

JDAI News

Newsletter of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

March 2006

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Largest Ever Annual Conference Focuses on Fundamentals; Sites Challenged to Go Deeper

More than 400 detention reformers came together in Las Vegas to celebrate their work at the largest meeting ever of JDAI practitioners. A diverse agenda provided something for everyone including 36 workshops spread over two days. Four special tracks of workshops were provided: fundamentals, girls in detention, racial disparities and a population management simulation.

Participants were challenged to go deeper and move beyond their early successes. In her opening address, Raquel Mariscal, Senior Associate for Juvenile Justice Reform at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, reminded conference attendees that the ongoing challenge as a JDAI site is to remain focused on fundamentals, be persistent in seeking improvements, and methodically work toward integrated systemic reform.

The Foundation's Director of Programs for High-Risk Youth, Bart Lubow, welcomed the new JDAI sites including Minnesota, Washington D.C., Missouri and a consortium of counties from Oregon. He reported that in the past six years JDAI has grown from five pilot sites to almost 60 sites in 16 states and acknowledged that this sudden growth creates potential risks which could over time threaten the integrity of the JDAI model. He encouraged everyone involved in the process to remain vigilant in supporting fidelity to the JDAI model.



Panel on youth involvement: (l. to r.) Tshaka Barrows, Community Justice Network for Youth; Ben Alamillo, Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos; Catrenna Burney, Youth Rights Media; Laura McCarger, Youth Rights Media; and Steve Eiseman, Cook County Juvenile Probation.

Why we detain youth who don't belong in detention?

The conference opened with a discussion on the purpose of detention. Both within and across JDAI sites, detention continues to be used in idiosyncratic ways often resulting in unnecessary, inappropriate, and disparate use of detention. The plenary panel, made up of both elected and senior juvenile justice officials, was chaired by Multnomah County Chief Family Court Judge Elizabeth Welch.

Panelists highlighted the difficult systemic issues that sometimes result in inappropriate detention. Panelists generally agreed that too many youth are detained when parents refuse to pick up their children, when youth are chronic

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The following are excerpts from Bart Lubow's "state of the initiative" presentation at December's inter-site conference in Las Vegas.

Let me try to quantify both the growth and growth potential of this detention reform movement. When we assembled for the first ever JDAI conference in December 1992, there were five local jurisdictions represented. Their combined detention populations accounted for less than five percent of the overall detained population in the nation. Tonight as we meet here, JDAI is being implemented in more than 60 jurisdictions in 16 states and the District of Columbia. The states where JDAI is active house approximately 49% of all detained youth in the country. If expansion continues consistent with the expressed interests of the system officials we have been in contact with, by the end of 2006, juvenile detention reform will be the agenda in at least 27 states and the District of Columbia, accounting for just about three-quarters of all the detained youth in the country. I believe it is, therefore, neither an exaggeration nor a boast to say that we do indeed have a juvenile detention reform movement in this country whose reach is already extensive but whose scale is now approaching a genuine "tipping point".

But as flattering as wide scale replication is, let no one here think that it does not come with significant challenges, including living up to the reputations that many of your sites have or are acquiring. One thing has become very clear over the course of the replication phase of this initiative: those sites that have fared most poorly, that have the least to show in terms of measurable changes, are the sites where JDAI has been viewed and acted upon as but another new program, another grant opportunity, another feather in some administrator's cap. The places that do best view detention reform as the engine for system transformation. They have made their bet on the future with a known, do-able, proven set of strategies that can ripple through their entire system like the radiating rings of a stone dropped on the surface of a placid lake.

Our most fundamental challenge is how to take advantage of this unique opportunity to change juvenile justice. The large numbers of sites that wish to join your ranks are welcome, of course, but how are they to be supported in the work? How can we continue to grow, continue to innovate, and stay loyal to the most exacting standards? I would suggest two things. First, we must recognize that this unprecedented growth demands a new infrastructure that can support reform in more and more places,

but with greater efficiency, less individualized attention, and a corresponding increase in self-reliance by new sites. To that end, we are working on a number of exciting efforts.

