

The CT Juvenile Justice Alliance

January NOTES AND NEWS 2002

The CT Juvenile Justice Alliance was launched in November 2001 as a collaborative effort of four Connecticut organizations, RYASAP, the Center for Children's Advocacy, the Tow Foundation, and CT Voices for Children.

Membership in the Alliance is open to individuals and organizations working with or on behalf of Connecticut young people involved in or at risk of involvement with the Connecticut juvenile justice system.

Goals of the Alliance in its first year include:

- Raising awareness of the needs of adjudicated and pre-adjudicated youth
- Developing a variety of public education materials and activities to inform the general public and target

audiences about these issues, and

- Making public policy recommendations on best practices, training, diversion

In today's America, there is simply no justification for denying any child a legitimate hope for the future and a reasonable expectation of a successful entrance to adulthood. In fact, with sufficient public will, political resolve, and imagination we have a real chance to extend to all our children a fair share of the promise of American life.

Douglas Nelson, President
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

and treatment alternatives, resource development and allocations.

The Alliance began its work by hosting an informational briefing in November that included ten CT organizations

working in juvenile justice.

On January 15, 2002, the Alliance hosted its first public forum, "Meeting the Needs of Youth in the Juvenile Justice System." Issues of concern include:

- The need for substantial improvement in access to mental health diagnostic and treatment services for youth involved with the juvenile justice system

- The wisdom of constructing two new 88-bed juvenile detention facilities rather than expanding treatment-based community services

- Inadequate services for girls, and

- The over-representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system.

"THE 8% SOLUTION: PREVENTING SERIOUS, REPEAT JUVENILE CRIME"

In November 2001, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released "The 8% Solution," a study of juvenile offenders in which a small proportion (8%) of the

youth accounted for 55% of repeat crimes.

These youth, reliably identifiable at first arrest, were involved in crime at an early age and exhibited a "multi-

problem" profile including significant family problems, school truancy and failure, drug and alcohol abuse, and behaviors such as gang involvement, running away and stealing.

The report is online at —
[//www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200139.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200139.pdf)

SOME CURRENT ACTIVITIES AIMED AT IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR YOUTH IN CONNECTICUT'S JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Court Support Services Division within the CT Judicial Department is researching best practices to reduce juvenile recidivism, developing a juvenile sex offender program, and implementing a new risk assessment protocol to determine needed treatment levels.

Contact Anne McIntyre Lahner, Director of Research, at — anne.mcintyre.lahner@jud.state.ct.us

The CT Center for Effective Practice is conducting a study of effective interventions for youth with mental health problems who are either in the juvenile justice system or at risk of entering it. The Center is also preparing to assume responsibility for training those who will be involved in this program as well as providing

consultation for and evaluating the intervention program.

Contact Dr. Janet Williams, Director, at — JWilli0206@aol.com

The Tow Foundation has convened a Mental Health Intervention Task Force to develop a wrap around, community-based mental health pilot program in the Stamford/Norwalk juvenile court for youth in the juvenile justice system with mental health needs.

Contact Diane Sierpina, Program Officer, at — sierpina@czn.com

The CT Community Mental Health Strategy Board has just allocated two-year funding in excess of one million dollars to support intermediate level court-ordered community mental health evaluations for youth under age 16 who present with

severe mental health problems but do not appear to be at risk of harming themselves or others. Access to these services will begin to reduce assessment gridlock for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Contact Shelley Geballe, CT Voices Co-Director, at — yalie4567@aol.com

The Center for Children's Advocacy's TeamChild initiative has recently been recognized in *ABA Child Law Practice* for improving outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system. In partnership with the Hartford Juvenile Public Defender's Office, TeamChild handles the youth's civil legal issues including special education and access to mental health treatment services.

For more information, contact Martha Stone, Executive Director, at — mstone@law.uconn.edu

FOR MORE INFORMATION OR TO JOIN THE CT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE...

To obtain more information about the CT Juvenile Justice Alliance, contact:

➤ Robert Francis, Executive Director of RYASAP at 203-579-2727, or by email — rfrancis_99@yahoo.com

➤ Dr. Janice Gruendel, Co-Director of CT Voices for Children at 203-498-4240 or by email — JMRab@aol.com

The CT Juvenile Justice Alliance is supported through a \$50,000 grant from the Tow Foundation.

Individuals and organizations interested in youth development or youth risk issues may wish to join the Youth-Listserv and/or the Children's Mental Health Listserv, hosted by CT Voices for Children.

To subscribe, send an email to — voices@ctkidslink.org

"It's not like we're not aware of the solutions, but they cost money. There's no voting constituency, no powerful lobby. It's simply not a priority. It's frustrating."

Senator Donald Williams
Select Committee on Children
Hartford Courant, Dec. 31, 2001