



Data Snapshot of Youth Incarceration in Connecticut

2020 Update

Colette Marcellin and Samantha Harvell

May 2020

Youth incarceration in Connecticut has changed significantly in the past several years. In 2018, the then governor Dannel Malloy closed the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS),¹ the state's only remaining youth prison. Since the closure, boys committed to state facilities have been placed in special postconviction units in one of Connecticut's two juvenile detention centers, whereas girls have been placed in a contracted facility operated by a private nonprofit organization (Tow 2019b). As of May 2020, no publicly available data existed on youth incarcerated postadjudication—that is, youth who would previously have been incarcerated at CJTS. This snapshot summarizes trends in two related populations: youth held in juvenile detention centers preadjudication and youth transferred to adult court and supervised by the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC).

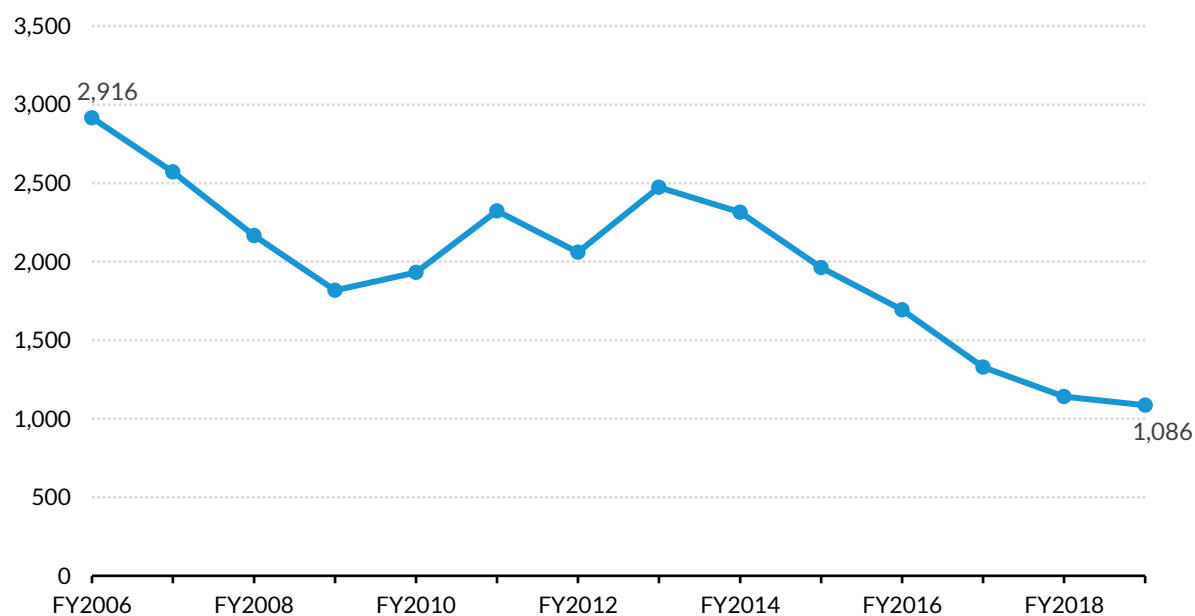
As in most other states, youth detention rates have declined significantly in Connecticut in the past decade. However, Connecticut incarcerates an increasing proportion and disproportionate number of youth of color. From 2015 to 2019, the share of youth of color admitted to juvenile detention increased from 79 to 84 percent (Tow 2019c). Moreover, despite the decline in youth detention, Connecticut has not invested in a continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration to provide intensive, individualized services to youth in the state.

Admissions to Juvenile Detention Fell 63 Percent since 2006

Between 2006 and 2019, preadjudication admissions to Connecticut’s two juvenile detention centers (the Bridgeport and Hartford Juvenile Detention Centers) declined nearly two-thirds (63 percent) (Tow 2019a).²

FIGURE 1
Preadjudication Admissions to Juvenile Detention, FY 2006–19

Number of admitted youth



Source: Tow (2019a).

Note: FY = fiscal year.