But we also need to rely on ourselves to set and sustain the standards of excellence essential for detention reform's values and strategies to reach full potential. The healthy growth of our movement has no alternative but to rely on all of you to set the standards, in effect to speak the truth based upon what you have learned and demonstrated. Our network can not, therefore, only be about personal friendships and professional accommodations. It must also be the conscience that steers this growing movement.

Can we be this helmsman? There are about 400 of you in this room this evening. You come from all corners of the country and from every key constituency group within juvenile justice. I have no doubts that we are now large enough to tip the scales, to transform juvenile justice from its narrow reliance on surveillance and punishment to a system in which none of us would dread our own child's involvement.

That is the opportunity we have; that is the challenge we face. We will succeed if we find the collective will to do so.



Plenary panel: (l. to r.) Stephen Siegel, Commissioner, Superior Court, Santa Cruz, CA; Elizabeth Welch, Chief Family Court Judge, Multnomah, OR; Leonard Pugh, Director, Dept. of Juvenile Services, Washoe County, NV; William Voy, Judge, Eighth Judicial District Court of Clark County, NV; Sheila Mitchell, Chief Probation Officer, Santa Clara County, CA.

drug users, when the appropriate mental health services are unavailable, or when youth repeatedly joy ride in stolen cars. Despite the fact that reform is taking hold, too many inappropriate youth are still being locked up. The representatives of all six JDAI sites acknowledged that detention reform practitioners must go deeper in creating targeted solutions to reduce inappropriate detention.

Fundamentals remain at the heart of JDAI

Because there were a significant number of people from new or potential sites attending their first JDAI conference, as well as a number of people from more experienced sites that were new to the initiative, a series of four workshops were offered as an introduction to detention reform. Participants explored the role of data, examined tried and true reform strategies, and heard from JDAI leaders from around

the country on common problems and their solutions.

For those more experienced practitioners a double workshop offered a detention reform simulation of the fictitious “Emerald County” and participants worked together to analyze quantitative and qualitative data and propose detailed and specific reform strategies. The simulation mimicked JDAI’s collaborative process, requiring attendees to work together, compromise, on turf issues and recognize each other’s points of view.

In conjunction with the release of the JDAI publication, *Detention Reform and Girls*, two workshops probed the relevance of JDAI core strategies as tools to alleviate gender bias and support gender-responsive reform. Four workshops on reducing racial disparities in detention were some of the most popular workshops at the confer-

ence. Leaders from JDAI sites around the country described their experience engaging community stakeholders, outlined successful program elements and detailed program innovations that have targeted racial bias and over-representation.

Workshop outlines examples that improve equity

At a workshop that provided practical examples to reduce the over-representation of minorities, Judith Cox, Santa Cruz County Chief Probation Officer, described the creation of a neighborhood evening reporting center designed for high-risk Latino youth as an alternative to detention. According to Ms. Cox, “It has been my experience that disproportionate minority confinement is due in large part to the system’s inability or unwillingness to provide targeted services tailored to the individual needs of the jurisdiction’s minority population. So often the youth of color have unique needs that go unnoticed or ignored.”

Clayton County, Georgia Juvenile Judge Steven Teske discussed a cooperative agreement between the juvenile court and the public school system that provided the county with a much needed protocol for detention. Due to zero tolerance policies minority youth were being referred to detention for misdemeanor offenses. After implementing the agreement referral rates for African American youth plummeted.

James Bell, Director of the Burns Institute reminded workshop participants, “Merely reducing the population in detention won’t necessarily impact the over-representation of minorities, unless you use your data to pinpoint the exact decision points that are contributing to the bias.”



Peer to Peer Education

The JDAI state coordinators (l) and local coordinators (r) pose for pictures after a breakfast round table focused on peer learning. Despite an 8:00 a.m. call, this was a hugely successful voluntary event. An acre of conference space had tables filled with judges meeting with judges, chief probation officers with chief probation officers, detention staff with detention staff, prosecutors with prosecutors, elected officials with elected officials, etc.

Beyond detention

The conference wrapped up with a final plenary session that explored ways in which JDAI can be a platform for overall system reform. In the closing session leaders from three of initiative's oldest sites--Cook County, Multnomah County and Santa Cruz-- described how detention reform has served as a catalyst to stimulate and support far reaching changes in every aspect of their respective juvenile systems.

