

# *“Effective School Staff Interactions with Students and Police”*

## **Improving School Climate through Collaboration with Police**

*Effective School Staff Interactions with Students and Police* is a curriculum project of the State of Connecticut’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (JJAC) and its School/Police Task Group. The charge of the Task Group is to address the problem of arrests in schools and the need to encourage and support schools and police in diverting students from the juvenile justice system without sacrificing school safety.



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The *Effective School Staff Interactions with Students and Police* training is conducted by one school staff trainer and one police officer trainer. The goals of this curriculum are to:

1. **Increase** school staff knowledge of:
  - Youth behavior
  - Strategies for interacting effectively with students,
  - The role of law enforcement in schools, and
  - How the juvenile justice system works.
2. **Increase** school staff awareness of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) with the school disciplinary and juvenile justice systems.
3. **Improve** school staff attitudes toward students exhibiting inappropriate behavior.
4. **Increase** the likelihood that interactions between school staff and students exhibiting inappropriate behavior will have positive outcomes for students and reduce involvement of police.
5. **Increase** the likelihood that disruptive students will respond positively toward school staff.

## **Curriculum Overview by Training Topic**

### **Introduction: Why We Are Here**

- Sets the stage for learning by encouraging interaction among participants.
- Familiarizes participants with the agenda and training goals.
- Engages participants in activities to get them thinking about building positive relationships with students and police.

### **Topic 1: Equal Treatment of Diverse Youth**

- Exposes participants to youth behavior and education system statistics.
- Introduces participants to basic disproportionate minority contact (DMC) concepts and evidence of DMC in school disciplinary data.
- Engages participants in discussions of possible causes of DMC and ways school staff can help eliminate DMC.

### **Topic 2: Juvenile Justice System**

- Presents information on how the juvenile justice system works and why it is important to keep students out of the juvenile justice system.

### **Topic 3: Staff / Student Interactions**

- Briefly covers youth culture, adolescent development, and biological and social influences on youth decision-making.
- Identifies strategies for using verbal and non-verbal communication to build rapport with youth and prevent their behavior from escalating.
- Identifies de-escalation techniques to help distressed students regain self-control.
- Engages participants in an activity on perceptions of youth.

### **Topic 4: Schools & Police Working Together**

- Covers new research on the relationship of rates of discipline to attendance issues and academic achievement.
- Exposes participants to rates of out-of-school sanctions data.
- Provides information on formal school/police collaboration.
- Identifies the roles of teachers, administrators, related services staff and law enforcement when students exhibit inappropriate behaviors.

### **Summary: Putting It All Together**

- Revisits the purposes of the training.
- Reviews key concepts.
- Encourages participants to identify concrete action steps they can take immediately to make a difference with students and police.

### **Evaluation Results**

The JJAC commissioned an evaluation by the University of Connecticut to test the effectiveness of “*Effective School Staff Interactions with Students and Police.*” The evaluation design consisted of the following components:

- 1) Pre- and post-testing of a training group and a comparison group to assess the impact of the training on participant knowledge of and attitudes toward students and police;
- 2) Follow-up testing of training participants and the comparison group 5-7 months after training to assess participants’ retention of what they learned.

The first phase of the evaluation study was conducted in fall 2012 and the second phase in spring 2013. Key findings included:

- ✓ Positive increases in training participants’ knowledge scores that remained significant 5 to 7 months after the training had been completed.
- ✓ Training participants reported greater change than school staff in the comparison group on a cluster of attitude items focused on their efficacy in successfully interacting with students.
- ✓ Training participants found the program to be useful.

### **Participant Feedback**

*“Excellent chance to talk about issues.”*

*“We were able to hear how other school districts handle things.”*

*“I love the fact that a police officer was part of the teaching team.”*