Although Youth Admissions Have Declined, Racial and Ethnic Disparities Have Worsened

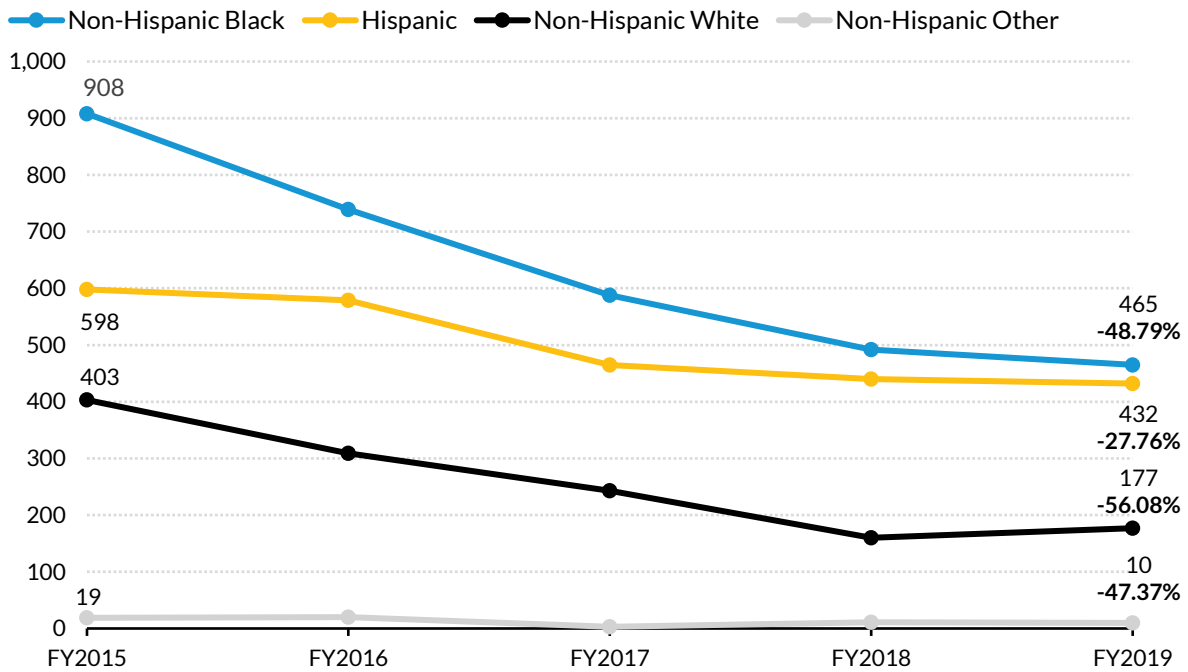
Preadjudication Admissions Have Declined Less for Youth of Color

Although preadjudication admissions declined overall and declined for white, Black, and Hispanic youth between 2015 and 2019, admissions declined less for youth of color. During this period, preadjudication admissions fell 56 percent (from 403 to 177) for white youth. However, admissions only fell 49 percent (from 908 to 465) for Black youth, and only 28 percent (from 598 to 432) for Hispanic youth.³ In other words, the steep overall decline in youth detention has benefited youth of color less than white youth.

FIGURE 2

Preadjudication Admissions to Juvenile Detention by Race/Ethnicity, FY 2015–19

Number of admitted youth



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow (2019c).

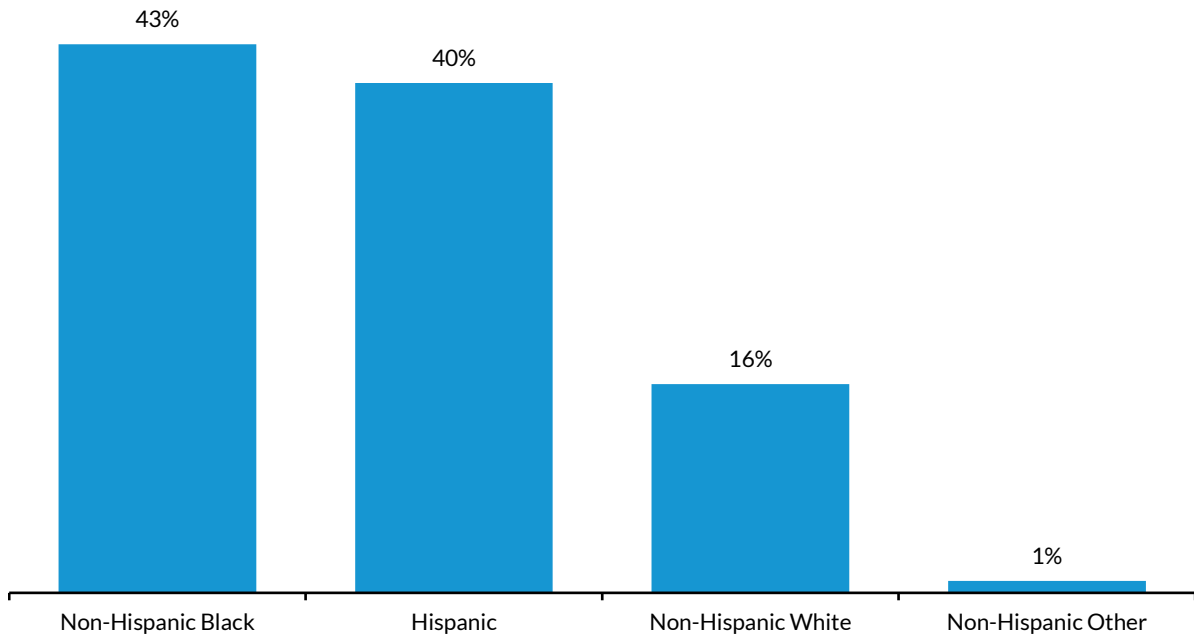
Note: FY = fiscal year.