Family focused policies and programming have been integrated into the juvenile justice operations. Services and programs are in place to minimize inappropriate detention. The values inherent to JDAI are woven into the fabric of every policy document, case

decision and training manual. The three counties are intentional in their desire to divert every youth from penetrating any deeper into the juvenile system.

According to Michael Rohan, Director of Probation and Court Services in Cook County, "It's how we do business in Cook County and the outcomes are more than worth the effort." Bill Siffermann, formerly of Cook County and the current Chief Juvenile Probation Officer in San Francisco, likens the change in the Cook juvenile system to a runaway stage coach, "Detention reform took off running and is such a positive force on everyone involved."

JDAI conference participants: a broad and diverse group.

72 Sites from 22 States

- 45 Judges
- 55 Probation Supervisors and Staff
- 41 Administrators
- 25 Technical Assistance Providers
- 24 Court Personnel
- 21 Community Service Agencies
- 20 Prosecutors
- 18 Juvenile Justice Agency Directors
- 18 Detention Personnel
- 13 Public Defenders
- 13 Chief Probation Officers
- 13 JDAI Local Coordinators
- 12 JDAI State Coordinators
- 9 Elected Officials
- 8 Law Enforcement Personnel

Results are significant for detained and adjudicated youth in DuPage County, Illinois

DuPage County is a bedroom community outside of Chicago. John Bentley, its director of probation and court services, worked in Cook County, IL in its first year as a JDAI site. He has successfully applied the JDAI principles and reduced DuPage’s reliance on out-of-home placement for both detained and adjudicated youth.

Although the county had added 64 new beds for a total of 96 in the late 90s, DuPage is currently averaging only 35 youth a day in detention. In November of 2005 they had a fifteen year low of 22 youth in detention. Annual admissions have been reduced by 42 percent, from 968 in 1998 to 559 in 2005. As a result a 16-bed wing was transferred to the sheriff for adult work release and alternative programming is being explored for the remaining excess beds.

DuPage also reduced its total costs for out-of-home placement from \$3 million in the mid 90s to \$2.2 million in 1998 and just over \$1 million in 2005. Last year the county sent just 10 youth to secure care at the Illinois Department of Corrections compared to 25 in 1998. The county is achieving its combined goals of reducing secure detention, residential placements, and institutional commitments.

In 1998, worried about the high cost of out-of-home placement, a DuPage steering committee was formed to look at both committed and detention placements. The group quickly agreed

on guiding principles that included a decision-making model based upon objective instruments; enhanced reliance on family preservation, Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy; and an outcomes-based approach that held staff and service providers accountable. A comprehensive, data-driven continuum of services for moderate and high-risk youth was eventually designed and implemented.

Detention reform in DuPage included

- an increase of family-focused alternatives;
- better solutions for non-delinquent truants and children running away from child welfare placements;
- a court notification program to reduce failures-to-appear;
- a pre-trial intervention program for high-risk youth;
- a reduction in the number of violations of probation due to improved probation services;
- the court’s increasing trust of and reliance upon predictive screening instruments; and,
- improved staff training in assessment and case management.

As the county reduced its reliance on secure detention, the daily operations at the DuPage County Detention Center earned a national reputation and is recognized by the National Juvenile Detention Association as a model detention center. The facility provides treatment to mitigate risk factors while youth are in detention. Initial research indicates that the one year re-offending rate of detained youth was reduced 28%.

DuPage Indicators	1998	2005
Average Daily Detention Population	53	35
Annual Admissions to Detention	968	559
Commitments to Secure Placement	25	10
Annual cost of out-of-home placements	\$2.2 million	\$1.0 million

Essex County, New Jersey forms youth advisory council

As part of the many detention reform strategies being adopted in New Jersey, Essex County has created a Youth Advisory Council to inform and advise county juvenile employment and juvenile justice programs. Council members will have the opportunity to assess juvenile program effectiveness, serve as a bridge to the community and encourage additional youth involvement.

