

The Connecticut Youth Services Association leads, strengthens and supports a unified network of 103 Youth Service Bureaus serving 138 towns across Connecticut dedicated to promoting the well-being of children, youth and families.

YOUTH SERVICE BUREAUS' LEGISLATIVE REQUEST

YSBs are the community-based support systems for Connecticut's youth. The extraordinary needs of our youth have elevated the need for additional staffing and resources to support the complex nature of the issues facing them and their families. **Additional yearly funding of \$60,000 per YSB (\$6.18 million for all 103 YSBs) will allow for increased staffing and support in the areas of mental health, case management and/or program services (based on the needs of each community) to increase capacity and respond to issues the current funding allocation does not allow.**

On average, state funding of YSBs accounts for only 14.6% of total funding. State funding is administered by the Department of Children and Families and requires YSBs to undertake administrative core unit functions, while also providing direct services based on the needs of their individual communities. Direct services include, but are not limited to, mental health, diversion, truancy, prevention, youth development, employment skills, and substance use.

The current state funding is not sufficient in meeting the increased needs of youth and their families. Given the mandated requirements of state statute 10-19m, CYSA believes the state has a vested interest in supporting YSBs, which provide needed services and supports to youth throughout Connecticut.

2023 ADVOCACY STATEMENT AND CORE AREAS

ADVOCACY STATEMENT

Advocate for substantial, supportive, and sustainable investment in each of the core areas as required under CT statute 10-19M which provide meaningful and transformative services to youth through Connecticut's network of YSBs.

CORE AREAS

- **Community Based Treatment and Prevention:** As statewide youth referrals become more complex due to the growing prevalence of mental health, social-emotional, and behavioral issues, organizations across Connecticut have the persistent and increasing challenge of meeting the service needs of the youth in their communities.
- **Fiscal Stability:** Meaningful and ongoing funding and fiscal structural support for Connecticut's Youth Service Bureaus.
- **Diversion/Youth Justice:** Advocate for youth to be served in the most appropriate way in their community whenever possible, support the use of a restorative approach and provide for sustainable funding to address the changes in the system statewide.
- **Data Collection:** Refining data collection and use practices through more direct tracking of youth outcomes and program effectiveness. Finding opportunities to utilize data to better understand youth needs in the community and help direct the development of meaningful support. Data from the YSB/JRB Landscape Analysis pointed to the ability to best actualize the Community-Based Diversion System and provide the services identified in 10-19M when the YSB had extensive community partnerships. By providing YSBs across Connecticut with the resources necessary to grow their list of community partners and/or develop more direct services, youth throughout the state will have access to needed services.
- **Resources and Support:** Support staffing to ensure the realization of the Community-Based Diversion System which enables Youth Service Bureaus to provide delivery of the services detailed in the State Statute.

Connecticut Statute 10-19M states that "youth service bureaus shall be the coordinating unit of community-based services to provide comprehensive delivery of prevention, intervention, treatment and follow-up services...."

For more information visit www.ctyouthservices.org

201,182
total youth
served in
FY22

YOUTH SERVICE BUREAUS BY THE NUMBERS

103 YSBs serving 138 towns

185,242 - TIER 1 YOUTH SERVED IN FY22

Tier 1 is defined as a one-time program or less than 20 hours of programming, often facilitated through large group activities or programs where demographic information is not collected.

15,940 - TIER 2 YOUTH SERVED IN FY22

Tier 2 programs typically last 20 or more hours, are more intensive and most often have a curriculum or specific long-lasting outcome.

AVERAGE # OF CORE STAFF WITHIN A YSB

2FT & 2PT, the typical YSB having 2 or fewer

CURRENT FUNDING

AVERAGE % FUNDED BY DCF: 14.6%

YSB Main Grant: \$2,654,772

Since 1996, each new YSB only receives \$14,000 annually. This amount must be matched 100% by the town and can include up to 50% of in-kind contributions. Prior to 1996, appropriated funds were distributed by formula.