Share of Youth of Color Admitted to Juvenile Detention Increased

Although preadjudication admissions of youth of color to juvenile detention declined, the proportion of youth admitted who were youth of color increased between 2015 and 2019. In 2015, 79 percent of youth admitted to juvenile detention were youth of color; in 2019, despite successful state efforts to reduce youth incarceration overall, 84 percent of youth admitted to juvenile detention were youth of color (Tow 2019c).

FIGURE 3

Share of Preadjudication Admissions to Juvenile Detention by Race/Ethnicity, FY 2019



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow Youth Justice Institute (2019c).

Note: FY = fiscal year.

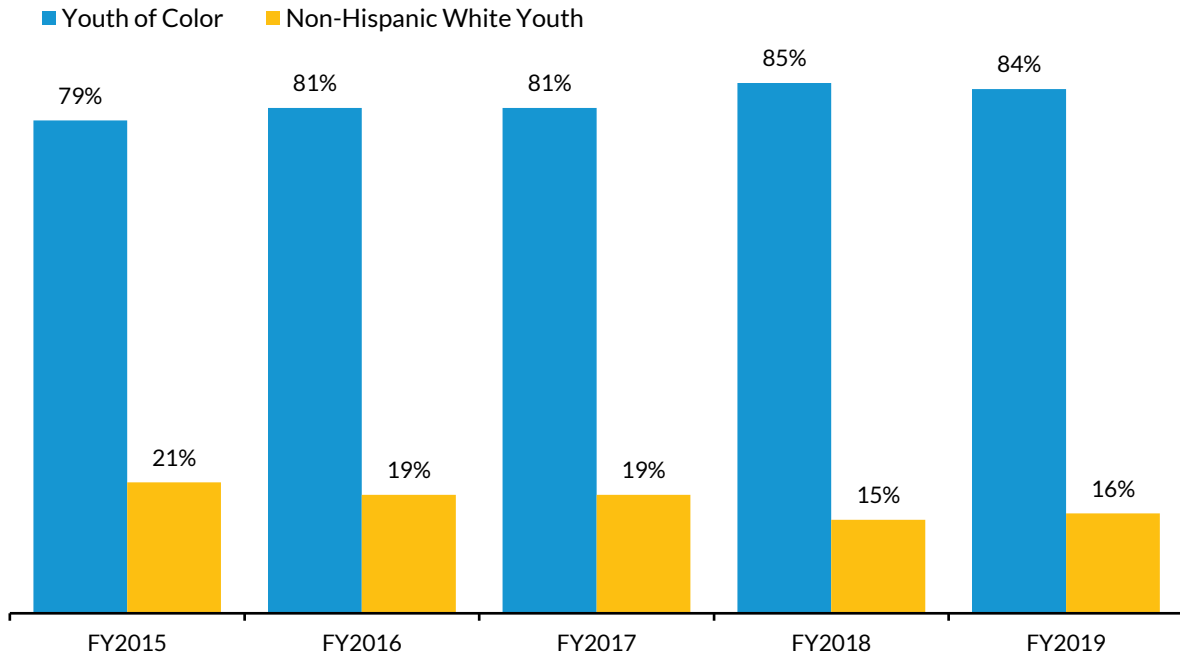
Connecticut Disproportionately Detains Black and Hispanic Youth

In 2019, 43 percent of youth admitted to juvenile detention in Connecticut were Black, even though only 12 percent of its youth population (people ages 12 to 20) as of 2018 were Black. Similarly, 40 percent of youth admitted to juvenile detention in 2019 were Hispanic, even though only 21 percent of the state's youth as of 2018 were Hispanic. By contrast, 16 percent of youth admitted to juvenile detention in 2019 were white, whereas 61 percent of the state's youth as of 2018 were white (Tow 2019c).⁴

FIGURE 4

Racial/Ethnic Disparities in Preadjudication Admissions to Juvenile Detention, FY 2015–19

By share of admitted youth



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow Youth Justice Institute (2019c).

