



## Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative

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Although overall rates of juvenile arrests are declining, in-school arrests continue to be a growing concern in Connecticut, particularly among youth of color and youth with unmet mental health needs. The Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (**SBDI**) is a school-level intervention designed to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system by helping schools meet the following **goals**, to:

- **Reduce** use of in-school arrests, out-of-school suspensions, and other exclusionary discipline practices
- **Build** knowledge and skills among key school professionals to recognize and manage behavioral health crises in the school, and access needed community resources
- **Link** youth who are at-risk of arrest to appropriate school and community-based services and supports

### KEY ACTIVITIES:

- **Community Coalition Building/Linking to Mental Health Resources.** SBDI helps schools understand and access existing mental health services and supports in their community to effectively meet the needs of students and their families. This includes developing or revising an existing Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between participating schools, their local police departments, and local Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) provider, as well as connecting to local systems of care and other resources to enhance access to appropriate services and supports.
- **Customized Professional Development in Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.** Teachers, support staff (guidance, social workers, school psychologists), administrators, and school resource officers receive training on recognizing and distinguishing between mental health symptoms and “criminal behavior,” managing classroom behavior problems, and promoting positive school climate, among other topics.
- **School Disciplinary Policy Consultation.** SBDI reviews school disciplinary policies and works with key stakeholders to revise these policies to align with diversion values. This includes development of a graduated response model for school discipline that emphasizes diversion from arrest, expulsion, and out of school suspension; access to mental health resources; and integration of restorative practices.

**OUTCOMES:** SBDI has been implemented in 21 schools across 10 Connecticut school districts (Fig. 1). Among the 18 schools that have participated in SBDI since 2010, those schools have **reduced court referrals by 45%** (Fig. 2) on average in their first year of participation and have **increased EMPS referrals by 94%** (Fig. 3). Many schools have sustained or even further improved these outcomes over time. Results of a 2012 external evaluation indicate:

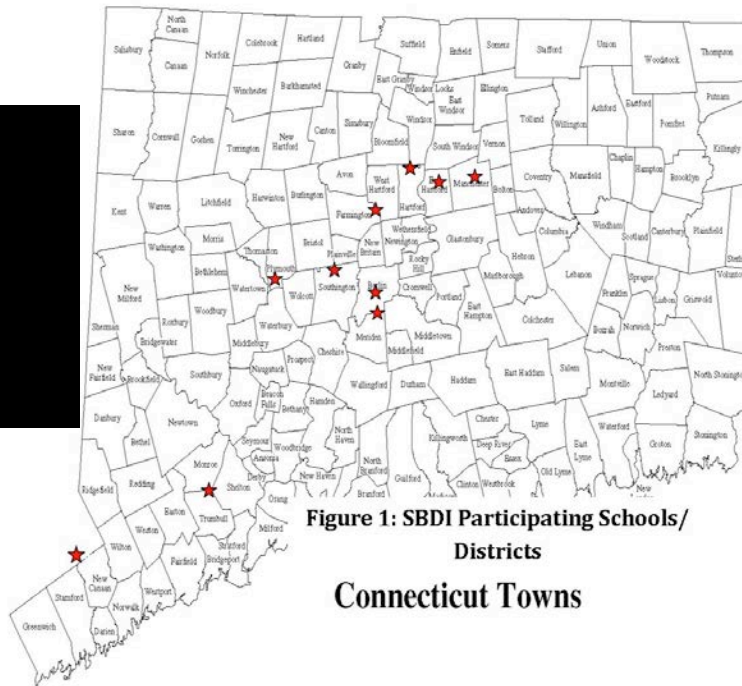
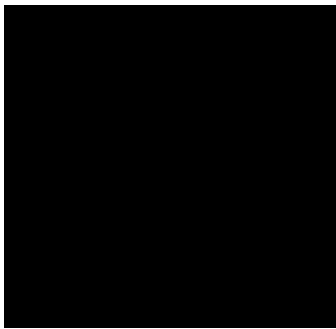
- Youth referred to EMPS rather than court at the time of an in-school behavioral incident have a lower likelihood of subsequent arrest regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity or prior court involvement.
- Compared to similar communities without SBDI, communities with SBDI have overall lower rates of juvenile arrests and significantly higher rates of referral to EMPS.

**PARTNERS:** SBDI was developed as a component of the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network and is currently funded and overseen four state agencies: the Judicial Branch’s Court Support Services Division (CSSD), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), the State Department of Education (SDE), and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). The Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) coordinates SBDI implementation.

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**Figure 1: SBDI Participating Schools/  
Districts  
Connecticut Towns**

- Bridgeport Public Schools**
- Luis Muñoz Marin School
- Consolidated School District of New Britain**
- New Britain High School
- CT Technical High School System**
- H.C. Wilcox Technical High School (Meriden)
- East Hartford Public Schools**
- East Hartford High School
- East Hartford Middle School
- Hartford Public Schools**
- Academy of Engineering and Green Technology at Hartford Public High School
- Culinary Arts Academy at Weaver High School
- Sarah J. Rawson School
- Manchester Public Schools**
- Illing Middle School
- Manchester High School
- Meriden Public Schools**
- Francis T. Maloney High School
- Orville H. Platt High School
- Venture Academy
- Southington Public Schools**
- John F. Kennedy Middle School
- Joseph A. DePaolo Middle School
- Stamford Public Schools**
- Cloonan Middle School
- Westhill High School
- Waterbury Public Schools**
- Crosby High School
- Enlightenment School
- Wallace Middle School
- West Side Middle School

## Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative

**Referrals to Behavioral Health Service**

**UP 94%**

Among the 18 schools that have participated in SBDI since 2010, those schools on average have reduced court referrals by 45% in their first year of participation, and have increased EMPS referrals by 94%.

**School-Based Court Referrals**

**DOWN 45%**

The Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative is helping transform school discipline and improve student outcomes. Instead of arresting and suspending children with behavior problems, SBDI schools are connecting them to community-based behavioral health services.

Learn more at:  
[www.chdi.org/sbdi](http://www.chdi.org/sbdi)  
 and [www.ctsbdi.org](http://www.ctsbdi.org)