

Early Screening and Intervention Program



What is ESI?

The Early Screening and Intervention (ESI) Program is a prosecutor-led diversionary program with:

- A Prosecutor - identifies individuals charged with low-level criminal offenses at the earliest stages of the Court process that may benefit from services and
- A Resource Counselor (employed by a nonprofit provider) - assists in providing those services

Working together, the Prosecutor and Resource Counselor screen the defendant to identify underlying factors that have contributed to criminal behavior and refer the defendant to the appropriate services in the local community.

What is ESI? (continued)

The ESI Program addresses several criminal justice system concerns including, but not limited to:

- Attending to the basic needs of the defendant while holding the individual accountable for their actions
- Lack of treatment of underlying behaviors of the offender
- Too many continuances in court
- Nolles without in-depth assessment and monitoring
- Responding to the impact on victims and the local community of the offense

Goals of the ESI Program



- Provide individualized justice based on:
 - Needs of the defendant and the underlying charges
 - Services available in the community
 - Impact of the crime on the community and the victim
- Use of dedicated Prosecutors and Resource Counselors:
 - To ensure cases and defendants are treated similarly and consistently.

How It Began



Spring of 2017

Began in the GA Courts in Bridgeport and Waterbury with assistance from the Singer Foundation and Center for Justice Innovation

2017 Legislative Session

General Assembly passes Public Act 17-205 (C.G.S. Sec 51-286i) requiring the Division of Criminal Justice to establish a diversionary program for defendants struggling with substance use or mental health issues or are unhoused.

Spring of 2018

In response to PA 17-205, and encouraged by the results at the two pilot sites, the program expanded to the GA Courts in Hartford, New Haven, New London and Norwich

Eligible Offenses



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- Alcohol statute violations
 - Breach of peace
 - Criminal impersonation
 - Criminal mischief
 - Criminal trespass
 - Disorderly conduct
 - Drug possession
 - Failure to appear
 - Gambling
 - Harassment
 - Interfering
 - Larceny 5th and 6th (shoplifting)
 - Prostitution
 - Solicitation of prostitution
 - Threatening
 - Town ordinance violations

Excluded Offenses



Family violence matters, operating under the influence, and crimes involving serious physical injuries are not appropriate for the ESI Program.

Other Eligibility Considerations

Other eligibility considerations for acceptance into ESI may include:

- Criminal history including:
 - Extensive records including felonies and jail time
 - Pending cases in other GAs
 - Defendants who have participated in ESI previously
 - Monitoring defendant's probationary status as part of ESI services
- Age (18 or older)
- Victim input
- Residency

Victim Contact



As with any criminal case, victim contact must be made when appropriate.

Focus on Root Problems, Risks, and Needs

As the Prosecutors and Resource Counselors review the police incident report and speak with the defendant, they identify any underlying needs of the individual with the following in mind:

- Substance use disorders
- Mental health concerns
- Homelessness/houselessness
- Other basic needs

Program Requirements



- Substance use disorder education and treatment
- Mental health treatment
- Anger management
- Individual therapy
- Housing
- Restitution or Mediation
- Community Service

Program Length



If a defendant is engaging in treatment, it is recommended that they provide at least two favorable treatment letters over a period of two to three months before the case is considered for disposition.

This is a general guideline and may vary by program, victim input, and nature of charges among other factors.

Other factors that may require a longer period of monitoring may include new arrests or substance use relapse.

Requirements, Successful Completion, Failure to Comply/Complete, or New Arrest



A defendant must comply with all treatment and community service requirements to remain in the ESI Program and successfully resolve their criminal case.

In addition, it is expected that the defendant should not have any new arrests.

The ESI Program holds the defendant accountable but understands that the route to success may include some setbacks.

Requirements, Successful Completion, Failure to Comply/Complete, or New Arrest (continued)

A defendant who successfully completes the ESI Program may:

- Have their case nolle and/or dismissed
- Plea to a reduced charge for probation or a conditional discharge with the requirements of continuing with treatment and no new arrests, or an unconditional discharge
 - In some jurisdictions, entering guilty pleas may occur only if the defendants are unsuccessful and/or pick up new cases

Requirements, Successful Completion, Failure to Comply/Complete, or New Arrest (continued)

A defendant who is unsuccessful in the ESI program may:

- Elect to participate in another diversionary program
- Have their case returned to the regular docket and apply for a Public Defender or hire a private attorney

Program Data



- In 2025, Hartford, New London, and Norwich reviewed 222 individuals for the program.
- 165 individuals were accepted into the program.
- 86 of those individuals successfully completed the program.
- By the end of 2025, 144 clients were actively participating in the program across all three sites.
- In 2025, Hartford's average caseload for this program was 22.

Benefits of the ESI Program

- Allows in-depth screening of low-level offenses at the earliest stage in the proceedings to identify individual needs.
- Assessment of underlying factors contributing to criminal behavior by an ESI Coordinator (social worker).
- Significant reduction in court appearances
- Locally based, real-time, treatment and accountability



Thank you!

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