

# **DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE**

The Digest of Administrative Reports to the Governor  
**Fiscal Year 2023-2024**

## *At a Glance*

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**Established** - 1973

**Constitutional Authority** - Article XXIII of the amendments to the Connecticut Constitution

**Statutory Authority** - General Statutes §§51-276 and 51-277

**Central Office** - 300 Corporate Place, Rocky Hill, CT 06067

**Number of Employees** - 501 (positions authorized) 467 (positions filled)

**Recurring Operating Expenses** - \$58 million (all sources)

## **Organizational Structure**

The Division of Criminal Justice is composed of the Office of the Chief State's Attorney and one State's Attorney's office for each of the state's thirteen Judicial Districts: Ansonia/Milford – Margaret E. Kelley; Danbury – David R. Applegate; Fairfield – Joseph T. Corradino; Hartford – Sharmese L. Walcott; Litchfield – David R. Shannon; Middlesex – Michael A. Gailor; New Britain – Christian M. Watson; New Haven – John P. Doyle, Jr.; New London – Paul J. Narducci; Stamford/Norwalk – Paul J. Ferencek; Tolland – Matthew C. Gedansky; Waterbury – Maureen Platt; Windham – Anne F. Mahoney.

## **Agency Mission**

The Division of Criminal Justice (DCJ) is the agency within the executive branch of government responsible for investigating and prosecuting all criminal matters in the adult and juvenile courts of the State of Connecticut. The agency also represents the state in all appellate, post-trial and post-conviction proceedings arising from the prosecution of criminal matters.

## **Statutory Responsibility**

The Division of Criminal Justice is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of criminal matters in Connecticut. Through the Chief State's Attorney and the thirteen State's Attorneys, the Division takes necessary and proper steps to prosecute all crimes and offenses against the laws of the state. This includes ordinances from municipalities and regulations from proper authorities.

## **Public Service**

The Division serves the public by conducting investigations and prosecutions fairly, justly and transparently with deference to the rule of law. The Division maintains the highest ethical standards to serve the public appropriately. This includes accused persons, victims of crime, and the public at large.

## Improvements/Achievements 2023-2024

In fiscal year 2023-2024, the Division added 92,525 new criminal and motor vehicle cases and disposed of approximately 98,000 cases. Of the approximately 98,000 criminal and motor vehicle dispositions that occurred in this state during the 2023-2024 fiscal year, almost half (43,514) were resolved by the state's entry of a nolle prosequi, or the state's exercise of its discretionary authority not to prosecute. Approximately 165 matters handled by the Division went to verdict after trial in the last year, including many high profile cases. Of note, the state obtained a guilty verdict in *State of Connecticut v. Michelle Troconis*, a case that gained national attention following the 2019 murder of Jennifer Dulos by her estranged husband, Fotis Dulos. On July 1, 2024, there were 88,000 pending criminal and motor vehicle matters in this state.

Specialized units at the Office of the Chief State's Attorney achieved successes in 2023-2024. The Appellate Bureau, which is responsible for representing the State of Connecticut in the vast majority of appeals challenging criminal convictions, employs approximately seventeen prosecutors, prepares written legal arguments (briefs) and presentations (oral argument) before the Connecticut Supreme and Appellate Courts. Appellate Bureau attorneys also track developments and trends throughout the state's trial courts, and conduct important research for the Chief State's Attorney on criminal justice issues and training. Among other decisions, members of the Appellate Bureau obtained favorable results from the Connecticut Supreme Court in the following cases involving police interrogation, discovery, and territorial jurisdiction:

- In *State v. Garrison*, the Court held that a defendant was not in custody for *Miranda* purposes where police questioned a defendant at a hospital intermittently over four and one-half hours, the aggregate time spent questioning him amounted to one hour, the questioning was not aggressive, and the officers did not restrain the defendant or take advantage of any restraint attendant to his medical treatment.
- In *State v. Andres C.*, the Court found that the State had not violated its *Brady* obligations when it had a Spanish-speaking non-lawyer member of the State's Attorney's staff review a complainant's diary, which was written in Spanish, for purposes of determining whether any material in the diary was subject to disclosure as material exculpatory evidence.
- In *State v. Honsch*, the Court adopted, for the first time, a rebuttable common-law presumption and found that the Connecticut courts had territorial jurisdiction over a murder prosecution where the victim's body was found dumped in Connecticut, but the specific location where the murder occurred could not be determined.

