

For Immediate Release
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Schools in East Hartford and Meriden Selected for Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI)

*State-Funded Initiative Helps Schools Connect At-Risk Students to
Mental Health Services as an Alternative to Arrest*

Farmington, CT – Four Connecticut schools were selected as partners in the [Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative \(SBDI\)](#) for the 2013-2014 school year. SBDI is an interagency state and local partnership supported by the Connecticut Judicial Branch, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF), the Connecticut State Department of Education (SDE), and local school districts. The Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) is the coordinating center for the program.

The schools are:

- East Hartford High School (East Hartford)
- Platt High School (Meriden)
- Maloney High School (Meriden)
- Venture Academy (Meriden)

“This program is a real win for the schools, the students and the courts,” said William Carbone, Executive Director of the State of Connecticut Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division. “We know that approximately 65-70% of youth in juvenile detention have a diagnosable behavioral health condition. The program works by identifying and connecting at-risk youth to community-based mental health services as an alternative to arrest.”

Although overall rates of juvenile arrests are declining, in-school arrests continue to be a growing concern in Connecticut, particularly among youth of color and youth with unmet mental health needs. SBDI is a school-level intervention designed to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system by helping schools meet the following goals:

- ✓ Reduce use of in-school arrests, expulsions, out-of-school suspensions, and other exclusionary discipline practices
- ✓ Enhance knowledge and skill development among key school professionals relating to children’s mental health and juvenile justice
- ✓ Increase utilization of school and community-based mental health services and supports

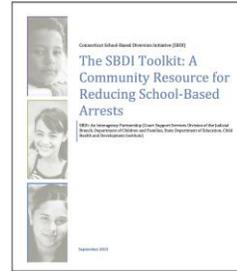
“Research shows that schools that successfully address the unmet mental health concerns of their students will not only see a decrease in student arrests, but will also see an improvement in academic achievement, school climate and school safety,” said Dr. Jeana Bracey, CHDI Senior Associate and lead author of CHDI’s **IMPACT report: [Improving Outcomes for Children in Schools: Expanded School Mental Health.](#)**

The schools selected for this year’s SBDI program showed an interest in reducing school arrests, as well as addressing the unmet mental health needs of their students. **This will be the second time schools in East Hartford and Meriden have been chosen.** In 2010-2011 East Hartford Middle School and H.C. Wilcox Technical High School (Meriden) participated in SBDI with successful results:

- East Hartford Middle School reduced their rate of school-based arrests by 69%
- H.C. Wilcox Technical High School saw a 50% decrease in school-based arrests

Since 2009, twenty-one schools in nine Connecticut communities have implemented the SBDI model. The nine communities are: Bridgeport, Southington, East Hartford, Meriden, Manchester, Stamford, Hartford, New Britain and Waterbury.

The School-Based Diversion Initiative also recently released a free toolkit designed to quickly reach more schools with core elements of the SBDI program that can be implemented at little to no cost. [**The SBDI Toolkit: A Community Resource for Reducing School-Based Arrests**](#) is free and available to all schools in Connecticut.



For additional questions, please contact Jeana Bracey at: bracey@uchc.edu or 860-679-1524; or Julie Tacinelli at: Tacinelli@uchc.edu or 860-679-1534.

Click [here](#) to learn more about SBDI or to download a copy of *The SBDI Toolkit: A Community Resource for Reducing School-Based Arrests* and *CHDI's IMPACT: Improving Outcomes for Children in Schools: Expanded School Mental Health*.

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