Notes: FY = fiscal year. "Youth of Color" includes Hispanic youth, non-Hispanic Black youth, and non-Hispanic "other" youth.

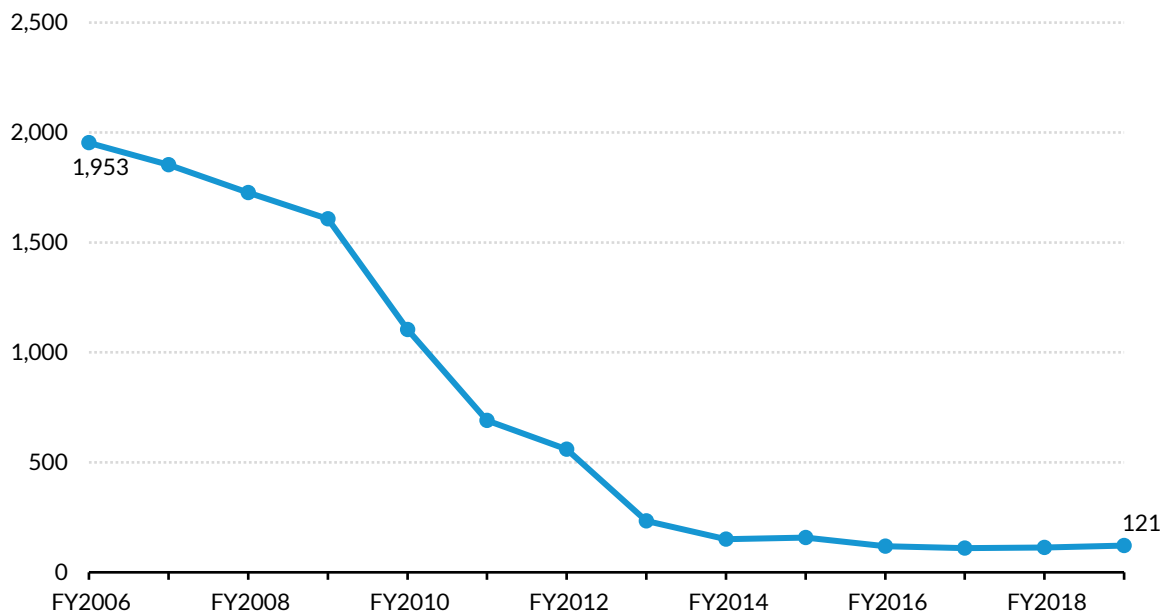
Youth Admissions to Adult Prisons Fell 94 Percent since 2006

In addition to the increasing racial disparities in Connecticut's juvenile justice system, problems persist regarding the declining (though still significant) number of youth transferred to the state's adult correctional system. Boys transferred to the adult system are incarcerated in the Manson Youth Institution (Manson), and girls are incarcerated in the York Correctional Institution (York), both of which are DOC prisons that house minors.⁵ Between 2006 and 2019, admissions to Manson and York fell 94 percent (Tow 2019a).

FIGURE 5

Admissions to Manson and York, FY 2006–19

Number of admitted youth, sentenced and pretrial



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow Youth Justice Institute (2019a).

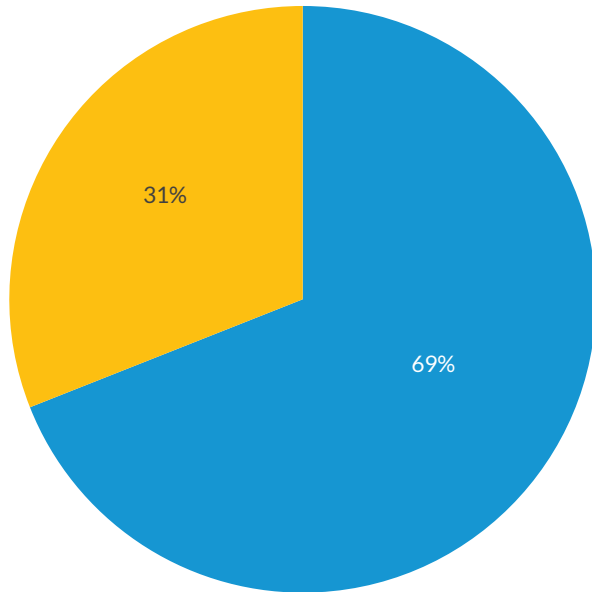
Note: FY = fiscal year.

