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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 10, 2020

## **Development Services Group, Inc., to Assess Connecticut's Residential Treatment Facilities for Juveniles**

### ***National Juvenile Justice Research Firm to Perform Process and Outcome Evaluations***

Bethesda, Md.—The state of Connecticut's Judicial Branch Court Support Services Division (JBCSSD) has selected Development Services Group, Inc. (DSG), to assess how well its Re-Entry, Goal-Oriented, Individualized, Opportunity to Nurture Success (REGIONS) residential treatment facilities model for juveniles is meeting its goals. To complete the evaluation, DSG will partner with the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute and the University of New Haven.

Taking a multi-informant, mixed-methods approach, DSG and its partners will perform both a process evaluation and an outcome evaluation. The process evaluation will assess the degree to which program activities are being implemented with fidelity (that is, how closely aligned the implemented program is with the program design). The outcome evaluation will assess the degree to which the program is accomplishing its desired outcomes. An additional goal of the process evaluation is to provide recommendations on how facilities staff can more closely align actual practices with new REGIONS policies.

DSG's Elizabeth Spinney, a nationally recognized expert on disproportionate minority contact and veteran of several state juvenile justice system studies, will act as Project Director for the two evaluations. The final report on the project is due in December 2023.

### **Connecticut Has Nation's Lowest Rate of Youths Held in Residential Treatment**

At a time when states and local jurisdictions nationwide are reforming their juvenile justice systems, moving away from the tough-on-crime approaches of the early 1990s toward more evidence-based and trauma-informed approaches, Connecticut has been a national leader in many areas of reform. The national *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement* found Connecticut had the lowest rate in the land of youths held in residential placement facilities during the last two censuses, taken in 2015 and 2017. In the 2017 census, 27 juveniles were in residential placement per 100,000 youths in the population of Connecticut, compared with 138 juveniles per 100,000 in the United States overall. Residential placement rates for each race also were lower in Connecticut than in the rest of the country.

Connecticut residential programs participate in the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's national Performance-based Standards (PbS) initiative, which

was launched in 1995. PbS aims to identify, monitor, and improve conditions and rehabilitation services provided to youths.

### **Though a Leader in Strategies to Reduce Racial Disparities, Stark Disparities Persist**

Connecticut has been a leader in developing strategies to reduce racial disparities. However, though the state has low rates of secure confinement compared with other states, Connecticut's racial disparities are troubling. In 2017 the relative rate index comparing Black residential placement with White residential placement was one of the nation's highest.

### **Legal Authority for Children Committed as Delinquent Transferred to JBCSSD**

Connecticut Public Act No. 18-31, which went into effect Aug. 1, 2018, transferred juvenile services from the Department of Children and Families to JBCSSD. Further, the law requires JBCSSD to develop a continuum of community-based programs for the reduction of delinquencies and to establish secure and staff-secure residential facilities to serve juveniles placed on probation supervision or probation supervision with residential placement. While the Judicial Branch maintains legal authority over children who have been adjudicated as delinquent, Public Act 18-31 mandates that JBCSSD coordinate programs with Connecticut's Department of Children and Families, Department of Education, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, Department of Social Services, Department of Development Services, and any other agencies as necessary.

After a child has been adjudicated as delinquent, but before disposition, the legislation requires that the court conduct an investigation to collect information to determine the appropriate disposition. The law also mandates that facility-based programs and the continuum of community-based programs be developmentally and culturally appropriate, trauma informed, and gender responsive, *and* that the programs incorporate restorative principles and practices.

"These programs are required to address the individual risks and needs of juveniles," explained DSG's Spinney. "They have to take into account each juvenile's history, age, gender, maturity and social development, mental health, alcohol or drug use, and need for structured supervision and other characteristics. The legislation requires the programs to provide the least restrictive environment possible in a manner consistent with public safety. We'll be evaluating 80 metrics related to each of the REGIONS components and also measuring changes in recidivism."

JBCSSD created the REGIONS model to fulfill Act 18-31's requirements. The REGIONS program has three primary components:

- The Court Clinic's REGIONS evaluation process
- The REGIONS residential treatment programs



- Reentry from a residential treatment program to probation supervision in the community

*About DSG:* DSG is a woman-owned research and consulting firm headquartered in Bethesda, Md. Since its founding in 1977, it has been leading the way in finding, assessing, and applying what works in justice, behavioral health and wellness, education and development, and international development. DSG is dedicated to providing federal, state, and local governments and other organizations with the highest-quality products and services in research and evaluation, training and technical assistance, management consulting, communications, and website and application development. Visit [www.dsgonline.com](http://www.dsgonline.com) for more.