Enhancement Grant: \$1,093,973

This funding is distributed by population to all 103 YSBs. As new YSBs are created, new funding is not allocated, instead the grant is recalculated causing the disbursements to decrease to all other YSBs.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING

The Legislature appropriated \$1 Million to DCF for supplemental funding for YSBs in FY23. Funds were allocated to each YSB in July 2022.

\$2 Million in ARPA Funding for FY23/24/25

DCF received \$2 million in ARPA funding to create and implement a plan with YSBs in support of improved outcomes for youth. The plan has been approved by OPM to allocate this funding toward training, data collection expansion, and service gap analysis.

GET TO KNOW CONNECTICUT'S YOUTH SERVICE BUREAUS

INSIGHTS AND CASE EXAMPLES

YSB Directors shared their thoughts about the increased complexity of cases they are experiencing with youth across the state.

"It is rare that chronic truancy is not the symptom of other family issues such as single parenting, mental health issues, substance misuse and no connection to the school community. I have also found a higher percentage of the LGBTQ community in this category of truant behaviors. I have seen exhausted single parents doing their best to get kids to school but many times their own jobs don't lend themselves to positive parenting."

"...many of these kids have mental health issues that are barely worked on outside of a social worker/clinician at school. I feel one of the things that JRBs need is access to behavioral/mental health programs; both clinical and peer/non-clinical. The reduction in youth incarceration and detention in CT is amazing. But (similar to mental health deinstitutionalization in the 60s and 70s) if there aren't enough programs and access to resources for the community-based diversion (and judicial!) programs to utilize, it won't help these kids in the long run."

"[Our] Diversion Team is experiencing an influx of cases with complex mental health issues. Many of these youth would benefit from a higher level of care; however, they do not meet the criteria or programs have extremely long waitlists. Community mental health agencies have high turnover, and youth are often shuffled from clinician to clinician without the consistency in the treatment they desperately need. We need a stronger pathway of resources from the Emergency Department to inpatient or intensive outpatient programs that have reasonable timeframes for admission."

In addition to truancy, medical and mental health challenges were reported. Interventions included regular communication at the beginning of each day and intermittent meetings with the youth and family. Ongoing weekly communication with appropriate school personnel was necessary to coordinate how best to support student attending school regularly. Support will be required until the student graduates from high school.

LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS DATA

The following information was collected as part of the YSB Landscape Analysis and illustrates current community needs and organizational capacity and priorities.

The number of youth served by YSBs over the last 5 years has increased and youth across the state are coming to YSBs with more complex support needs which require more time to address. Additionally, mental health issues are on the rise.

- **95%** of YSBs reported there was a significant need for mental health services in their area.
- **71%** of YSBs reported the complexity of Tier 2 cases has increased over the last five years.
- **70%** of YSBs reported that more time is required to properly address Tier 2 cases now compared to five years ago.

Many YSBs across the state have expanded services internally to address the growing youth population and youth needs, however, expansion of programming has NOT been accompanied by expansion of staff or resources. Additionally, community partners have not been able to expand programming as rapidly in their communities.

- **58%** of YSBs reported they had expanded internal/direct services in the last five years due to increased need and expansion of organizational priorities.
- **31%** of YSBs reported community partners had expanded available services in the last five years due to increased need.

Many YSBs reported budgets remained static over the last five years even though programming often expanded to meet community needs.

- **68%** of YSBs reported their YSB budget has remained the same or decreased over the last five years.

The majority of YSBs across the state indicated there was unmet need in their community. In most cases YSBs reported additional staff and funding would help address unmet need.

- **80%** reported unmet need for Tier 2 programming and **61%** reported unmet need for Tier 1 programming in the community.

Areas that would help address unmet needs

- **Tier 2 need- 95%** of YSBs that identified unmet need indicated increased staffing would help bridge the gap and **78%** indicated increased funding would help bridge the gap.
- **Tier 1 need- 88%** of YSBs that identified unmet need indicated increased staffing would help bridge the gap and **78%** indicated increased funding would help bridge the gap.

The full Landscape Analysis Report can be obtained by emailing info@dillingerrad.org.