Although youth admissions to Manson and York are declining, most youth admitted to and incarcerated at Manson are unsentenced. Of the youth in custody at Manson as of September 2019, nearly 70 percent were unsentenced (Tow 2019b).

FIGURE 6

Legal Status of Youth at Manson, 2019

■ Unsentenced ■ Sentenced



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow Youth Justice Institute (2019b).

Note: Data reflect the legal status of youth in September 2019.

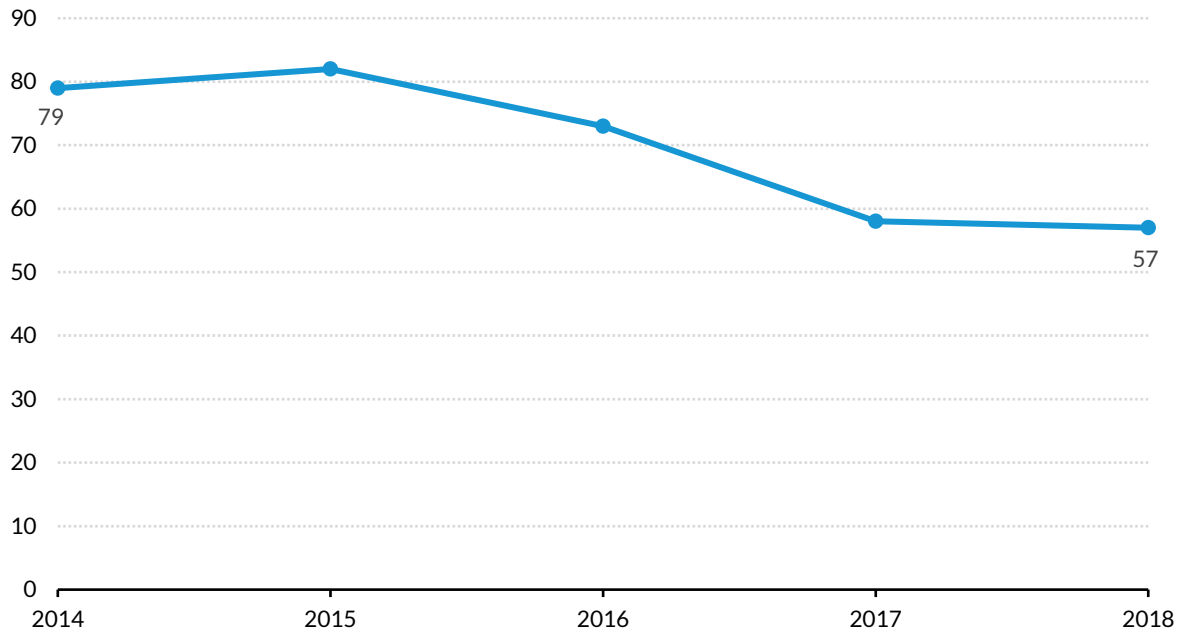
Average Daily Population of Youth in DOC Custody Fell 28 Percent since 2014

Between 2014 and 2018, the average daily population of youth in DOC custody fell 28 percent (Tow 2019a).

FIGURE 7

Average Daily Population of Youth in DOC Custody, 2014–18

Average daily population of youth



URBAN INSTITUTE

Source: Tow Youth Justice Institute (2019a).

Reform Efforts and Persistent Issues in Connecticut

Since CJTS closed, Connecticut stakeholders have focused on how best to supervise youth at the state level. For example, the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, a legislatively mandated group with 40 cross-system members (including child and parent advocates),⁶ completed an 18-month strategic planning process in December 2018. Its plan identified four goals for 2019 through 2021: (1) limit youth entry into the justice system by reserving the formal justice system for cases that cannot be diverted or appropriately served by alternatives; (2) reduce youth incarceration; (3) reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system; and (4) set appropriate lower and upper age limits for the juvenile justice system.⁷ Given the disproportionate incarceration of youth of color (particularly Black youth), reducing racial and ethnic disparities is critical to making Connecticut’s juvenile justice system more equitable and just.