Prosecutors and Inspectors assigned to the Division's Cold Case Unit also continued their success in solving and prosecuting previously unsolved murders. In addition to traditional investigative techniques, the unit utilizes the Grand Jury system as well as innovative scientific methods such as Forensic Investigative Genetic Genealogy to attempt to solve cold cases. Several arrests have been made this year and those cases are pending in various courthouses. Notable decision from this past year include:

- *State v. James Brown*, a 2008 cold case from Hartford involving a gang dispute that erupted during a concert at the civic center. The fight carried over to the street and an individual

was shot and killed. The Cold Case Unit presented the case to a jury. Brown was convicted of murder and sentenced to forty years to serve.

- *State v. Brandon Letman*, a 2016 cold case from Hartford involving a gun for drug deal which went bad when both the defendant and one of the victims tried to use fake items in the trade. The defendant returned to where the victim was and shot three people, including two fatally. He was sentenced to life without the possibility of release plus ten years for attempting to tamper with witnesses during the pendency of his case.

The Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU), created in 2022, is a unit within the Office of the Chief State's Attorney that independently reviews and re-evaluates past convictions to ensure justice and implement safeguards that guarantee Connecticut's criminal justice system is working fairly. The Unit is staffed by two prosecutors, three police inspectors and a paralegal specialist. The Conviction Integrity Unit reinvestigates eligible cases of convicted persons who claim to be wrongfully convicted and cases where there are questions about the integrity of the investigation that resulted in a conviction. In fiscal year 2023-2024, the CIU:

- issued reports in the matters of *State v. Derrick Taylor* and *State v. George Gould*. The reports have been made public by posting on the Division of Criminal Justice CIU website.
- received 52 requests for case review.
- reviewed and closed 14 cases. The CIU sends to the defendant and/or the attorney representing him/her, a written rationale for closure of the investigation.
- had 72 pending cases in the investigation stage. One matter was referred to the local State's Attorney for consideration of the Conviction Integrity Panel's recommendation.

On the technology front, the Division continues to increase its participation in the Criminal Justice Information Sharing Governing Board's (CJIS) new Criminal Information Sharing System (CISS). This system provides for the exchange of criminal case data among police departments, the Judicial Branch, and the Division's electronic case management system. Initially implemented in only one Division location, the Middlesex Judicial District, the Division recently has expanded the data exchange to police departments in the Waterbury and New Haven Judicial Districts.

During the fiscal year 2023-2024, the Division of Criminal Justice continued its work on the *Moving Justice Forward* initiative, a collaboration between the Division of Criminal Justice and The Center for Justice Innovation that focused on improving fairness and efficiency in Connecticut's criminal justice system. Funded with private support from the Herbert & Nell Singer Foundation, the project involved a comprehensive analysis of current state of prosecutorial policies and practices in four of the state's 13 Judicial Districts - Hartford, New Britain, New London and Danbury. The end result of the project was a blueprint, or strategic management plan, released in July of 2023 that will assist in implementing practice changes. Over the last year, the Division made significant strides in implementing many of the blueprint's goals and objectives and continues to consult and rely upon the blueprint in assessing and planning future agency-wide initiatives.

