶ Police Officers need more training (and more often)
- ▶ Parents need more education so they are aware of how to make a referral
- ▶ Referral forms need to be more widely available
- ▶ Runaway services are lacking, so that population can be very challenging depending where you live

Gaps, Barriers and Challenges (continued)

- ▶ Some programming is not available for those not involved in the JJ system
 - ▶ Most common is educational advocacy - either legal or educational support (and is most needed by those who are truant)
- ▶ No community based “best practices”
- ▶ No standard Outcome Measures
 - ▶ More than just returning to schools
 - ▶ Every case is different

Issue of Data

- ▶ Data collection is a challenge
 - ▶ YSBs currently use Excel spreadsheets for data collection
 - ▶ New data system coming online in 2022-23
- ▶ Prior to legislative changes, many cases were referred to court, but weren't always served (or youth did not comply/engage)
- ▶ In 2016 there were @2800 cases referred to court for Truancy and/or Defiance of School Rules
- ▶ In 2018-19 a little under 1000 youth were reported as Truancy and/or Defiance of School Rules referrals to YSBs.
 - ▶ But this does NOT mean all those other kids were not served
 - ▶ Schools are required to do more programming but are not required to make referrals to the YSB

About the Juvenile Review Boards (JRBs)

- ▶ A Juvenile Review Board (JRB) is a community-based diversion program for youth that may otherwise be referred to the Juvenile Court for minor violations of the law. Although there is no specific enabling statute establishing a JRB, the Youth Service Bureau (YSB) model has been in existence for 50 years in Connecticut.
- ▶ The purpose of diversion is **to redirect youth from involvement in the formal juvenile court system** in an effort to hold youth accountable for their behavior without resorting to legal sanctions, court oversight, or the threat of confinement to mitigate future risk and subsequent delinquent behavior
- ▶ The first JRB was created in Enfield, CT in 1968
- ▶ 91 JRBs serving over 135 communities
- ▶ Most JRBs fall under the umbrella of the YSB. 10% are run by another entity
- ▶ Restorative Process is the foundation of this work

Questions/comments?

Thank you

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