

Research Plan for Cook County JDAI Research Committee

There are several sets of needs and requirements driving the charge given to the Cook County JDAI Research Committee to improve JDAI related data.

Casey Foundation Requirements

To begin with, it is imperative that we improve the quality of detention data that is reported to the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Casey JDAI Report Templates (attached) encompass the following:

Detention Data

The template for the Detention Population Quarterly Report calls for counts of juvenile detainees at the beginning and end of the reporting period, total admissions and releases during the period, as well as average daily population and average length of stay. These statistics are to be tallied for not only the total detention population, but for various sub-groups broken out by gender, race, and offense type.

Detention Screening Data

The template for the Referrals Screened Quarterly Report calls for counts of all risk assessment instruments (RAI) that were administered during the reporting period. Separate totals are needed for juveniles who were detained, those released with conditions, and those released without conditions – and within each group, the number who scored at high, medium, and low levels on the RAI. Each of these sub-totals is then broken out by gender and by race.

The template for the Overrides Quarterly Report is also based on risk assessment instruments (RAI) that were administered during the reporting period. Separate totals are needed for juveniles who received overrides up (decision is more severe than the score would recommend), overrides down (decision is less severe than the score would recommend), and those with no override. Each of these sub-totals is then broken out by gender and by race.

Detention Alternatives Data

The template for the Alternative Programs Quarterly Report calls for separate counts of juvenile admissions to each detention alternative program at the beginning and end of the reporting period, as well as total entries and exits during the period, exits that were the result of an FTA or a re-arrest, and average daily population and program capacity for each program. These statistics must then be broken out by gender and by race.

State JDAI Initiative

The Illinois JDAI Initiative is also developing a Monthly Data Report template that will be sent to each of the county JDAI sites, and synthesized into a state JDAI report for Casey. The template is also intended as a rudimentary tool that counties and the state can use to plan detention alternative programs. This template is, in most respects, more simplified than the Casey templates. It seeks data on the number of juvenile detention center admissions and total detention alternative program admissions – broken out by race and ethnicity. That being said, there are requirements of the state report that require additional data or detail beyond the Casey reporting requirements:

- The data is needed monthly rather than quarterly.
- Besides admissions to detention and detention alternatives, data is also being sought on number of juvenile arrests, numbers of youth in detention alternatives who were re-arrested prior to adjudication or who failed to appear for a scheduled court hearing (regardless of whether those violations resulted in program termination), and average case processing times for youth in detention and for youth in detention alternatives.
- Detention center admissions are collected separately for pretrial vs. post-trial.
- Each of the totals is to be collected by race AND by ethnicity – separately. This is how it is done by the U.S. Census Bureau and is more accurate than simply collecting race data since Hispanics can be either Black or White.

Management, Evaluation, and Modeling of Detention Alternative Programs

In addition to external reporting requirements, there is a need to improve JDAI information so we can effectively manage detention alternative programs, conduct evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses, and document and convey that information to delegations from other jurisdictions interested in replicating our JDAI initiatives. This has implications not only for the detention alternative program data, but for detention data, screening data, and court caseflow data as they will provide the context (screening and caseflow data) or the comparison group (detention data) for measuring client performance in detention alternatives.

The information needs of program managers have not been systematically identified, nor has a basic evaluation strategy been designed. This should constitute the seminal activity carried out by the research committee, since it will frame the uses of JDAI data beyond satisfying our reporting requirements. Evaluation research that focuses on client outcomes will certainly rely heavily on our ability to capture data on those outcomes commonly associated with successful detention alternatives including, but not limited to, appearance at scheduled court hearings, and reductions in recidivism as well as technical violations of probation. Data collection, management, and reporting strategies that meet the needs of program managers and that provide a foundation for future research also should easily fulfill program documentation needs for jurisdictions interested in possible program replication.

Two other research initiatives may also drive the need for data. First, connected to the JDAI initiative is the need to reduce unnecessary delays in juvenile court caseload. Court management reports currently produced by Joe Gebhart provide a solid starting point for identifying specific points in the juvenile court process where delays occur. The reports are somewhat limited however, and do not appear to lead to clear-cut remedial delay-reduction strategies. The caseload documentation work is, however, essential and should be re-tooled to better assist judges in framing and implementing caseload enhancements. Dr. Jeffrey Butts of Chapin Hall has expressed an interest in partnering with us in this work. He has received federal grant money to collaborate with one or more court jurisdictions for the express purpose of facilitating the creation of reports that effectively identify sources of caseload delay, and to then help construct delay-reduction strategies. Once the design and specifications for such reports are known, specific data elements will be needed to complete them. In all likelihood much of this data would need to come from the Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court Clerk's Office.

Second, Deborah Busch, a consultant who manages much of the national data collection effort for the Casey Foundation, is preparing a document which describes instructions for a detention utilization report. The utilization report can be generated from existing quarterly reports, but also seems to address a broader range of juvenile justice decision points. She indicated that it would be available later this year. When it does, we may require additional data elements to produce that report. In all likelihood much of this data would need to come from the Juvenile Detention Center.