Judge James G. Troiano conducted the swearing-in of eleven youth at the Essex County Historic Courthouse. The judge advised the youth that if at any time they needed to speak to him or the other judges, their doors would be open. He encouraged them to learn more about local juvenile justice system operations and invited them to tour both the courthouse and the detention center. Some of the members of the newly formed advisory council have direct personal experience with

the juvenile justice system. The youth were referred by probation and Youth Services Commission programs.

According to Melissa D’Arcy, Detention Specialist for Essex County, “The ceremony was very nice. There were 11 youths sworn in. Our local judge was thrilled to be a part of this program and seemed very supportive of the new council. We think everyone will benefit from this process.”

Another JDAI site, Cook County, Illinois, has relied upon its Juvenile Advisory Council since 2002 for advice and education. The mission of the Cook County council is to create a forum for youth to work with court personnel and assist in developing client-based perspectives on programs and policies.

New Jersey to resolve minor offenses at police station and to avoid formal court proceedings

The New Jersey Attorney General has directed New Jersey police departments to adopt uniform guidelines to resolve minor delinquent activity at the police station to avoid formal processing in the courts.

Under the Station House Adjustment program, officers are required to bring in the youth’s parents or guardians and the victim to discuss the offense and, when appropriate, arrange for restitution. If all sides agree, a formal written agreement would be drawn up, setting the terms and conditions of the adjustment.

The guidelines will turn what was informal police activity into standardized law

enforcement practice. Following a review of existing practices across all jurisdictions, juvenile justice officials found vast differences in the application of adjustments that suggested an unequal administration of justice for juveniles throughout New Jersey.

The preliminary findings suggested that some municipalities did not use stationhouse adjustments resulting in a complaint being filed every time a juvenile is charged with an offense, to a neighboring town, where first time offenders were regularly diverted with no record or court intervention. New Jersey officials hope that by promulgating this policy they will interrupt and prevent future disparities in treatment from occurring.

“For most young people, their first contact with the juvenile justice system is their local police department. Many times, these youth will never have contact with the system again. The uniform use of stationhouse adjustments will give our local law enforcement officers an important tool to help get young people on the right track and build stronger communities. By bringing families, caregivers and law enforcement together, and identifying any need for support services, this early intervention strategy can prevent a juvenile’s further involvement in the juvenile justice system,” said Howard L. Beyer, Executive Director, Juvenile Justice Commission.

“The Station House Adjustment Program is an important diversionary tool that should be used by all police departments,” said New Jersey Juvenile Officers Association President Detective Sergeant Robert Sarnecki. “In New Jersey, it benefits the victims of crime by allowing them to obtain justice without having to go to court. At the same time,

it allows first-time juvenile offenders who commit minor offenses to face immediate consequences for their actions without being formally charged. This allows the juvenile an opportunity to correct their behavior while avoiding a formal delinquency record.”

Juvenile offenses involving drugs or violence are excluded from stationhouse adjustments unless there is a waiver from the county prosecutor.

Cook County, Illinois public defenders embrace detention advocacy and see positive results

Last year, for transparency and accountability purposes, the Cook County Public Defender’s Office released the findings of a 2004 evaluation that found significant shortcomings in the office’s lawyer – client relationships.

Most Cook County public defenders had too little contact with youth, meeting with clients and their families just minutes before critical court hearings that determine detention status. The study also found that although staff were overwhelmed by large caseloads and tight budgets, the management of the cases themselves was not efficient nor in the clients best interest.

Dorene Kuffer, Chief of the Juvenile Justice Division, Cook County Public Defender’s Office, determined to improve office practices, implemented new procedures to be more supportive of the client. She assigned an additional attorney to each case. One defender goes into the detention facility each morning to conduct intake interviews with youth and, whenever possible,

family members. The second defender conducts the preliminary case investigation. As a result, the public defenders were more adequately prepared at the 1:30 p.m. detention hearings.

While one attorney is representing detained youth at the detention hearing a second attorney is assigned to meet, interview and talk with the youth and parents who arrive at court with a summons or orders to appear. The second defender is available to provide the youth and family with a full explana-

tion of what to expect and how their case will likely progress through the system.

In order to take advantage of the detention alternatives in Cook County, the public defenders were trained by Cook County probation staff in how to assess and match youth with appropriate programs. As they become familiar with the local range of options to detention, they started taking a more active role in recommending alternatives to the court.

