Collective Impact Case Study:

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance

The Collective Impact Forum, an initiative of FSG and the Aspen Institute Forum for Community Solutions, is a resource for people and organizations using the collective impact approach to address large-scale social and environmental problems. We aim to increase the effectiveness and adoption of collective impact by providing practitioners with access to the tools, training opportunities, and peer networks they need to be successful in their work. The Collective Impact Forum includes communities of practice, in-person convenings, and an online community and resource center launched in early 2014.

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This data from this study draws primarily on the research study "[When Collective Impact Has an Impact,](#)" conducted through collaborative effort between Spark Policy Institute of Denver, CO and ORS Impact of Seattle, WA.

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Summary

The [Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance](#) (CTJJA) seeks to stop the criminalization of Connecticut's children and youth by ensuring fewer children enter the system and by treating all children fairly and effectively. The CTJJA accomplishes this mission by serving as a catalyst for systems reform through legislative education and advocacy, strategic communications, community organizing, and national, state, and local partnerships.[1]

> ### Key Facts
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> **Initiative/backbone name:** Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance
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> **Year initiative was formed:** 2001
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> **Mission:** The mission of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance is to stop the criminalization of Connecticut's children and youth.
>
> **Geographical scope:** State of Connecticut

Problem

In 2001, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention released "The 8% Solution," which noted that a small proportion of the state's youth (8%) accounted for 55% of repeat crimes. The Alliance came together around the need for substantial improvement in access to mental health diagnostic and treatment services for youth involved with the juvenile justice (JJ) systems, inadequate services for girls, and over-representation of minority youth in the system. [2]

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[1] Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance About. Accessed Dec. 2018. https://ctjja.org/about/

[2] The CT Juvenile Justice Alliance. "January Notes and News 2002". Accessed Dec. 2018. http://www.ctvoices.org/sites/default/files/juv02AllnceBrf01.pdf

Getting Started

The Alliance was launched in November 2001 as a collaborative of several Connecticut organizations, including the Regional Youth Adult Social Action Partnership (RYASAP), the Center for Children's Advocacy, and Connecticut Voices for Children.[3] The Alliance has since become known for its persistent pursuit of meaningful reforms at state and local levels, its facilitation of dialogue across a diverse set of JJ stake-holders, and its reputation for authenticity and credibility as a conduit of input from all corners of the JJ universe.[4] The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, a program of RYASAP, serves as the initiative's backbone organization.

