

Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative

OVERVIEW

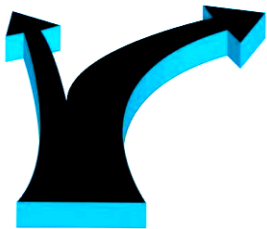
The mental health, education, and juvenile justice systems are deeply interconnected systems with critical impacts on young people with mental health needs and young people of color. Incarcerated youth have high rates of unmet mental health needs and “zero tolerance” policies in schools contribute to high rates of arrest and school expulsion. Although Connecticut has made important progress on reducing total arrests, recent data indicates continuing problems with *in-school* arrests, which can differentially impact students with mental health needs. Clearly, there is a need for effective school-based initiatives that build the capacity of school professionals to integrate connected systems priorities.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The Connecticut School-Based Diversion Initiative (SBDI) was developed with support from the MacArthur Foundation; the Judicial Branch’s Court Support Services Division (CSSD), and the Department of Children and Families and has been piloted in four school districts: Bridgeport, Southington, East Hartford, and Wilcox Technical High School (Meriden). The goals of SBDI are to:

- Reduce the number of youth that are arrested or expelled
- Build knowledge and skills among teachers, school staff, and school resource officers to recognize and manage behavioral health crises in the school
- Link youth with mental health needs and at-risk of juvenile justice involvement to appropriate community-based services and supports

COMPONENTS OF SBDI



TRAIN school staff on key juvenile justice and mental health competencies:

- Recognition of mental health symptoms
- Awareness of community-based resources

BUILD school capacity through development of school policy and data analysis:

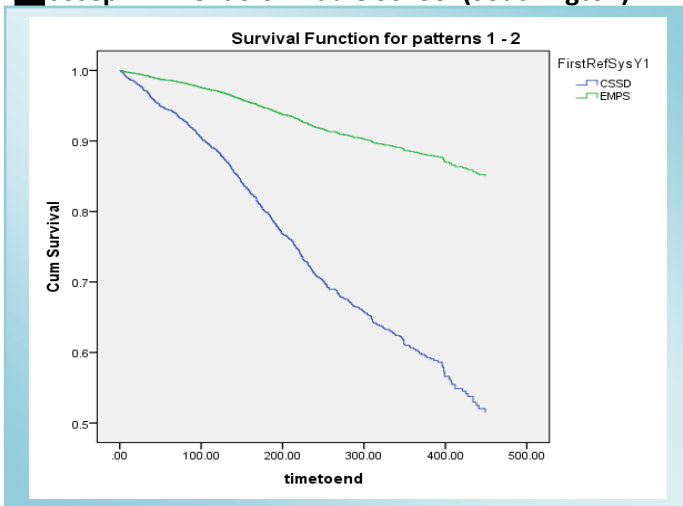
- Individualized consultation, data collection, quality assurance, and evaluation
- Graduated Response Model for behavioral intervention

ENHANCE community collaboration with key system partners

- EMPS, SROs/local police, community collaboratives, LISTs, non-traditional supports

OUTCOMES: YEAR 1 (2009-2010)

Participating Schools: ■ Luis Muñoz Marín School (Bridgeport) ■ John F. Kennedy Middle School (Southington)
■ Joseph A. DePaolo Middle School (Southington)



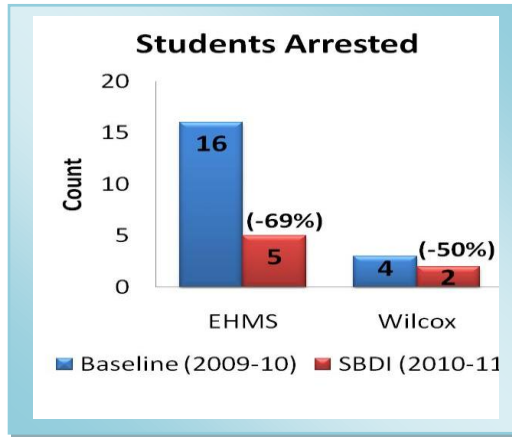
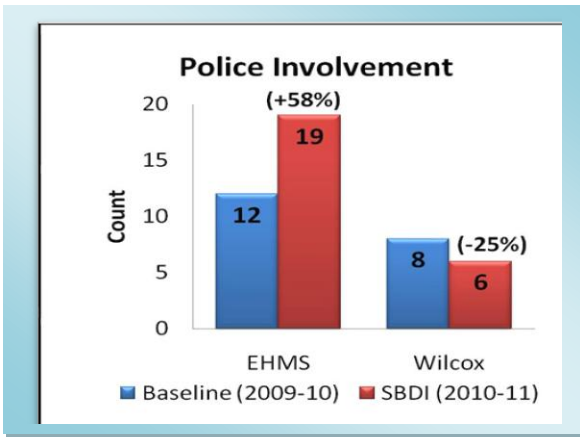
Delaying Re-Arrests

- Among youth with prior CSSD involvement, 47% of EMPS-referred youth were re-arrested during the index period, compared to 66% of CSSD-referred youth.
- Youth in SBDI communities were significantly less likely to re-offend compared to youth in non-SBDI comparison communities, even after controlling for prior CSSD involvement, race, gender, and age (31% vs. 43%).