The public defender's office is also publishing an updatable resource guide that highlights all decision points and identifies opportunities to involve the client and get feedback in case decisions. It is designed as a training guide for new defenders and a practitioner's handbook for senior staff.

For more information contact Dorene Kuffer, Chief of Juvenile Justice Division, Cook County Public Defender's Office. dkuffer@cookcountygov.com.

Conferences

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ)

2006 Annual Conference
What are the implications of adolescent brain development for juvenile justice?
May 4-7, 2006
Bethesda, Maryland
Contact Leslie Linn at (202) 467-0864 or linn@juvjustice.org.

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCFCJ)

Graduated sanctions in juvenile justice: a national training
May 7-10, 2006
Las Vegas, Nevada
Visit www.ncfcj.org

National Center for Children Exposed to Violence (NCCEV)

Leading change: rethinking juvenile justice
3rd Annual Juvenile Justice Conference
May 11, 2006
Storrs, Connecticut
Visit www.nccev.org.

Child Welfare League of America (CWLA)

2006 Juvenile Justice National Symposium
Building successful alliances to improve outcomes
May 31-June 2, 2006
South San Francisco, CA
Contact Kerrin Sweet at 202/942-0276 or ksweet@cwla.org.

National Mental Health Association (NMHA)

2006 Annual Meeting
Building the movement
June 8-10, 2006
Washington, D.C.
Contact Diana Looney at 703-838-7504 or DLooney@nmha.org.

National Association of Counties (NACo)

71st Annual Conference 2006
August 4-8, 2006
Cook County, Illinois
Visit www.naco.org.

JDAI Newsmakers

Baltimore JDAI leader named “unsung hero”



Maceo Hallmon receives award from Mark Soler

Maceo Hallmon, Director of East Baltimore Youth and Family Services, received an “Unsung Hero” award from the Youth Law Center on December 12, 2005, in San Francisco. The Center honored Mr. Hallmon for his “commitment to bring the voice of the community to juvenile justice reform efforts in Baltimore and the State of Maryland.”

Mr. Hallmon has been active as part of JDAI in Baltimore, and most recently he served as Acting Director of the Community and Family Resource Center, a new program for parents and youth at the Baltimore City Juvenile Justice Center. Mark Soler, President of the Youth Law Center, said, “This award recognizes Maceo’s outstanding efforts over many years to bring the concerns of the community to juvenile detention reform and other juvenile justice initiatives in the state.”

The Youth Law Center presents the Loren Warboys Unsung Hero award each year to individuals who have made

exemplary contributions to improve the lives of at-risk youth in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. The award honors Loren Warboys who was a Youth Law Center staff attorney and managing director from 1979-1999, when he died of leukemia.

Barrios Unidos honored



Daniel Nane Alejandro

award was accepted by Daniel Nane Alejandro, Executive Director.

Barrios Unidos’ mission is to prevent violence amongst youth by providing them with life enhancing alternatives. Over the past twenty-five years Barrios Unidos has developed a model that helps to reclaim and restore the lives of struggling young people while promoting unity in families and neighborhoods through community building efforts. Along with extensive community outreach, the organization operates the Cesar E. Chavez School for Social Change, an alternative high school in Santa Cruz, California.

Barrios Unidos has been a key community partner in Santa Cruz’s detention reform initiative, conducting cultural programs in the juvenile facility and providing employment, mentoring and educational services for delinquent youth in the community.

Scott MacDonald recognized as United Way community hero



Scott MacDonald

The United Way of Santa Cruz County named Scott MacDonald, Assistant Chief of Probation, their Community Hero in 2005. Scott was recognized for his

leadership in the county’s effort to reform its juvenile justice system.

Since 1997, Santa Cruz County has dramatically reduced its reliance on detention, while also cutting juvenile crime substantially. By providing probation services to low risk offenders and placing committed youth in alternative programs Santa Cruz has seen a reduction in juvenile crime. Less than 3 percent of all youth diverted to alternative services re-offend.

In addition, because juvenile hall costs about \$156 per youth per day and the services provided to divert children from detention cost about \$65 per child per day, Santa Cruz County is spending less to do more.