Structure

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance is a program of RYASAP and serves as the initiative's backbone organization. The CTJJA does not have its own defined workgroups, but works with existing committees such as the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) staffed by the University of New Haven, and the Local Interagency Services Teams (LISTs) which is comprised of state agencies and local community organizations.[5] CTJJA's Steering Committee, made up of all non-governmental partners, serves to guide policy decisions, sets the scope of the initiative's work, and approves campaigns. Other state partners and organizations represented in CTJJA at the time of this study include the Connecticut Association for Human Services; Connecticut Association of Foster and Adoptive Parents; Connecticut Commission on Women, Children, and Seniors; Connecticut for Community Youth Development; Connecticut General Assembly; Connecticut Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee; Connecticut State Department of Education; Connecticut's Justice Information System; Connecticut Voices for Children; Office of the Child Advocate; and The Tow Foundation.
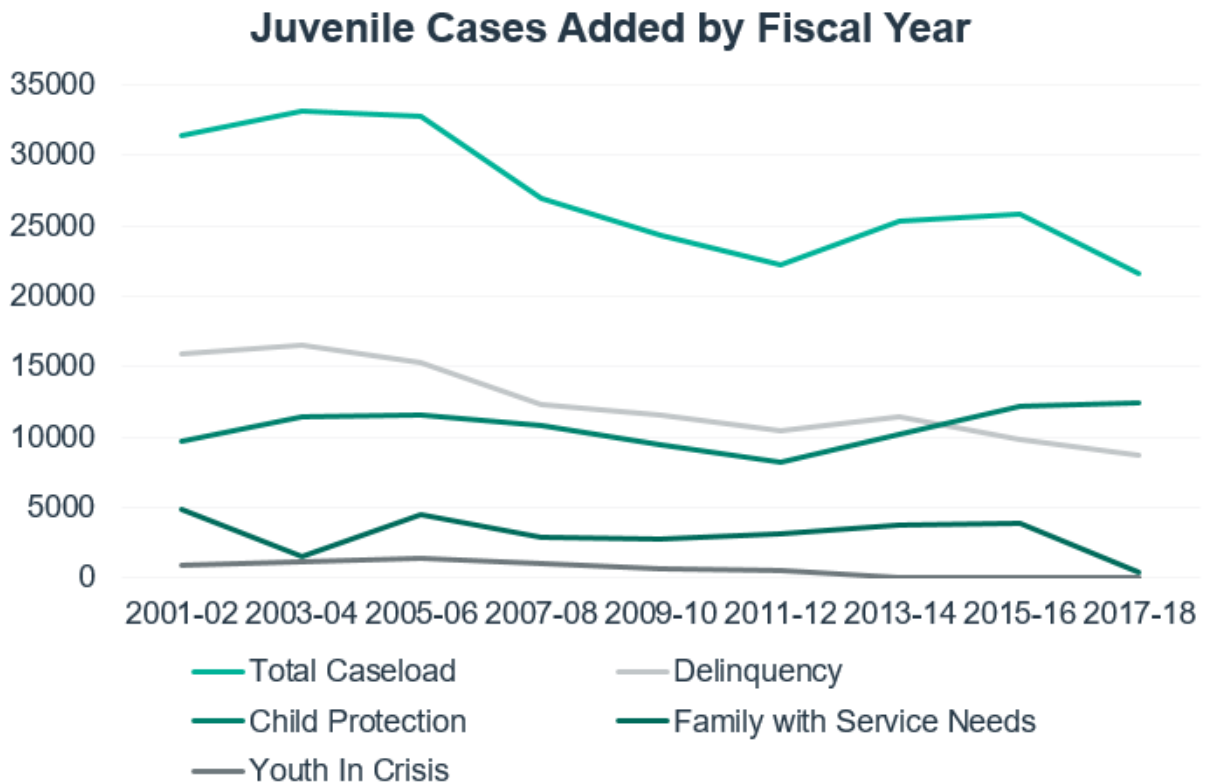
Results

CTJJA fostered a range of early and systems changes that have resulted in the **population level change** of fewer young people entering the juvenile justice system (see figure below). The most important **early changes** cited by the initiative include more legislative champions and increased political will; an expanded universe of allies; deepened relationships and increased trust between governmental and non-governmental partners; and increased awareness and engagement from the general public. The most important **systems changes** include creation and implementation of the Joint Juvenile Justice Strategic

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[3] Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance About. Accessed Dec. 2018. https://ctjja.org/about/

[4] RYASAP: Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. Accessed Dec. 2018. http://www.ryasap.org/what-we-do/connecticut-juvenile-justice-alliance/

Plan (JJSP); adoption and implementation of Raise the Age (RTA) legislation; changed juvenile court practices; changed criteria for which youth can be held in detention; and increased investment in community-based services (see Appendix 1 for more details).

Juvenile Cases Added by Fiscal Year

Legend:
- Total Caseload
- Delinquency
- Child Protection
- Family with Service Needs
- Youth In Crisis

Five Conditions of Collective Impact

Common Agenda

CTJJA established a shared vision for change among partners. The initiative's vision is to stop the criminalization of children. It achieves this by reducing the number of youth who enter the system and ensures a safe, fair, and effective system for those who do. The initiative has articulated a range of strategies including diverting young people from system involvement, expanding community-based services, and reducing the overrepresentation of youth of color. The initiative conducts a formal strategic planning process every five years. However, because of its heavy policy focus, the initiative makes intentional efforts to capitalize on unforeseen opportunities that emerge from the current policy environment—for example, leveraging short-term political opportunities or amplifying community concerns to influence the policy agenda.

