

For Immediate Release  
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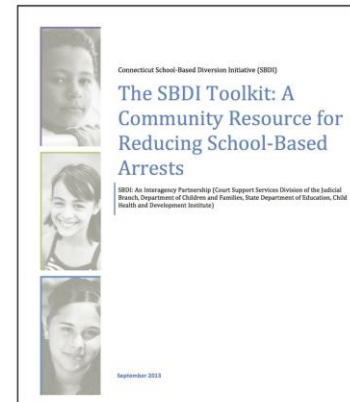
## Free Toolkit for Connecticut Schools Now Available Online

*Toolkit Helps Reduce Arrests & Connect At-Risk Students to Mental Health Services*

Farmington, CT – A toolkit to decrease school arrests by connecting at-risk students to community-based mental health services is now available at [www.chdi.org](http://www.chdi.org). *The SBDI Toolkit: A Community Resource for Reducing School-Based Arrests* was prepared by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut (CHDI) for the Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI): an interagency partnership supported by the Court Support Services Division of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), and the Connecticut State Department of Education. Since 2009, seventeen Connecticut schools have implemented the SBDI program with impressive results.

"This initiative represents one of a number of collaborative efforts between the Department of Children and Families, its sister agencies, and the Judicial Branch to intervene early on when children begin to exhibit difficulties," DCF Commissioner Joette Katz said. "By getting children connected to effective services before the issues grow more complex, we can keep them on track with their education and keep them away from the juvenile justice system completely."

***The SBDI Toolkit was designed as a way to quickly reach more schools with core elements of the SBDI program.*** SBDI offers schools an alternative to calling law enforcement when children are exhibiting behavioral problems. Instead children are connected to school and community-based mental health services through Connecticut's local Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services (EMPS) teams. ***The principles outlined in the toolkit can be applied by the schools at little to no cost.***



Elements of the toolkit include:

- Description of the core features of the SBDI model
- Checklist of immediate action steps
- Outlines of SBDI professional development modules
- Sample memoranda of agreement (MOA) that your school can use to link with local providers and police departments
- Additional resources designed to assist you in developing staff skills, strengthening community partnerships, and reducing arrests.

Multiple data sources indicate that schools are a growing source of arrests, often for minor issues that may be due to an unidentified or untreated emotional or behavioral problem. Youth with disabilities and those from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds are disproportionately represented. "Schools addressing mental health concerns often see a decrease in student arrests, suspensions, expulsions and bullying, as well as an improvement in academic achievement, school climate and school safety," said Dr. Jeana Bracey, CHDI Senior Associate.

Based on the lessons learned from implementing SBDI, CHDI also recently published the IMPACT report, “*Improving Outcomes for Children in Schools: Expanded School Mental Health.*” The report examines mental health services available to school settings in Connecticut and summarizes the benefits and challenges of expanding these services to meet the current need. It also offers a framework to guide policy development and systems reforms as the State considers the best ways to address mental health and safety in our schools.

Visit [www.chdi.org](http://www.chdi.org) to 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.

Additional Background:

*The School-Based Diversion Initiative was developed in Connecticut as a pilot program funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Action Network and is currently jointly funded by three state agencies – the Court Support Services Division of the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families and the Connecticut State Department of Education. The Connecticut Center for Effective Practice at CHDI has coordinated the implementation of the initiative. Participating communities include: Bridgeport, Southington, East Hartford, Meriden, Manchester, Stamford, Waterbury, Hartford, and New Britain. SBDI was recognized nationally as part of the MacArthur Foundation’s 2011 Champions for Change Awards.*

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