
CT Sentencing
Commission: Online
Behavioral Health
Diversionary Resource



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Definitions (CSG Justice Center, 2019)

Behavioral health diversion broadly refers to “exit ramps” that move individuals with substance abuse or mental health conditions away from the criminal legal system, offering an alternative to arrest, prosecution, traditional criminal proceedings, and incarceration.

Can include: 1) pre-arrest, 2) pre-booking, 3) post-booking, and 4) pre-trial diversion

Diversion Goals (Center for Health and Justice, 2013)

The goals of diversion are often to:

1. Address a defendant's criminogenic factors
2. Reduce prison and docket pressures, facilitating more efficient resource allocation
3. Reduce recidivism

Policy Problem: Mental Health in the Justice Involved Population (CTSC, 2023)

- 32% of the incarcerated population was classified as having an active mental health disorder requiring treatment (MH-3 or higher)
- 89% of the incarcerated population was classified as having a history of or current substance abuse problem (T-2 or higher)

Policy Problem: Holistic Understanding of Diversion

- The current landscape of behavioral health diversion in CT is likely poorly understood across stakeholders and the public
 - Research has provided evidence that the procedural complexities surrounding arrest diversionary practices and insufficient stakeholder training was a barrier in implementing New Haven's Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program (Joudrey et al., 2021).
- Lack of CT specific informational materials on the role of judges in diversion and other diversionary related topics, such as deflection and crisis intervention teams
- Information regarding diversionary programs in the state are scattered across multiple reports and agency web sources with many programs not existing in statute
- Top level of statistics of many mental health diversionary programs are not published regularly or visualized

Identified Programs

Adult Behavioral Health Services

Advanced Supervision and Intervention Support Team

Alternative Drug Intervention

Alternative In the Community

Community Recovery Engagement Support and Treatment

Early Screening and Intervention Program

Jail Diversion Substance Abuse

Jail Diversion Veterans

Jail Diversion/Court Liaison Program

Jail Reinterview Program

Pretrial Intervention Program

Pretrial Supervised Diversionary Program

Residential: Sierra Center

Treatment Pathway Program

Women's Jail Diversion

Project Goals/ Scope (by May 2025)

- Introduce CT behavioral health diversion to the public, practitioners, legislators, and other stakeholders, building off the commission's 2020 report
- Create regularly maintained webpages that aggregates information and data on all major diversionary programs across the state, including programs from DMHAS, Judicial Branch, and the Division of Criminal Justice
- Discuss mental health diversion from a broad perspective, covering topics such as the role of judges and pre-arrest deflection
- Highlight exemplar programs from CT and other states.
- Direct readers to other diversion related resources to learn more

Draft Sections Outline

- I. Introduction: What is behavioral health diversion?
- II. Deflection and Pre-Arrest
 - o Crisis stabilization
 - o Crisis Intervention Team from Connecticut Alliance to Benefit Law Enforcement
 - o REST New Haven
 - o Early Screening and Intervention Program (DCJ)
- III. Role of Judges in Mental Health Diversion
- IV. Judicial Branch Administered Programs
- V. CT Program Highlight: SDP

- VI. Out-of-State Program Highlight: Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Alternatives to Incarceration Program (IDDATI) in Rockland, NY & The Deferred Deposition Program (DDP) in Virginia
- VII. DMHAS Administered Programs
- VIII. CT Program Highlight: EFRB
- IX. Conclusion



Thoughts and Questions So Far?

- Additional topics to cover? Expansions to project scope?
- Topics under consideration:
 - CT Mobile Crisis Teams
 - Juvenile Diversionary Programs Related to Mental Health
- What questions do you have about CT behavioral health diversion that you would like to see answered?

DEMO OF WEBPAGES

References

Center for Health and Justice. (2013). *A national survey of criminal justice diversion programs and initiatives*. https://www.centerforhealthandjustice.org/tascblog/Images/documents/Publications/CHJ%20Diversion%20Report_web.pdf

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Joudrey, P. J., Nelson, C. R., Lawson, K., Morford, K. L., Muley, D., Watson, C., Okafor, M., Wang, E. A., & Crusto, C. (2021). Law enforcement assisted diversion: Qualitative evaluation of barriers and facilitators of program implementation. *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment*, 129, 108476. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsat.2021.108476>