

Expanding JDAI to the Deep End: An Overview

In 2013, the Annie E. Casey Foundation began working with a few experienced Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) sites to expand their detention reform efforts to the “deep end” of the system. The expansion of JDAI to the deep end is grounded in the framework described below. As in JDAI, each site’s specific path to reform will vary based on unique local circumstances, but the sites are united by the goals, objectives, values, and core elements laid out in this framework.

To support each site’s progress, the Foundation has identified core values and decision-points that are essential to deep end reform, as well as developmental milestones to guide sites through the deep end reform process. This overview describes the outcomes that sites will be working to achieve, core content areas, and the steps to be taken in the first two phases of reform.

GOALS	
<i>Communities engaged in deep end reform ultimately show progress toward these goals.</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significantly reduced reliance on out-of-home placements Safe and healthy adolescent development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elimination of racial/ethnic disparities Safe communities Sustained commitment to JDAI detention reform
CORE ELEMENTS	
<p>Reducing the use of out of home placement involves the identification and implementation of reforms that address the six core elements below. While each element is important to an effective juvenile justice system, not all have the same priority for deep end reform.</p> <p>“Tier 1” represents the foundational elements of our approach to deep end reform. Before adding community-based services or changing the nature of residential or re-entry programs, systems begin by evaluating the decisions that determine who ends up in programs, both residential and non-residential. This process inevitably includes consideration of probation practices, including the ways in which probation itself can be a driver of confinement. The core elements in “Tier 2” represent areas of reform that may be essential for complete implementation of “Tier 1” reforms – e.g., probation practice changes may be difficult to fully implement before enhanced diversion efforts have minimized the number of low-risk youth ending up on formal supervision. Taken together, “Tier 1” and “Tier 2” reforms will ensure that “Tier 3” efforts are focused on the right populations.</p>	

OBJECTIVES

To achieve the goals described above, communities implement reform strategies to achieve these measurable objectives.

- Ensuring that decisions to remove youth from their homes are informed by objective assessments of risk and other structured tools, and that such decisions are made only when a less restrictive option is not possible
- Examining probation practice to minimize the number of youth in out-of-home placements due to violations of probation (VOPs)
- Establishing a more robust, targeted, and effective continuum of community-based interventions
- Improving public safety outcomes by reducing recidivism rates
- Eliminating racial, ethnic, and gender disparities
- Increasing juvenile justice system accountability for long-term youth well-being
- For those youth who are removed from their homes, ensuring that they are held in facilities that are safe, humane, small, and close to home

VALUES

The following values are the foundation of all aspects of deep end reform, and are manifest in reform priorities and strategies.

- Collaboration
- Data-driven decision making
- Racial and ethnic equity
- Family engagement
- Youth development
- Defense advocacy

DEEP END REFORM VALUES: DESCRIPTIONS & KEY QUESTIONS

1. Collaboration

Does the JDAI/Deep End collaborative include a diverse group of juvenile justice stakeholders, community representatives, and youth & families impacted by the system? Are all of those stakeholders meaningfully engaged in the development, implementation, and evaluation of juvenile justice policy and practice?

2. Data-Driven Policy and Practice

Do practitioners have access to comprehensive deep end data and statistics, including demographic information, most serious current offense, prior history, risk-level, placement, and length of stay? Does capacity exist to conduct in-depth analyses of that data? Is the data made available to stakeholders and regularly used to inform decision-making about policy/practice change, and to evaluate policies, practices, and programs that are already in place?

3. Racial & Ethnic Equity

Is racial/ethnic equity prioritized in the development and evaluation of existing policy, practice, and programming? Do system stakeholders consistently monitor issues of racial disparity, seek meaningful input from community partners, and work to design and implement solutions to achieve greater equity for all youth?

4. Youth Development

Does the system hold itself accountable to the ethical standard of “first, do no harm” when it comes to court-involved youth? Are policies, practices and programs examined to ensure they do not derail safe and healthy adolescent development? Are those policies, practices and programs developmentally appropriate for youth? Does the system seek and measure positive achievements and outcomes for youth?

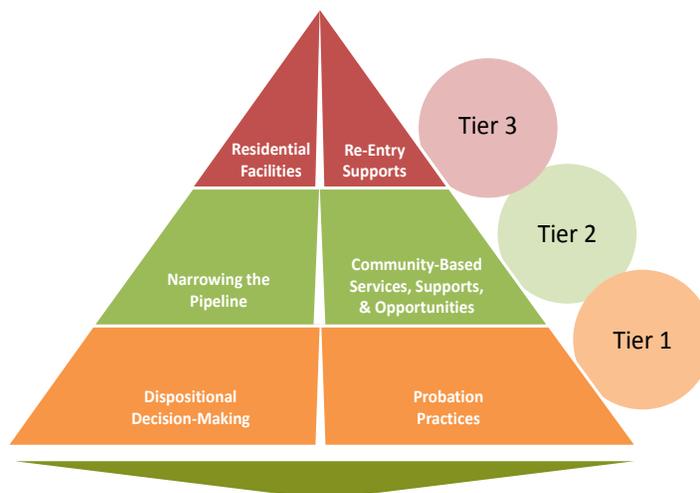
5. Family Engagement

Are families treated as true partners in individual cases? Does the system make affirmative efforts to ensure that families have a meaningful voice in the decision-making process – both at a case-level and at a systems-reform level? Is family defined broadly to include supportive adults and siblings, not just biological parents?

6. Defense Advocacy

Do system-involved youth have prompt access to well-trained defense attorneys that advocate on their behalf and help them navigate the highly complex legal system while ensuring that the young people’s voices are heard? Do juvenile defense attorneys develop their own dispositional recommendations for the court’s consideration? Are those plans developed in consultation with youth? Are they presented to the court in writing? Do juvenile defense attorneys continue to actively represent youth post-disposition?