Shared Measurement

CTJJA uses publicly reported data to track progress. The initiative's shared measurement system captures the number of youth who come into contact with the justice system, such as the number of youth arrested and the number of youth held in residential facilities. The initiative focuses on building the capacity of governmental organizations to track and regularly report on progress indicators. CTJJA is also exploring additional indicators to help guide decision-making—for example, metrics that reflect the outcomes of youth in the system and the effectiveness of different strategies.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities

CTJJA has adaptive structures for working together. CTJJA strives to create sustainable processes and structures that are not reliant on the initiative. Partners actively work together to implement and align activities but do not organize into specific working groups. Rather, existing committees and workgroups such as the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) and the Local Interagency Services Teams (LISTs) coordinate the work of the initiative. This has included adopting and implementing legislation for Raise the Age, limiting schools' use of out of school suspension, and requiring MOUs between police departments and school boards. Committees and workgroups have also pursued changes to law enforcement categories to increase referrals to Juvenile Review Boards; juvenile court practices; criteria for which youth can be held in detention; and practices among Case Review Teams to explore options to help youth remain in communities. The initiative has also worked to increase services for female youth, investment by the Department of Children and Families, and programming and staff to identify and help youth with mental health issues. The initiative takes a more fluid approach toward identifying strategies to allow CTJJA to adapt to changing contexts and emergent opportunities.

Continuous Communication

CTJJA has strong internal and external communication mechanisms. The initiative has a variety of mechanisms to foster internal communication, including regular steering committee meetings to coordinate around initiative priorities, an official liaison to the local infrastructure (LISTs), and an email group. Because the partners are so interconnected, much of the communication also occurs informally. Internal communication helps partners get the information they need, coordinate with other partners/groups, and identify priorities. CTJJA also has a variety of mechanisms for external communication, including traditional media, social media, and community forums and dialogues. External communication creates awareness about issues and helps to garner public engagement and support.

Backbone Support

CTJJA's backbone is a strength of its CI approach. The backbone serves as the "hub" for CTJJA, as it facilitates communication and connections among partners; identifies emerging issues, priorities, and roles; runs the steering committee; and advances implementation of strategies. Partners within and outside of the initiative perceive the backbone as credible and describe the backbone as having a critical role. The CTJJA has focused its next phase of growth on amplifying youth voices and expertise using a two-pronged approach: training and supporting youth to take seats at existing tables, and working side by side with them to build new tables rooted in equity. As a result, the CTJJA has added to its strategic activities the work to guide and support directly-impacted youth with the launch of Justice Advisors, an organizing-driven partnership between CTJJA and a group of young leaders with first or second-hand

justice system experience. By fostering simultaneous dialogue with both local communities and state lawmakers, the Justice Advisors act as ambassadors between the various entities determining policy, implementing policy, and — crucially — being impacted by policy.

Adoption of Principles of Collective Impact

Cross-Sector Collaboration

CTJJA developed strong cross-sector relationships that foster change. The initiative built relationships with a wide range of stakeholders—including nonprofit, advocacy, governmental, and community-based organizations—to create shared ownership and influence policy. CTJJA continues to make a genuine effort to form new relationships and encourage authentic voices to drive change, particularly those of youth and families.

Equity

CTJJA has a strong focus on equity. CTJJA has an intentional equity focus, with the aim of addressing the persistent over-representation of racial/ethnic youth involved in the justice system (despite overall rates of decline of the number of young people involved in the justice system) and the unique needs of certain populations, such as female and LGBT youth. The initiative continues to pursue the need for a shared vision, approach, and language around equity as well as a more consistent framing that equity transcends CTJJA's work.

> ### *The Eight Principles of Collective Impact*
> - Design and implement the initiative with priority on equity
> - Include community members in the collaborative
> - Recruit and co-create with cross-sector partners
> - Use data to continuously learn, adapt, and improve
> - Cultivate leaders with unique system leadership skills
> - Focus on program and system strategies
> - Build a culture that fosters relationships, trust, and respect across participants
> - Customize for local context

CTJJA has taken some specific steps to advance equity actions. For example, available data is disaggregated, and there is regular reporting on the issue of disproportionate minority contact with the justice system. The initiative aims to hear from young people and prioritizes strategies related to equity, including access to mental health services and school-based arrests. CTJJA is working to ensure that initiative leaders are representative of the community, including by more fully engaging those with lived experience. The steering committee includes LGBT people and people of color as well as representatives from parent advocacy groups. The initiative values the importance of the youth voice and has engaged youth in a few ways—for example, hearing directly from girls in the system. CTJJA is also exploring solutions to the challenges around direct youth engagement, including limited capacity, the technical nature of the issue, the ability/willingness of people to participate, and the need for better processes to facilitate engagement (e.g., meeting at convenient times).

