

OPPORTUNITY YOUTH: 2024 POLICY AGENDA

FOR YOUTH. FOR FAMILIES. FOR COMMUNITIES. FOR BUSINESSES. FOR CONNECTICUT.

Faced with the needs of Connecticut's 119,000 disconnected or at-risk youth – young people who have either dropped out of school or are in danger of dropping out of school, and who are, for those aged 18 to 26, unemployed and in many cases without the skills to gain employment – a coalition of Connecticut stakeholders are working together with our elected officials as the Opportunity Youth Initiative.

Public investment in disconnected youth is essential to promote economic growth and social equity and prepare the next generation of workers for a rapidly changing job market.

A STATEWIDE ISSUES REQUIRES A STATEWIDE APPROACH

Disconnected youth live in every municipality in Connecticut – rural, urban and suburban – and success in breaking the status quo requires a comprehensive, statewide approach informed by leading national practices and customized for Connecticut's current business climate.



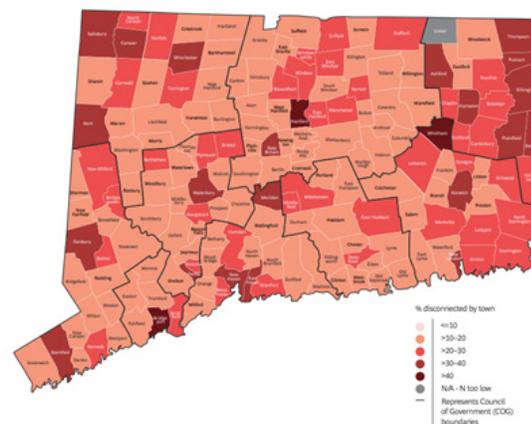
ACTIONABLE SYSTEMS CHANGES

Connecticut has no time to lose. The cost of youth disengaging from or never entering services is too steep. To effectively bring disconnected youth who are un- or under-served into career pipelines, the following actions require state action.



- **Target Untapped Federal Funds:** Assure that state agencies maximize revenues available from un- or under- utilized federal funding that could be targeted to support publicly- and privately administered workforce development, education and social support services for disconnected youth.
- **Shared Data Platform:** Document and achieve better outcomes for at-risk and disconnected young people by leveraging existing data platforms to provide a streamlined way for private and public providers to access and share integrated, individual-level deidentified data to improve collaboration, communication, efficiency and transparency.

Map of Young People Aged 14–26 Experiencing Disconnection in Connecticut



There is negligible dedicated funding from the state of Connecticut to support these services for disconnected youth.

**Map and data courtesy of Boston Consulting Group, Connecticut's Unspoken Crisis: Getting Young People Back on Track.*

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

An initial statewide investment of \$50 million would launch Connecticut's ability to serve disconnected youth at scale – engaging 5,000 young people in career pathways in year one while building the foundation for an effective, comprehensive statewide approach.

The proposed investments demonstrated cost-effectiveness and positive impacts on supporting disconnected youth to enter employment. While pilot programs have provided successful outcomes, these efforts require state funding to be scaled and sustained. Currently, there is negligible dedicated funding from the state of Connecticut available to support these services for disconnected youth.

- 1. Career-Based Education and Training:** Allocate additional state funding to pilot specialized remedial education, contextualized learning and work readiness through community-based and Adult Education providers to implement evidence-based services to disconnected youth essential for careers in high-demand industries.
- 2. Youth Career Navigation and Social Supports:** Invest in “relentless” outreach to identify and engage youth in services and to remove barriers to job training, education, wellness and employment.
- 3. Subsidized Employment:** Invest in supported employment for in-demand careers that meet the immediate needs of young people to earn income while gaining “safe” work experiences and the needs of Connecticut employers seeking to fill positions.

LET'S DO THIS

The Campaign for Working Connecticut (CWCT) is a statewide coalition working to create an equitable and inclusive Connecticut economy.

The Opportunity Youth Initiative is an effort of the CWCT to generate and guide public and private investments in our state's disconnected young people to secure the necessary supports for their long-term success.

- Capital Workforce Partners
- COMPASS Youth Collaborative
- CT Association of Adult & Continuing Education
- Domus Kids
- EastCONN
- EMERGE CT
- Greenwich United Way
- Love146
- National Youth Employment Coalition
- New Haven Violence Intervention
- Norwalk Acts
- Our Piece of the Pie
- RYASAP
- United Way of Central & Northeastern CT
- United Way of Coastal and Western CT
- United Way of Connecticut
- United Way of Greater Waterbury
- United Way of Southeastern CT
- Youth Business Initiative

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