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OUTCOMES: YEAR 2 (2010-2011)

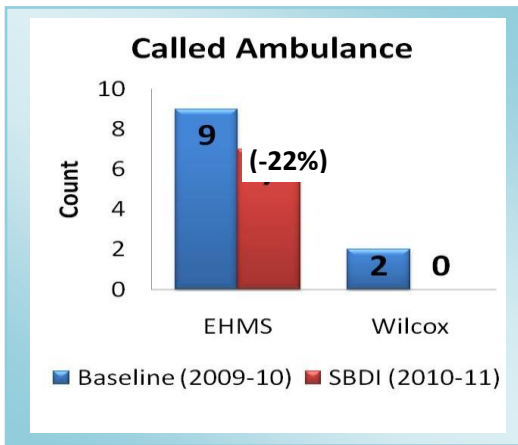
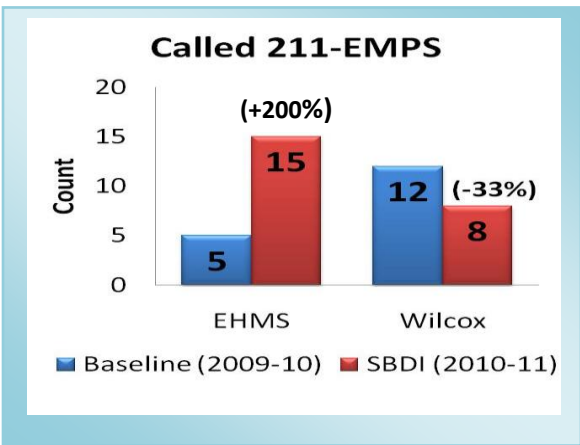
Participating Schools: ■ East Hartford Middle School (East Hartford) ■ H.C. Wilcox Technical High School (Meriden)



School Responses to Student Crises

Among a sample of high risk youth:

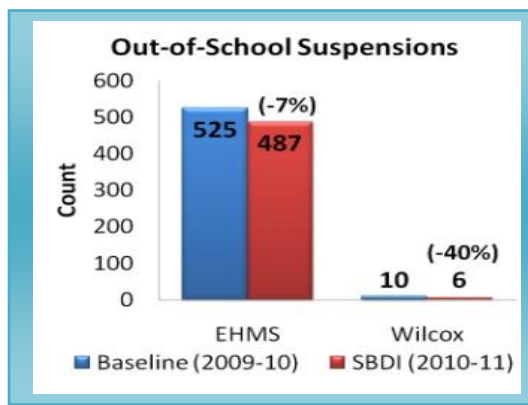
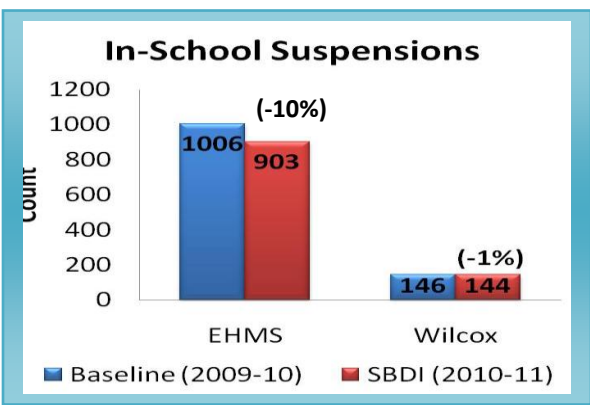
- Calls to state police decreased (Wilcox). Involvement of SROs in behavioral crises increased (EHMS).
- Student arrests decreased significantly in both schools.



School Responses to Student Crises

Among a sample of high risk youth:

- School referrals to EMPS increased significantly for EHMS and decreased slightly for Wilcox, yet were used as a resource for parents.
- Ambulance calls for psychiatric needs decreased across both schools.



School Discipline Data

- Suspensions are declining in both schools
- Reduction of expulsions will be added to SBDI goals for 2011-2012.