DEEP END REFORM CORE ELEMENTS: DESCRIPTIONS & KEY QUESTIONS



1. Dispositional Decision-Making

Are dispositional recommendations informed by objective tools, such as a validated risk assessment instrument, that are supported by system stakeholders and rarely overridden? Is there a clear purpose for sentencing youth to probation or out-of-home placement? Is public safety risk the primary reason for deeper system penetration, while needs are addressed through different avenues? What safeguards exist to minimize the odds that low- and moderate-risk youth will be removed from their homes to address needs?

2. Probation Practices

Is the purpose of probation clearly defined and understood by system stakeholders, including youth and families, and do the outcomes match the expectations? Do probation officers focus their time and energy on working with youth to identify and implement meaningful strategies for achieving behavior change, while holding youth appropriately accountable for misconduct without being overly punitive? Or is probation too often a stepping stone to the deep end?

3. Narrowing the Pipeline

Is there an intentional effort to divert cases that do not require formal court processing, with clear guidelines regarding the kinds of cases that are appropriate for diversion, and a wide array of diversion options that effectively prevent further system penetration? Do law enforcement agencies have policies or practices that enable pre-arrest diversion? Does the court collaborate with schools to minimize unnecessary referrals from school to court?

4. Community-Based Services, Supports, and Opportunities

Is there a robust array of programmatic options that allows practitioners to develop comprehensive, individualized supports for probation as well as alternatives to incarceration? Are decisions about funding programs made carefully through comprehensive analysis? Do processes exist to ensure that community-based services, supports, and opportunities are evaluated to ensure they are developmentally appropriate for youth?

5. Residential Facilities

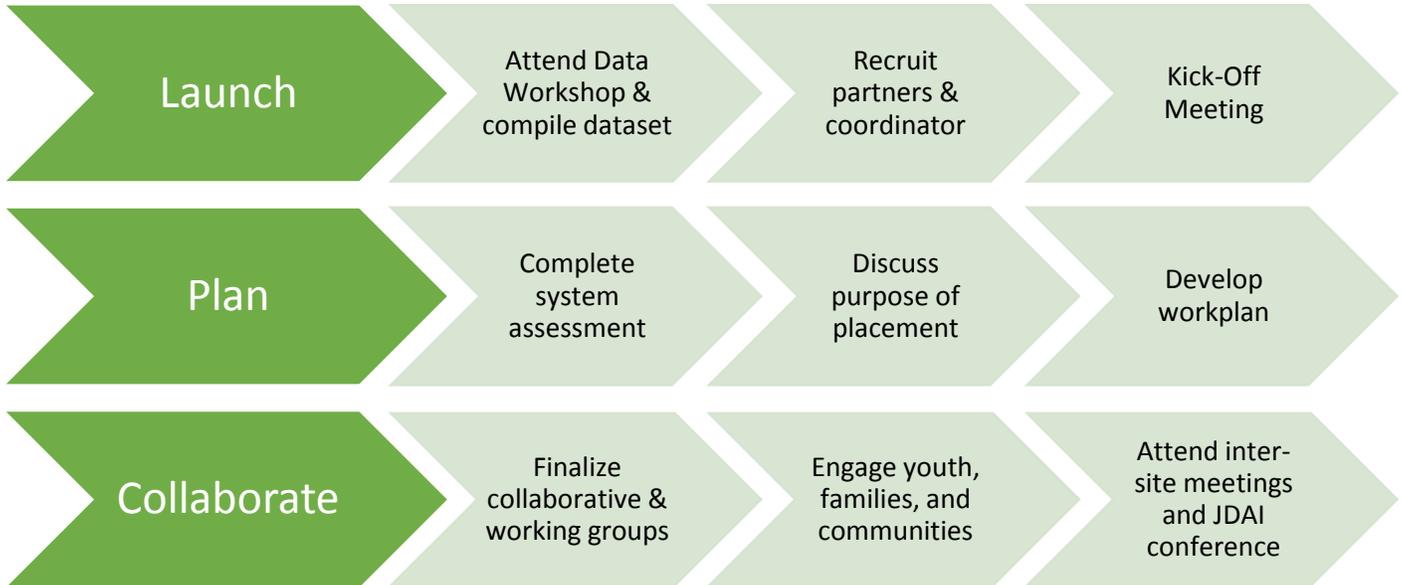
Are residential placements safe, humane, small, and close to home? How are youth and family incorporated into the case-planning process? Are local decision-makers knowledgeable about conditions, culture, and treatment approaches in the residential facilities upon which they rely – including facilities operated by the state, by private providers, or by local actors?

6. Re-Entry

Are aftercare plans initiated when youth first enter out-of-home placement, developed with input from youth and their families, and are those plans revised regularly as needed? How do stakeholders from facilities, probation, and court systems collaborate with each other and with families to prepare youth to re-enter the community as soon as possible, and to ensure families are prepared to support them? Are aftercare plans designed to help work through the obstacles that a youth may face as he/she transitions back to his/her community?

PHASE ONE MILESTONES

Phase One focuses on startup and building the infrastructure to effectively address the drivers of out-of-home placement. The milestones below are activities that sites will engage in during this phase.



PHASE TWO MILESTONES

Phase Two asks sites to focus their attention on a prioritized selection of the Deep End Core Elements, and to ensure that Deep End Values are addressed through specific strategies as well as infused throughout the work. Priorities are selected based on the system assessment, and are reflected in the goals and objectives of the workplan.