MacDonald, now a national leader in JDAI, credited his boss, Chief Probation Officer Judy Cox, the entire Probation Department, and the community agencies that provided the services as the real heroes. “It’s not about any one so-called hero,” he said. The staff at United Way agreed that numerous people contributed to the effort, but said MacDonald had been among those at the forefront. Santa Cruz County Sheriff Steve Robbins said, “It’s a well-deserved award.”

Report features effective strategies to target and reduce racial disparities

Two JDAI sites are highlighted in a new publication “No Turning Back: Promising Approaches to Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities Affecting Youth of Color in the Justice System,” a new report by the Building Blocks for Youth initiative at the Youth Law Center. Youth of color make up one-third of all youth in America, but two-thirds of youth in juvenile detention facilities. The report outlines in depth eleven case studies and catalogues the strategies, including research, legislation, community organizing, media advocacy, and litigation to reduce racial inequities in the juvenile justice system.

The chapter on JDAI demonstrates that by reducing detention, jurisdictions were also able to reduce disproportionate minority confinement. In 1994, in Multnomah County (Portland), Oregon, youth of color represented 73% of the youth in detention. By 2003, the average daily population of youth in detention declined from 96 to 33, the number of annual detention admissions fell from 2,915 to 348 (an 88% decline), and the percentage of youth of color in detention fell from 73% to 50%. In 1997, in Santa Cruz County, California, youth of color comprised 72% of the youth in detention. By 2003, the average daily detention population fell from 47 to 27, the number of annual detention admissions fell from 1,591 to 972 (a 38% decline), and the proportion of detained youth who were youth of color also fell. “No Turning Back” may be ordered on the Youth Law Center’s website, www.ylc.org.

Group looks at best practices to assist youth involved in multiple human service systems

A series of issue briefs examine how the systems of public education, juvenile justice, and child welfare can work in better coordination to address the needs of youth who are often impacted by more than one system at a time. The series provides information on the scope of the “tunnel problem” and recommendations for how funders and policy-makers can support better collaboration between systems and youth-serving organizations at the federal, state, and local levels. The publications are available on the Youth Transitions Funders Group website, www.ytfg.org.

Juvenile crime: don’t believe the hype ... believe in hope

By Vincent Schiraldi, Director of the District of Columbia’s Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services. Originally published in the Washington Examiner



Vincent Schiraldi

As 2005 comes to an end, there is hopeful news about juvenile crime in the District of Columbia that will probably come as a surprise to most. Juvenile arrests are down for the first time in three years. The sharpest declines have come in the serious crime categories. And juveniles commit far less crime than adults do.

At Mayor Anthony Williams’ Fourth Citizens Summit in November 2005, some 2000 citizens reported that, while crime by adults was down, juvenile crime was up. This comes after more than a year of crime coverage in the media that has focused on juveniles as if they are committing crimes in greater numbers than before and in greater numbers than adults. Research has found that juvenile crime - nationally - is often covered out of proportion to its actual occurrence. This leads consumers of the news media to conclude that young people commit a larger portion of crime than they actually do, and that juvenile crime is increasing when it actually isn’t.

While juvenile crime is serious whenever it occurs, it is not increasing and it occurs much less frequently than adult crime. Metropolitan Police statistics through mid-December 2005 show that juvenile arrests in the District are down 2.3 percent versus the same period last year, while adult arrests have actually risen slightly. More importantly, homicides by and of juveniles dropped by 60 percent and 54 percent respectively since 2004. Overall, there were 16 times as many adults arrested in 2005 as juveniles and the adult arrest rate in D.C. is 31 percent higher than the juvenile arrest rate.

In addition to the improving economic picture in the District, a lot of people worked very hard to get us to the point where we are experiencing the first drop in juvenile crime in three years. The Metropolitan Police Department and Court Social Services joined forces to develop a unique program aimed at youth who steal cars to try to turn them in the right direction (and juvenile

arrests for car theft are down 10 percent from 2004).

Last year, the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services funded the Latin American Youth Center to operate an Evening Reporting Center to supervise, tutor and counsel youth for five hours every night of the week as an alternative to detention. Ninety-six percent of the youth in that program have not been rearrested or missed court dates since it began in July. Two new centers serving Wards 7 and 8 will open in early 2006.