Research Strategy

➤ Identify information needs for detention alternative programs

While the data needs corresponding to external reporting requirements are defined, those relating to detention alternative program management and overall JDAI evaluation are not. The first step then is to provide that definition. Identification of data needs for program management can be accomplished by meeting with managers and staff from each of the detention alternative programs:

- Staff Secure Shelter
- Evening Reporting Center
- Electronic Monitoring
- Home Confinement
- Sheriffs Work Alternative Program (S.W.A.P.)
- Community Outreach Supervision
- Court Notification

These meetings have two purposes. First, JDAI Research Committee members will document the scope and quality of current data collection activities including the number and types of variables collected regarding juvenile clients' background and program participation and performance, and the longevity and currency of the dataset. They will also consider and document data quality issues that impact validity and reliability.

Management of the data will be documented as well (e.g., how often the data is entered, what software is used, what a edits are in place, etc.). At the current time, those program managers having automated client data rely on a loose confederation of micro-systems – mostly EXCEL spreadsheets or ACCESS databases created by Mark Dean-Myrda. These are stand-alone applications that do not share information, making more difficult a comprehensive assessment of the entire JDAI program continuum.

The second purpose of the meeting is for program managers to communicate to the JDAI Research Committee their own data needs as they relate to the review of staff performance and to the overall enhancement of program services. A sub-group of the committee should prepare a site visit protocol containing the specific questions to be asked, program documentation to be collected, observations to be made, and data management review procedures.

➤ **Conduct gap analysis**

Once all data requirements for external reporting, program management, and evaluation have been identified, a gap analysis is needed. This means that the sum total of all data requirements must be compared against the current data management capability of the various source systems. As described above, the meetings with JDAI program staff and managers will reveal the status of their data collection and management efforts.

In addition to this documentation process for detention alternative programs, a similar examination is needed of the capacity of “institutional” juvenile justice systems that contain adjudicatory and detention records. Some of these systems have been used to support reporting requirements in the past. For example, the detention portion of Casey reports submitted in the past is derived from PROBER and JEMS systems to which the Juvenile Probation Department has direct access. Other systems, such as those run out by the Juvenile Detention Center and by the Circuit Court Clerk’s Office have been under- or non-utilized for such purposes. It is important then to extend the documentation process to inventory each of these “institutional” data systems as well.

Following this inventory of all data resources, the gap analysis will reveal which of the required data elements are contained in existing systems. Strategies for accessing those data elements from source agencies will be formulated by the Research Committee. Those strategies will include recommendations for improved interagency communication and coordination, as well as steps needed for data transfers, data conversions, reconciliation of differential coding protocols and other database and system interface issues. If it is discovered that specific required elements are not collected at all, recommendations for new data collection strategies will be proposed by the Research Committee.

➤ **Gap Analysis Findings Report and Recommended Action Steps**

Once the gap analysis is complete, the Committee will generate a report of its findings, specifically:

1. Listing of data elements needed for meeting the Casey Foundation's quarterly reporting requirements in each of three data domains: secure detention, detention alternative programs, and detention screening; and a summary of which are currently available through existing institutional data systems and which are not.
2. Listing of data elements needed for meeting the State JDAI monthly reporting requirements in each of four data domains: juvenile arrests, secure detention, detention alternative programs, and juvenile court caseflow; and a summary of which are currently available through existing institutional data systems and which are not.
3. Listing of the each of the data elements needed by detention alternative program managers, by program; and a summary of which are currently available in existing program data systems and which are not.
4. Listing of additional data elements needed for evaluations of detention alternatives and other JDAI initiatives; and a summary of which are currently available in existing institutional or program data systems and which are not. In this regard, the Committee will consider:
 - Outcome measures commonly associated with successful detention alternatives including, but not limited to appearance at scheduled court hearings, and reductions in recidivism as well as technical violations of probation.
 - Juvenile court data measures that will be determined to have value in the study of caseflow delay reduction strategies.
 - Additional measures needed for the detention utilization report, once specifications for that report are conveyed by Annie E. Casey Foundation consultants.
5. Recommendations for improved interagency communication and coordination to accomplish data enhancement goals.
6. Recommendations for steps need for data transfers, data conversions, reconciliations of differential coding protocols and other database and system interface issues -- including those surrounding the issues of coding race and ethnicity in a separate vs. combined manner.
7. Recommendations for new data collections strategies in instances where required data elements are not currently accessible.
8. Recommendations for re-tooling the current PC-based spreadsheets and databases used by detention alternative programs for purposes of improving data management and establishing uniformity and interoperability between fragmented systems. These recommendations will recognize the current JEMS effort which, if successful, would provide a county-supported mechanism to track clients' service combinations alongside their juvenile justice system contacts.

Upon completion, this report will be presented to the Cook County JDAI Executive Committee before recommendations are implemented.