Enhancing Supports to Reduce School-Based Arrests

Jeana R. Bracey, PhD, Yecenia Casiano, MS, and Tianna L. Hill, MSW

October 27, 2015

Bethlehem, PA
Overview

• Background

• Progress in Connecticut

• School-Based Arrest in the News

• School-Based Diversion Initiative

• Restorative Practices in SBDI Schools

• Next Steps
Background

Fewer juvenile court referrals, proportion from schools continues to be high

- 18.6% of all CT juvenile court referrals in 11-12; 14% in 12-13; 10% in 13-14, 20% in 14-15

High rates of unmet mental health needs and academic risk among youth who are arrested or expelled

- 20% of children meet criteria for MH diagnosis (160,000 youth in CT)
- Rates are 65-70% among youth in juvenile detention
- 80-90% in detention w/ significant trauma exposure
- Students arrested are 2x as likely not to graduate; increases to 4x if processed through court
Background and Statistics

- School arrest, expulsion, and suspension disproportionately affects students of color and students with disabilities.
- Influence of “zero tolerance policies,” “exclusionary discipline,” “school pushout,” “school to prison pipeline,” and role of law enforcement in schools.
  - Presence of law enforcement in schools rose 37% from 1997-2007.
  - $2.3 million allocated to fund SROs/security officers in 2013.
  - Ongoing challenge of determining what constitutes criminal activities vs. matters of routine discipline.
Newtown Response

• Renewed emphasis on school based mental health and school safety
  – Creation of Bipartisan Task Force on Gun Violence Prevention and Children’s Safety
    – Gun Violence Prevention Working Group
    – School Security Working Group
    – Mental Health Service Working Group
  – Creation of Sandy Hook Commission
  – PA 13-178 An Act Concerning the Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health of Youths signed into law in June 2013

There are expanded opportunities in Connecticut for bridging the mental health, health, juvenile justice, and education systems

• Reducing school-based arrests is one way to enter into this systems-level work
Progress in Connecticut

There have been a number of recent improvements in the CT system, supported by a multi-pronged approach

CT's approaches were highlighted in a New York School Justice Summit publication (www.school-justicesummit.org) and Family Court Review

Changes in CSSD Policies

• Changes to Juvenile Court Intake process (probation supervisors now can “send back” inappropriate court referrals)
• “Raise the Age” includes 16 and 17 year olds in the juvenile system
• New data collection practices to track school-based arrests

Systems coordination, public awareness, school policy consultation

• CT Juvenile Justice Alliance; OPM Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee; CT Voices for Children school disciplinary data
• Host forums; school-police MOA; analyze and report school discipline data
School-Based Arrests in the News

Muslim teen Ahmed Mohamed creates clock, shows teachers, gets arrested
Posted: September 16, 2015, By Ashley Fantz, Steve Almasy and AnneClaire Stapleton, CNN

Police handcuff Georgia kindergartner for tantrum
Posted: Apr 17, 2012, By Jeff Martin and Jeri Clausing, Associated Press

Kiera Wilmot, 16, Arrested And Expelled For Explosive 'Science Experiment'
Posted: May 1, 2013 By Rebecca Klein, The Huffington Post

Two Easton lacrosse players suspended under zero-tolerance policies
Posted: May 10, 2011, By Liz Bowie, The Baltimore Sun
Development of SBDI

• 2008: MacArthur Foundation Models for Change Mental Health Juvenile Justice Action Network facilitated by NCMHJJ

• 2009: Pilot SBDI in 3 schools

• 2010: State agencies sustained by sharing cost, blended funding with collaborative oversight

• 2013: Expanded partnership as evidence increased, tied into larger education and criminal justice reforms

• 2015: Statewide expansion through Governor’s $1M biennium
Participating Schools

SBDI Participating Schools/Districts
2009—2015

Bridgeport Public Schools
Luis Munoz 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
Groville 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
Goals of the School-Based Diversion Initiative

**Reduce** the number of discretionary arrests in school, reduce expulsions and out-of-school suspensions

**Build** knowledge and skills among teachers, school staff, and school resource officers to recognize and manage behavioral health crisis 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
SBDI Core Components

Professional Development
• Training and Workgroups

Community Coalition Building
• Emergency Mobile Crisis Services
• Systems of Care

Discipline Policy Consultation
• Graduated Response Model
• Restorative Practices

Implementation Guided by SBDI Toolkit
Restorative Practices in SBDI Schools

• **SBDI Model and Restorative Practices**
  - Creating a school climate that incorporates restorative practices as an alternative to exclusionary discipline

• **Professional Development**
  - Circles
  - Restorative Conferencing

• **2015 School, Police, and Community Symposium**
  - How Restorative Practices can be used in schools and engage families
Rawson Elementary Referral Data

![Graph showing referral data for EMPS and Court across three years: 2011-12 Pre, 2012-13 SBDI, 2013-14 Post. The EMPS data shows a significant increase from 16 in 2011-12 Pre to 72 in 2012-13 SBDI, then a decline to 36 in 2013-14 Post. The Court data shows a steady decrease from 13 in 2011-12 Pre to 1 in 2012-13 SBDI, and finally to 2 in 2013-14 Post.]
Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative

Referrals to Behavioral Health Service

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 and www.ctsbdi.org
Next Steps

• National Technical Assistance

• Governor’s Second Chance Society

• Statewide Expansion

• Restorative Practices Network
Next Steps

• Learning Community for Sustainability

• Youth and Family Engagement

• Community Engagement

• Law Enforcement Engagement
Available for **free download**
http://www.chdi.org/SchoolToolkit

We recognized a need to reach **more schools, more quickly**

Toolkit was designed for a school to **self-implement some of the core principles and activities** of SBDI
SBDI Toolkit’s Contents

• **Self-assessment guide** and best practice information
  Immediate action steps

• **Support** for Data informed Decision-Making and Referral and Service Coordination

• **Appendices:** Sample MOA; Graduated Response Framework; Core Training Modules; Workgroup Activities; SBDI Application Form; List of Resources
SBDI Website [www.ctsbdii.org](http://www.ctsbdii.org)
Contact Us

Jeana R. Bracey, Ph.D.  
bracey@uchc.edu

Yecenia Casiano, MS  
casiano@uchc.edu

Tianna L. Hill, MSW  
thill@uchc.edu

Jeff Vanderploeg, Ph.D.  
jvanderploeg@uchc.edu