DYRS also worked in collaboration with the Department of Mental Health to establish a Multi-systemic Therapy Program, a program that has been rigorously researched by the Justice Department and found to reduce delinquency in troubled youth. So far, 87 percent of the youth who have gone through that program have not been rearrested.

There are more plans for next year involving multiple agencies and branches of government working together with the community to reduce juvenile crime even further. In response to the Mayor's and Council's call for youth-serving agencies and law enforcement to work together on this problem, the police, probation and DYRS will be launching a program in early 2006 focusing on the most at-risk youth on our respective caseloads, showing an unprecedented area of interdepartmental cooperation.

The District was also recently selected as a site for the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This effort brings together the Family Court, Court Social Services, DYRS, the Office of the Attorney General, the Public

Defender Service and the police to "right size" the juvenile detention system. Through JDAI, we will make sure that there is decent secure custody for youth who need to be detained, and that those youth who are not detained make their court appearances without being rearrested. In places like Chicago, a JDAI site since 1993, the number of youths in detention has been cut in half, while rearrests and incidents of youth failing to appear in court have been reduced dramatically.

Contrary to what is too often portrayed by the media, there is room for hope that our juvenile justice system can strike the important balance between keeping the public safe and giving our kids a second chance. But we'll only achieve that balance if we look at real data, not myth and hyperbole.

Media highlights Dakota County, Minnesota effort to address over-representation issues

In Dakota County, Minnesota, the over-representation of minority youth is attracting the attention of local media. A recent news article in the Twin City Pioneer Press reported on the initial findings of a study by the Wilder Foundation. Their research documented that although African American youth represent only 3 percent of the county's population, African Americans represent 21 percent of youth on probation and 29 percent of youth in detention.

"Things that we've ruled out at this point in time is that African-American youth are committing more violent offenses or more serious offenses, or

have a chronic history (of crime) compared to other races," said Al Godfrey, Deputy Director of Dakota County Community Corrections, which runs the juvenile detention center.

Dakota County Commissioners approved a new position responsible for reviewing detention decisions of minority youth, hoping to increase the use of alternatives and minimize inappropriate placements in detention. "We want to make sure that the most effective use of scarce juvenile detention space is being made, and it's being used for the right reasons," said Dakota County Attorney Jim Backstrom, who sits on one of the JDAI teams.

In addition, the new position will collect data on minority youth and provide support for the ongoing Wilder study trying to uncover what specific decision points in the juvenile justice system are contributing to the racial disparities.

Researchers will look at the possibility of bias among law enforcement officials, probation officers, prosecutors and judges. The Wilder study will also look at how warrants, probation violations and plea bargains impact detention. Researchers will examine the question of attitude and perception, according to the report: "Personality characteristics of some minority youth may be interpreted or misinterpreted as defiance or disrespect towards authority, which may make a detention placement more likely."

For more information on hte reform efforts in Minnesotata, contact Maurice Nins, Minesotta DMC Coordinator maurice.nins@state.mn.us

Detention systems failing to meet the needs of girls

“More girls are entering detention and they have significant needs that differ in both degree and kind from those of the boys for whom detention systems have historically been designed,” concludes a new report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

These trends “magnify the already troubling conditions under which many girls are detained,” says “Detention Reform and Girls: Challenges and Solutions,” the thirteenth and latest in the *Pathways to Detention Reform Series*. Between 1990 and 1999, the number of girls entering juvenile detention nationwide rose 50 percent, compared with only a 4 percent increase for boys—an upward trend that continued through 2001. Girls are far more likely than boys to be detained for misdemeanors, technical violations of probation and parole, and status offenses, such as underage drinking or curfew violations that would not be crimes if committed by an adult, the report also notes.

Nationwide, girls comprised 19 percent of the young people detained in 2001 but 24 percent of those detained specifically for technical violations and 43 percent of those detained for status offenses. The report suggests that, contrary to the statutory purposes of detention, many jurisdictions are detaining girls not simply to maintain public safety, but to protect and arrange services for girls who have not committed serious crimes—including many who have run away from chaotic or abusive homes.

