

PPSF Application  
November 2016  
Connecticut Bail Fund

Organization: Connecticut Bail Fund (project of the 501c3 corporation Community Bonds, Inc.)  
Address: 129 Church Street Suite 416, New Haven CT, 06511  
Website: [www.ctbailfund.org](http://www.ctbailfund.org)  
Supervisor: Brett Davidson, Executive Director  
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Placement dates: Tuesday, May 30 – Friday, August 11

The placement dates are flexible depending on the projects and tasks chosen by the fellow.

Hours: Monday-Friday, 9AM – 5PM

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### **Placement Description:**

Connecticut Bail Fund is dedicated to protecting the rights of the accused and promoting racial and economic justice in the pretrial system. By paying bail for indigent individuals charged with low-level offenses and connecting those individuals with social, medical, and legal services, we directly curb mass incarceration and restore the presumption of innocence to individuals living in poverty. The wide-ranging benefits of this intervention include retention of housing, retention of employment, family reunification, improved case outcomes, reduced recidivism, reduced jail populations, cost savings for the state, and increased trust in the criminal justice system. From this innovative platform, our organization also functions as a nonpartisan advocacy and research outfit to raise awareness on the inequities of the bail system and engage the community and government in comprehensive pretrial justice reform.

### **Fellow's Job:**

The Fellow will support our Executive Director in the day-to-day activities of Connecticut Bail Fund. This includes tracking data on current and former clients, collaborating with public defenders to select eligible clients for bail relief, reminding clients of upcoming court obligations, researching bail reform measures for legislative advocacy, sharing client success stories with the public, offering assistance to fledgling bail funds in other states, and organizing community discussions about mass incarceration and the rights of the accused.

### **Please write a complete description of the specific project you propose and list the duties/outcomes expected of the Fellow. (*Suggested length: one to two pages.*)**

Once we post bail, our organization is geared to address the attendant needs of our client population. Clients are paired with Community Navigators who have a history of incarceration and possess the necessary cultural competence to assist justice-involved individuals. We also provide transportation fare for court dates, facilitate medical and social services appointments,

make regular follow-up calls and court reminders, and partner with public defenders to stay aware of clients' legal obligations.

The Connecticut Bail Fund is in its first year of existence. Because we are a new organization, we are looking for a Fellow who is self-directed, creative, organized, and, most importantly, passionate about protecting the human rights of the accused. He or she will have the opportunity, if they wish, to propose and direct their own projects. However, we have listed three projects on which they can work, focused on three distinct areas of practice: community organizing; social scientific research; and social entrepreneurship.

Project 1: Our organization operates within the innovative political paradigm of participatory defense. Rather than conceiving of the criminal defendant as a passive recipient of legal services, the participatory defense model conceives the defendant and their network of friends and family as powerful agents throughout the pretrial process. Over the summer, we hope to partner with other local grassroots community organizations to launch a weekly participatory defense clinic, open to the public, where families with pending cases can give and receive a range of support services focused on improving collective case outcomes. The Fellow will have the opportunity to develop connections with other local organizations and plan these meetings. Duties and outcomes may include:

1. Establish formal partnerships with other local organizations.
2. Maintain a database of participants and their personal networks, along with case information and goals.
3. Connect with participants to remind them of appointments, court dates and other obligations.
4. Take detailed notes at community meetings.
5. Coordinate demonstrations and community meetings to support specific, high profile defendants, such as victims of police brutality.

Project 2: The Fellow will have the opportunity to assist in the Randomized Control Trial we are conducting to quantify the impact of our intervention across a range of variables, including case outcomes, time spent in jail, recidivism, and more. The Fellow will aggregate relevant data and create targeted fundraising materials highlighting empirical successes. Duties and outcomes may include:

1. Track data on case outcomes and develop conclusions about the impact of race, income, gender, and health status on bail amounts and case outcomes.
2. Produce the first semi-annual report on Connecticut Bail Fund's operations.
3. Create easily digestible publicity materials.
4. Help connect with donors about the impact of our intervention through our newsletter and social media presence.

Project 3: The Fellow will have the opportunity to conduct community outreach in Bridgeport and Hartford in order to begin the process of expanding operations into those cities. This includes forming relationships with re-entry service providers, public defenders, local politicians,

police administrators, court staff, formerly incarcerated individuals and families, and more. Duties and outcomes may include:

1. Research and compile a list of social service resources that exist in Bridgeport and Hartford, oriented to currently and formerly incarcerated individuals and their families.
2. Establish connections with those organizations on behalf of Connecticut Bail Fund.
3. Plan and host a series of community meetings (similar to meetings we have held in New Haven) in Bridgeport and Hartford explaining the nature of our intervention and inviting feedback from concerned community members.

**Specific skills/experience required for the project (*Please list*):**

1. Strong organization and attention to detail.
2. Strong communication skills.
3. Capacity for self-direction.

(Not required but strongly desired)

1. Experience working in New Haven with community-based organizations in the city
2. Community organizing experience.
3. Legislative advocacy research experience (e.g. writing or giving testimony, working for or with state legislators, preparing policy briefs or memos).
4. Social scientific academic experience.
5. Experience working with people who are currently or formerly incarcerated.

**Additional requirements (e.g. a car or weekend working hours). If a car is required, please include information regarding parking arrangements and mileage reimbursement):**

N/A

**Briefly describe the work that Yale PPSF Fellows have done with your agency in the past and present. If you have not worked with Yale Fellows, please describe any work that Yale students have done with your agency.**

Three of four co-founders of Connecticut Bail Fund are current or former students of Yale College. Brett Davidson, Executive Director, graduated *magna cum laude* in Spring 2016 with a B.A. in Political Science. Simone Seiver is currently a senior in Yale College, expected to graduate in Spring 2017 with a B.A./M.A. in Political Science. Patrick Sullivan is a junior in Yale College, expected to graduate in Spring 2018. To date, Connecticut Bail Fund has raised over \$150,000, obtained 501(c)3 status, gained licensing as professional bondsmen, and commenced operations in the GA 23 courthouse in New Haven. We have also established a Community Advisory Board to guide operations in New Haven. Our Fellow will interact extensively with the members of this board.