Furthermore, Connecticut has not invested in a continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration. The state traditionally housed youth in large, state-run facilities like CJTS rather than in small community-based treatment centers,⁸ and it has struggled to find community-based providers since CJTS closed.⁹ Funding is needed to provide intensive and individualized community wraparound services, including residential and nonresidential community-based programs.¹⁰ Although its past and

ongoing efforts to reduce youth incarceration are notable, Connecticut's next challenge is to address the disproportionate incarceration of youth of color and invest in comprehensive, community-based alternatives to incarceration.

Notes

- ¹ "Gov. Malloy Announces Closure of Connecticut Juvenile Training School," State of Connecticut Governor Dannel P. Malloy, April 12, 2018, <https://portal.ct.gov/Malloy-Archive/Press-Room/Press-Releases/2018/04-2018/Gov-Malloy-Announces-Closure-of-Connecticut-Juvenile-Training-School>.
- ² All data from Tow (2019b) refer to fiscal year.
- ³ All data from Tow (2019c) refer to fiscal year.
- ⁴ "Easy Access to Juvenile Populations: 1990-2018," US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, last updated July 15, 2019, <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>.
- ⁵ Kathleen Megan, "Report: CT Youth Correctional Centers Need 'Massive Overhaul'," *Connecticut Post*, January 16, 2019, <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Report-CT-youth-correctional-centers-need-13538052.php>.
- ⁶ "Public Act 14-217, Section 79, An Act Creating the Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee, Committee Membership," University of New Haven, accessed January 24, 2020, https://www.newhaven.edu/_resources/documents/lee-college/institutes/tow-youth-justice-institute/juvenile-justice-policy-oversight-committee/membership/membership-list.pdf.
- ⁷ "Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee," University of New Haven, accessed January 24, 2020, <https://www.newhaven.edu/academics/centers-institutes/tow-youth-justice-institute/juvenile-justice-policy-oversight-committee/>.
- ⁸ Kelan Lyons, "'Locked' At-Risk Youth Facilities Deter Providers from Opening in CT," *Connecticut Post*, January 7, 2020, <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Locked-at-risk-youth-facilities-deter-14955866.php>.
- ⁹ Kelan Lyons, "Officials Weigh Massive Changes in Juvenile Justice System," *Connecticut Post*, November 18, 2019, <https://ctmirror.org/2019/11/18/officials-weigh-massive-changes-in-juvenile-justice-system/>.
- ¹⁰ Lisa Backus, "'Long Fight' for Funding Rewards CT Juvenile Justice Programs," *Connecticut Post*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.ctpost.com/local/article/Long-fight-for-funding-rewards-CT-juvenile-13822722.php>.

References

- Tow (Tow Youth Justice Institute). 2019a. "2019 Annual Report on Strategic Goals: Detailed Handout." Presentation given at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee meeting, New Haven, CT, December 19.
- . 2019b. "Preliminary Presentation on Organizational and Programmatic Alternatives for Housing of Youth Under 18 in DOC Custody." Presentation given at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee meeting, New Haven, CT, November 21.
- . 2019c. "Progress Report." Presentation given at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee meeting, New Haven, CT, December 19.

About the Authors

Colette Marcellin is a research assistant in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where she works on projects related to criminal and juvenile justice reform, behavioral health, and trauma-informed programs.

Samantha Harvell is a principal policy associate in the Justice Policy Center. Her work focuses on bridging research, policy, and practice in juvenile and criminal justice.

Acknowledgments

This brief was funded by the Public Welfare Foundation. We are grateful to them and to all our funders, who make it possible for Urban to advance its mission.

The views expressed are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the Urban Institute, its trustees, or its funders. Funders do not determine research findings or the insights and recommendations of Urban experts. Further information on the Urban Institute's funding principles is available at www.urban.org/fundingprinciples.

Urban would like to thank the YouthFirst initiative for its support, and Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance staff for reviewing earlier drafts.



500 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Washington, DC 20024

www.urban.org

ABOUT THE URBAN INSTITUTE

The nonprofit Urban Institute is a leading research organization dedicated to developing evidence-based insights that improve people's lives and strengthen communities. For 50 years, Urban has been the trusted source for rigorous analysis of complex social and economic issues; strategic advice to policymakers, philanthropists, and practitioners; and new, promising ideas that expand opportunities for all. Our work inspires effective decisions that advance fairness and enhance the well-being of people and places.

Copyright © May 2020. Urban Institute. Permission is granted for reproduction of this file, with attribution to the Urban Institute.