

Youth-led Participatory Action Research on Pre-Trial Detention Project

Project Period: 2024 - Present | **HDI Staff on the Project:** Linda Sprague Martinez, PhD

Working in partnership with the CT Justice Alliance and The Gault Center, this project aims to engage young people in examining the impacts of pre-trial detention on youth health and well-being using a multilevel framework and identifying and understanding the drivers of pre-trial detention.

What is Pre-Trial Detention?

In *Schall v. Martin* (1984), the Supreme Court upheld pre-trial detention, allowing youth to be held pre-trial for societal and personal safety. Dissenting justices warned that detention’s psychological harms often outweigh its benefits and criticized vague laws enabling the removal of children without considering these effects.

YPAR Curriculum & Pedagogy

The curriculum emphasizes racial justice and power-sharing in research & action designed to engage youth in four units, with ongoing team-building exercises

Unit #1	Introduces key concepts such as social justice, detention laws, and health disparities.
Unit #2	Applies these concepts to the students' own lives and communities through data exploration.
Unit #3	Focuses on action—youth develop plans to address the impacts of pre-trial detention.
Unit #4	Involves planning for research dissemination and extending the impact beyond the program.

Defining Youth-led Participatory Action Research (YPAR)

An approach to scientific inquiry and social change grounded in principles of equity that engages young people in identifying problems relevant to their own lives, conducting research to understand the problems, and advocating for changes based on research evidence. (Ozer 2016)

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