

## Effort to Reduce School-Based Arrests Benefits Nearly 15,000 Additional Students This Year in Connecticut

### *Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) Expands to New Schools*

Farmington, CT – Eighteen Connecticut schools in six districts are participating in the Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) during the 2016-17 school year, bringing the [total number](#) of schools served by SBDI to 37. SBDI is a school level intervention designed to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system by connecting students to community-based mental health services as an alternative to arrest. Among schools participating since 2010, the average reduction in court referrals during their first year was 45% and increase in EMPS (Mobile Crisis Intervention Services) referrals was 94%.

“Helping students access behavioral health services can address the underlying causes of misbehavior that may result in arrest and juvenile justice involvement,” said Jeff Vanderploeg, Ph.D., Vice President for Mental Health Initiatives at the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI).

SBDI was expanded for the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years as part of Governor Malloy’s Second Chance Initiative. Funding and oversight is provided through a partnership involving four Connecticut state agencies: the State Department of Education (SDE), the Judicial Branch’s Court Support Services Division (CSSD), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). SBDI is coordinated by CHDI.

**Participating Schools for 2016-17:** This year, eighteen participating schools from six districts were selected based on demonstrating a strong interest in reducing school arrests and addressing the behavioral health needs of their students. These schools serve a total of 14,798 students.

#### **Bridgeport Public Schools**

- Curiale School
- Harding High School
- Luis Muñoz Marin School

#### **CT Technical High School System**

- A.I. Prince Technical High School
- Eli Whitney Technical High School
- Platt Technical High School

#### **New Haven Public Schools**

- Augusta Lewis Troup School
- Barnard Environmental Studies Magnet School
- New Horizons School
- Wilbur Cross High School

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**Waterbury Public Schools**

- Kennedy High School
- North End Middle School
- Wallace Middle School
- Wilby High School

**West Haven Public Schools**

- Bailey Middle School
- Carrigan Middle School
- West Haven High School

**Windham Public Schools**

- Windham High School

“Schools that successfully address the unmet behavioral health concerns of their students will not only see a decrease in student arrests, but will also see an improvement in academic achievement, school climate and school safety,” said Jeana Bracey, Ph.D., Director of School and Community Initiatives for CHDI.

**A new animated video explaining SBDI is available at <http://www.ctsbdi.org>**, along with additional information and resources. Schools can download a [free toolkit](#) designed to help them implement core elements of the SBDI program at little to no cost. Although overall rates of in-school arrests are declining, the issue continues to be a concern in Connecticut and nationwide, particularly among youth of color and youth with unmet mental health needs. Approximately 65-70% of youth in juvenile detention have a diagnosable behavioral health condition.

The SBDI model was co-developed in 2008 by CSSD, DCF and CHDI with funding from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through the Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network. This year the model was adapted to have leaders from participating districts serve as the local SBDI implementation coordinators for the selected schools. The SBDI model was also adapted to help Wisconsin, West Virginia, and Nevada, with funding and support from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, the MacArthur Foundation, and the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice at Policy Research Associates (PRA). Beginning in 2017, with funding from the National Institutes of Justice, CHDI will work with PRA to disseminate a school, justice and behavioral health collaborative approach to improving school safety in Michigan and Louisiana.

Visit [www.chdi.org/sbdi](http://www.chdi.org/sbdi) or [www.ctsbdi.org](http://www.ctsbdi.org) to learn more. Download a copy of [The SBDI Toolkit: A Community Resource for Reducing School-Based Arrests](#) and CHDI's [IMPACT: Improving Outcomes for Children in Schools: Expanded School Mental Health](#). For additional questions, please contact Jeana Bracey at [bracey@uchc.edu](mailto:bracey@uchc.edu) or 860-679-1524; or Julie Tacinelli at [tacinelli@uchc.edu](mailto:tacinelli@uchc.edu) or 860-679-1534.

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