In Connecticut, boys are incarcerated in the state’s only youth prison, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS), operated by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Although the state briefly ran a secure Pueblo Unit for girls from 2014 to 2016, committed, delinquent girls in Connecticut are placed in Journey House, a secure facility run by a private provider. Connecticut youth are also placed out of home in DCF-run group homes, residential treatment centers, and foster homes. In 2015, CJTS was subject to widespread scandal and public outcry when the Office of the Connecticut Child Advocate released a report alleging inhumane conditions, unlawful restraints, use of handcuffs and shackles, isolation, and inadequate mental health treatment for youth in CJTS (Eagan, Kramer, and Panciera 2015). Governor Malloy announced intentions to close CJTS by mid-2018, but although the DCF released a closure plan in October 2016 (Muñiz 2016), plans to replace CJTS are still not solidified.

Although the state has comparatively low incarceration rates, Connecticut has the highest racial and ethnic disparities in the country for committed youth. Youth of color are committed at 14 times the rate of White youth, and Black youth are committed at 24 times the rate of White youth.¹
Admissions to Connecticut Youth Prisons Are Down 69 Percent since 2004

Similar to national trends, admissions to CJTS have decreased significantly in the last decade, dropping 69 percent between 2004 and 2016 (figure 1). CJTS now imprisons approximately 40 to 50 youths on any given day (Muñiz 2016).

**FIGURE 1**

Connecticut Juvenile Training School Admissions, 2004–16

*Number of Youth, Boys only*


On average, 250 youths were committed delinquent to the DCF on any given day in 2016. In March 2017, 45 percent of these youths were under DCF supervision at home and receiving community based-services, 44 percent were in DCF-secure or congregate placement, and 11 percent were either incarcerated by the adult Department of Corrections or detained for new crimes occurring after their delinquency commitment (CDCF 2017).

CJTS, the most secure setting for boys, is the most commonly used out-of-home placement for committed youth. Other placements include group homes, residential treatment centers, and Journey House (CDCF 2017).
FIGURE 2
Placement Settings for Connecticut Youth Committed Delinquent
Share of youth, March 2017

Notes: "Adult DOC Incarceration" includes youths detained by the Court Support Services Division for new crimes committed after their delinquency commitment.

FIGURE 3
Connecticut Juvenile Training School Admissions by Offense Type (boys only)
Share of admissions, 2016

Connecticut Spends More on CJTS than All Prison Alternatives Combined

Connecticut spends more on CJTS than it does on all its alternatives to incarceration.

- In 2015, CJTS cost the state almost $32 million. This does not include the costs of private institutions or juvenile detention centers (Tow 2016).
- In 2015, spending on educational services within CJTS represented only 14 percent of CJTS’ total budget. This has remained relatively stagnant over the past 10 years.
- Spending on juvenile alternatives to incarceration declined 17 percent between 2008 and 2016 and has remained stagnant in recent years (figure 4).

FIGURE 4
Connecticut Spending on Juvenile Alternatives to Incarceration, 2006–16

Source: Office of Fiscal Analysis budget books appropriations.

Note: FY = fiscal year. All figures in 2016 dollars.

Connecticut Has the Sixth-Highest Black-White Commitment Disparity in the United States

Connecticut has the highest racial and ethnic disparities in the country for imprisoned youth.
Connecticut is one of only six states where the Black-White disparity of sending youth to prison is more than 10 to 1.7

Youth of color are committed at 14 times the rate of White youth, and Black youth are committed at 24 times the rate of White youth.8

Department of Children and Families data show that White youth are less likely to go to CJTS and 75 percent more likely to go to a residential treatment center.9 According to the most recent national data, Black youth in Connecticut were

- incarcerated at 17 times the rate of White youth,
- detained at 13 times the rate of White youth,
- committed at 23 times the rate of White youth, and
- diverted at 3 times the rate of White youth.10

Youth imprisonment has decreased since then, but national data indicate that racial disparities have worsened as incarceration decreases (Rovner 2016).

In 2015, more than half of boys admitted to youth prisons were Black (CDCF 2017), even though only 12 percent of the youth population at risk for system involvement are Black.11

FIGURE 5
Admissions to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School by Race, 2016
Boys only

Most System-Involved Youth in Connecticut Have Substance Use or Behavioral Disorders

Youth admitted to CJTS have an array of treatment needs, many of which are not met in facilities.

- Among boys admitted to CJTS, 91 percent had behavioral disorders, 69 percent had substance use disorders, and 62 percent had neurodevelopmental disorders (CJTS 2016).

- Among girls admitted to Pueblo before it closed, 82 percent had behavioral disorders, and 54 percent had substance use disorders (CJTS 2016).

- Girls had higher rates of trauma, which is exacerbated by conditions of incarceration (CJJA, n.d.). Eighty-two percent of girls had trauma disorders, and 90 percent of girls had psychiatric disorders.

**FIGURE 6**
Admissions to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School and Pueblo Unit by Treatment Need, 2015

Notable Reforms and Ongoing Efforts in Connecticut

The Juvenile Justice Policy and Oversight Committee is a legislatively mandated group with 30 cross-system members, including advocates. It aims to reduce incarceration rates among children, increase diversion of children from the juvenile justice system, and reduce recidivism. In 2016, the Connecticut legislature passed House Bill 5642, which implements the committee’s recommendations. It significantly reduced the reasons youth can be held in detention, set a date for the removal of truancy and defiance of school rules from status offender laws, and removed “punish the child” from the mission statement of the juvenile justice system in state statute. The committee’s 2017 legislative recommendations included steps toward closing the Connecticut Juvenile Training School, removing all youth under age 18 from adult facilities, and implementing educational and community diversion systems. The reforms in 2016 and 2017 were affected by budgetary restraints—anything costing money was stripped from the bill—including provisions that would have required every child in the juvenile justice system to be provided an educational advocate and expanded community-based programs.

Notes

4. Ibid.


References


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