Looking Ahead: Areas of Future Focus

Leadership

CTJJA is looking to build upon its success in cultivating leaders by anchoring actions in a common framework and building community leaders. CTJJA created leaders at many levels, including the legislature, the JJPOC, the Steering Committee, and the LISTs. As a result, the initiative elevated justice issues, created space for public discourse, and fostered change. However, the initiative understands the benefit of cultivating a larger bench of leaders with a more diffuse network. By including more individuals from the community and continuing to anchor on a common framework, the initiative hopes to further cultivate its leadership.

Data Use

CTJJA uses data to inform strategy and policy development but faces challenges with data access and use. CTJJA has been able to use data effectively, including using data to identify strategic priorities and inform policy development. Data is regularly disseminated through both reports/briefs as well as storytelling. CTJJA seeks to further inform strategy and development by addressing challenges both in obtaining data and using the data they have effectively. The initiative continues to pursue additional key measures that may help guide decisions and provide a fuller picture of the initiative as well as a framework to anchor data collection, analysis, and use.

Appendix 1: Snapshot of Change

Collective Impact Conditions	Strategies	Early Changes	Systems Changes	Population Changes
Common Agenda - Overarching mission - Strategies to coordinate efforts *Mutually Reinforcing Activities* - Formal strategic planning process - Regularly identifying near-term opportunities - JJPOC workgroups - Local Interagency Service Teams (LISTs) *Continuous Communication* - Regular steering committee meetings - Informal communication channels - Using LISTs to coordinate with and mobilize internal and external stakeholders - Traditional and social media outlets - Community forums and dialogues *Shared Measurement System* - Look at publicly reported data annually to track progress - Data are disaggregated by demographic characteristics *Backbone Infrastructure* - The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, a program of the RYASAP, serves as the backbone; two FTEs - The backbone serves as the "hub" and facilitates communication and connections among partners, identifies emerging issues, runs the steering	a. Community organizing and grassroots mobilization b. Creating strategic relationships with leadership counsels/ committees and legislators c. Advancing collaboration among youth-serving partners d. Raising awareness about the problems/ issues and solutions (e.g., community dialogues and the press) e. Using data and research to inform decision-making f. Emboldening and building the capacity of others to	a. More legislative champions and increased political will to address justice system issues b. Expanded universe of allies c. Deepened relationships and increased trust, including between governmental and non-governmental partners d. Increased awareness and engagement from the general public	**Structural/Foundational** a. Creation and implementation of Joint Juvenile Justice Strategic Plan, including the 13 LISTs b. Adoption and implementation of Raise the Age legislation and legislatively mandated implementation/oversights bodies c. Adoption and implementation of the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee (JJPOC) **Diversion and Community-based Programming** d. Adopted and implemented Youth and Family Resource Centers (to divert status offenders) e. Changed law enforcement categories to increase referrals to Juvenile Review Boards f. Adopted and implemented legislation limiting schools' use of out of school suspensions g. Adopted and implemented legislation requiring MOUs between a police department and school board of education h. Changed juvenile court practices (i.e., rejecting referrals involving	Decreased number of young people who enter the juvenile justice system

committee, identifies priorities and roles, and advances implementation. - The Steering Committee serves to guide policy decisions, set the scope of the initiative's work, and approve campaigns	advance the work (e.g., training)	youth arrested for minor behavior and referring to juvenile review boards) i. Changed criteria for which youth can be held in detention: (a) requiring a court order to bring a young person to detention (b) youth can only be detained if they are a risk to public safety, flight risk, or being held for another jurisdiction j. Changed Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (CSSD) practices among Case Review Teams to explore options to help youth remain in communities k. Expanded investment in programming and staff to identify and help youth with mental health issues l. Increased investment by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and CSSD in community-based services (e.g., MFT) m. Increased services for female youth

*This snapshot of change represents the work of the coalition through 2018

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The Collective Impact Forum exists to meet the demands of those who are practicing
collective impact in the field. While the rewards of collective impact can be great, the work
is often demanding. Those who practice it must keep themselves and their teams motivated and moving forward.

The Collective Impact Forum is the place they can find the tools and training that can help them to be successful. It's an expanding network of like-minded individuals coming together from across sectors to share useful experience and knowledge and thereby accelerating the effectiveness, and further adoption, of the collective impact approach as a whole.

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