Compared with detained boys, girls in detention are far more likely to have been abused as children, to suffer mental health problems like depression or

post-traumatic stress disorder, and to have undiagnosed learning disabilities. Yet most detention facilities were built to house boys and have “boy-specific” detention policies, practices, and training. Many detention facilities fail to meet girls’ needs, resulting in traumatizing, often counterproductive experiences for many girls, the report finds. These trends are “creating a real crisis in many jurisdictions,” it warns. “Detention Reform and Girls” offers recommendations and reviews effective initiatives to improve detention practices for girls.

Promising practices cited in the report include:

- Linking girls to community programs specifically focused on girls and geared toward building on strengths.
- Creating local alternatives to detention for girls, including community shelters and family-focused counseling services.
- Providing comprehensive legal representation for girls to address the needs of those who are involved in the juvenile justice system and are also dealing with other systems, including child welfare, special education, school suspension/expulsion, mental health, and/or social services.
- Ensuring that decision-makers understand all the issues affecting girls involved in multiple systems and that they work together to address all the girls’ needs and avoid unnecessary placement in detention.

Copies of “Detention Reform and Girls: Challenges and Solutions” can be ordered by calling the Casey publications voice line at 410-223-2890 or visiting www.aecf.org. This article was originally published in the Winter 2006 issue of “Casey Connects.”

Book explores transition difficulties for juvenile justice youth

Young adults leaving the juvenile justice system face a particularly difficult transition into adulthood, but they often navigate this transition with inadequate assistance from society, according to the new book, *On Your Own Without a Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations*, a product of The MacArthur Research Network on Transitions to Adulthood.

As a group, these young people are more likely than their peers to not finish high school, to have children outside of marriage and to be unemployed, factors that will complicate their adult lives. “Society has to do a much better job of providing integrated services to these juveniles, whether it’s drug treatment, mental health counseling, job training or education,” said David M. Altschuler, a principal research scientist at the Johns Hopkins University’s Institute for Policy Studies and the author of one chapter dealing with juvenile justice issues. “These are the tools that all young adults need to thrive as adults.”

The collection of articles addresses the difficulties and barriers facing older youth across the spectrum of human services. Although the specific challenges are different, the themes are similar—youth left to their own devices at age 18 without any support or guidance. Policymakers are urged to consider developing a system of care for these young adults whose needs are by and large being ignored.

The book is available through the University of Chicago Press, at 1-800-621-8476. On Your Own Without a

Net: The Transition to Adulthood for Vulnerable Populations, edited by D. Wayne Osgood, E. Michael Foster, Constance Flanagan and Gretchen R. Ruth. ISBN: 0-226-63783-2. More information may be found at www.transad.pop.upenn.edu

Youngest offenders deserve extra attention, according to justice department report

It is no surprise that young people engage in delinquent activity in groups; however results of a study by the National Institute of Justice uncovered several patterns of juvenile offending that suggest early intervention with youngsters who offend in groups.

“Co-Offending and Patterns of Juvenile Crime” Research in Brief reports that

when very young co-offenders were compared with very young solo offenders, only the co-offenders had high recidivism rates and only the co-offenders committed high numbers of violent crimes. The report recommends that these young co-offenders warrant special attention from the juvenile justice system.

Co-Offending and Patterns of Juvenile Crime; Research in Brief; U.S. Department of Justice; National Institute of Justice. This publication can be found at www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij.

Juvenile arrests in California plummeting

The number of California juveniles arrested last year dropped significantly, according to a report from the California Department of Justice.

The DOJ’s third annual Juvenile Justice in California report, a compilation of juvenile crime data, shows there were 15,000 fewer arrests for crimes committed by juveniles in 2004 -- down to 206,201 from 221,875 in 2003.

Of the 206,201 juveniles arrested in 2004, 78.4 percent were referred to probation, 19.4 percent were counseled and released and 2.1 percent were turned over to another law enforcement jurisdiction. Most formal juvenile court hearings resulted in the juvenile being made a ward of the court (63.9 percent) and 252 (0.3 percent) were remanded to adult court.

Since 1948, the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF) has worked to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families in the United States. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today’s vulnerable children and families. For more information on JDAI, please feel free to contact the resources listed below.

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