One of the goals identified in the *Moving Justice Forward* blueprint concerned expanding problem-solving approaches to prosecution through the development of robust diversion options. During the last fiscal year, the Division continued to expand and refine one such program, the

Early Screening and Intervention (ESI) program, which currently operates at seven locations throughout the state. ESI is designed to shift certain accused individuals from a more traditional court based response to a solution based system. Staffed with trained prosecutors and resource counselors the program works to meet the needs of low level offenders by addressing root causes of their criminal behavior. This focus on an individual's criminogenic needs helps to reshape behavior with resources targeting the unique situation of a particular offender. The program continues to have success diverting individuals away from the more traditional consequence based criminal justice system. ESI also continues working with outreach programs and their local police departments to combine efforts to give back to the community. In the last year, the Division created an Early Screening and Intervention practice guidelines to be used as a training reference statewide. Future plans include expanding the ESI program to all court locations, and work is currently underway to secure grant funding to assist in this endeavor.

Finally, improvements and achievements in the Division's recruitment and training efforts remain a central focus of the agency. In the last year, the Division:

- appropriated sufficient funding to offer, for the first time, paid internship opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students. This allowed the Division, during the summer of 2024, to increase economic diversity among our interns, hiring approximately forty paid interns who worked in locations across the state, from Stamford to Windham and Litchfield to New London, as well as in specialized units at the Office of the Chief State's Attorney.
- developed and implemented DCJ Camp Justice, a weeklong summer program for eighth grade students entering the ninth grade in the fall. Camp Justice debuted in the summer of 2023 and was a tremendous success. This innovative program provided approximately forty young people from across the state with meaningful exposure to the many opportunities associated with a career in the criminal justice system and educated them about the work prosecutors do every day in balancing community safety with the protection of the rights of individuals. Students at the camp were introduced to the criminal justice system through various presentations from guest speakers and career panels, as well as interactive opportunities with courthouse visits, mock trial preparation and presentation. The 2nd annual Camp Justice took place in July 2024.
- expanded the Division's Fellowship program three-fold. Since 2019, the Division has operated a fellowship program for graduating law students interested in pursuing a career in criminal justice. Through this program, the Division offers paid positions to qualified candidates prior to law school graduation, thus ensuring increased access to diverse candidates who might otherwise accept positions elsewhere early in the law school hiring process. The program allows law school graduates to begin work with the Division prior to bar passage and to work in a prosecutorial role as a fellow for up to two years while awaiting bar passage and, following bar admission, while pursuing vacant Deputy Assistant State's Attorney positions. During the first four years of the program, the Division accepted two fellows annually; however, in 2023, the Division expanded the Fellowship program to six. Five additional fellows are scheduled to begin their fellowships in September 2024 in office locations across the state.

- developed, drafted, and distributed a Division of Criminal Justice Supervisor’s Handbook, which now serves as a resource for supervisors state-wide. The Handbook also served as the foundation for a supervisor’s training held in May 2024.
- expanded the Deputy Assistant State’s Attorney “Bootcamp” training program, a week-long training for all newly appointed Deputy Assistant State’s Attorneys, into a three-stage program that tracks the progression of our most junior prosecutors, exposing them to increasingly advanced topics which they are likely to encounter as their careers, abilities, and responsibilities develop.
- conducted a four-day “detective school” and multiple one-day trainings for law enforcement statewide.
- reinstituted what previously had been known as the “Arnold Markle Search and Seizure Course” for prosecutors and law enforcement personnel. This 10-week, comprehensive course taught by Division personnel covers topics including the preparation of search warrants, exceptions to the warrant requirement, impact of sensory enhancements and technology, motor vehicle detentions, and warrantless arrests.

## **Information Reported as Required by State Statute**

### **Abbreviations**

CISS- Criminal Information Sharing System

CIU- Conviction Integrity Unit

CJIS- Criminal Justice Information Sharing Governing Board

DCJ- Division of Criminal Justice

ESI- Early Screening and Intervention

### **References**

Connecticut General Statutes § 51-276 et seq.

Connecticut General Statutes § 51-277

Public Act 19-59