

CONNECTICUT SENTENCING COMMISSION

Mental Health Committee

Wednesday, January 28, 2026

1:00 – 2:30 PM

Members: Jennifer Zito, John Santa, Gary Roberge, Janet Walker, William O'Connor, Reena Kapoor, Angel Quiros, Thomas Canny

Staff: Rich Sparaco, Andrew Clark, Matthew Hono, Tommy Dowd, Mike Cronin, Jordan Oquendo, Valerie Gordon

Guests: Rachel Mirsky, Sen. Cathy Osten, Benjamin Howell, Tobey Partch-Davies, Katie Farrell, Howard Sovronsky, Jessica Thomas, John Russotto

MINUTES

I. MEETING CONVENED

- Attorney Jennifer Zito convened the meeting at 1:01 PM.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE 10.14.2025 MEETING

- The minutes from the 10.14.2025 meeting were approved.

III. FORMALIZING COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- Jennifer Zito reported that the Commission is in the process of updating its committee membership lists.
 - Zito read the current roster of the Mental Health Committee.
 - Senator Cathy Osten, Katie Farrell (Office of the Chief Public Defender), Jessica Thomas (CT Legal Rights Project), and Howard Sovronsky (Behavioral Health Advocate) expressed interest in becoming formal members of the Committee.
 - Zito will relay these requests to the Steering Committee for approval.
 - Zito also noted that the Commission may soon amend its bylaws to allow committee members to designate a proxy to attend meetings on their behalf.

IV. STUDY ON INTELLECTUAL AND DEVELOPMENT DISABILITIES

- a. Presentation – Rachel Mirsky, Supervisory Attorney, Disability Rights Connecticut
 - Rachel Mirsky presented the Report on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.
 - Mirsky reviewed the statutorily required elements, report structure, methodology, findings, and recommendations.
 - Senator Cathy Osten, Gary Roberge, Howard Sovronsky, William O’Connor, and Jennifer Zito asked follow-up questions.
 - Zito questioned whether criminal history should exclude certain individuals from participation in an I/DD diversionary program, as is recommended in the report.
 - Roberge questioned whether an advisory board is necessary to oversee an I/DD diversionary program, as is recommended in the report.
 - Roberge also raised whether launching a pilot program in select judicial districts could present equal protection issues.
 - Members discussed whether competency should be required for admission into an I/DD diversionary program and, generally, how competency should be handled for this population.
 - Members also noted that further study was needed to estimate the cost of an I/DD diversionary program.
 - Zito thanked Mirsky and Disability Rights Connecticut for their work on this report.

- b. Vote to Send Report to Full Commission
 - Andrew Clark noted that the Committee could accept the report and forward it to the Commission, with the caveat that it would continue to review the recommendations and submit them to the Commission at a later date.
 - Members agreed unanimously.

V. OTHER UPDATES

- The Committee is continuing to oversee two additional research initiatives: (1) a study on the experiences of individuals seeking mental health and substance abuse treatment after release from prison or while on community supervision, conducted in collaboration with the Yale SEICHE Center; and (2) a study cataloging and presenting data on behavioral health diversionary programs in Connecticut.

VI. DISCUSSION ON 2026 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

- The Criminal Procedure and Sentencing Committee unanimously approved a proposal to increase funding for residential/mental health-related pretrial diversionary programs.
 - Jennifer Zito will keep the Committee updated on the proposal's progress.
- Zito also asked members to provide ideas for future committee projects.

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

- Jennifer Zito adjourned the meeting at 2:40 PM.
- Please review the recommendations in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Report and propose revisions for discussion at the next meeting.

2026 Meeting Schedule

March 2

May 4

August 3

October 5

December 7