

New Jersey Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative
 Innovation, Improvement, or Institutionalization of Policy/Practice:
 Model Activities

ACTIVITY OVERVIEW

Site:	UNION
Primary Core Strategy Area:	Collaboration/Leadership
Secondary Core Strategy Area:	N/A
Title/Name of Activity:	Prosecutor's Newsletter Welcoming JDAI to Union County
Activity Start Date:	04/2008

Description of Activity:	Deputy Trial Supervisor Doreen Yanik wrote an informative, three-page article welcoming JDAI to Union County. The article appeared in the Union County Prosecutor's Quarterly Newsletter, a widely distributed publication that highlights new legislation, recent policy/practice changes, and other initiatives affecting the law enforcement community.
Problem or Need this Activity Addressed and Data/Info that Identified this Problem or Need:	A review of membership lists for County Councils on Juvenile Justice System Improvement in JDAI sites and discussion with key actors around the state indicate that local law enforcement involvement in New Jersey's JDAI efforts is not as extensive as that of other key stakeholder groups. Often this is because local police departments within JDAI sites are not aware of – or even misinformed as to – the philosophies and core strategies of JDAI. However, Union County stakeholders understand that including local law enforcement in the process of juvenile justice system improvement is critical to the success and sustainability of JDAI efforts. Publishing an article on JDAI in the Prosecutor's Newsletter was a means for providing pertinent information about JDAI to local police departments, in the hopes of fostering communication and collaboration from the outset.
Impact/Results of this Activity:	<p>Circulation of the Prosecutor's Quarterly Newsletter is substantial, with over 2000 copies printed and distributed. In addition to being distributed to all employees of the Union County Prosecutor's Office, the newsletter is sent to: all of Union's 21 municipal police departments; the County Police, Sheriff's Office, Department of Corrections, and Freeholders; Kean University's Police Department; the Port Authority; the NJ Office of the Attorney General; and NJ senators and assemblypersons representing Union County. Several copies are also sent to federal agencies including the Department of Homeland Security, FBI, and DEA.</p> <p>According to Deputy Trial Supervisor Yanik, feedback regarding the article was overwhelmingly positive. She received several questions and comments on the article and on JDAI in general, many of which were from local police officers. As a result of the interest generated by the article, she now includes a "JDAI Update" as a standing agenda item for the monthly Union County Juvenile Officers' Association meeting, where she discusses all of the recent JDAI work going on in Union County and statewide. The meeting agenda is routinely printed in the Prosecutor's Quarterly Newsletter.</p>
Next Steps or Additional Comments:	In addition to regularly attending the Juvenile Officers' Association meeting, Deputy Trial Supervisor Yanik actively encourages law enforcement participation in JDAI locally. Currently, two detectives routinely participate on JDAI committees in Union County. These detectives have also volunteered to be part of Union County's Risk Screening Tool Training Team, and both attended the most recent NJ JDAI All-Sites Conference.

List Attachments (if any):	Copy of article published in the Prosecutor's Quarterly Newsletter.
Contact(s) for More Info:	Doreen Yanik, Deputy Trial Supervisor - Union County. (908) 527-4631 dyanik@ucnj.org

Union County Welcomes JDAI: The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

*By Assistant Prosecutor Doreen A. Yanik
Juvenile Unit*

**In 2006,
Union County
was chosen
to become one of
the replication sites
for the
Juvenile Detention
Alternatives Initiative,
referred to as the JDAI.**

In 2006, Union County was chosen by the non-profit Annie E. Casey Foundation and the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission to become one of the replication sites for JDAI (Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative). Through JDAI, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is committed to juvenile detention reform in an effort to streamline local juvenile detention systems. The initiative had already been in existence in the "original five" New Jersey counties of Essex, Camden, Monmouth, Atlantic and Hudson. Following an application and selection process, in late 2006, Union County joined Mercer and Bergen Counties as the new chosen sites, with Ocean and Burlington Counties to follow. JDAI is committed to overall juvenile system analysis and improvement, however, for purposes of this article the focus will be on the Initiative's impact on detention alternatives.

The Pilot Initiative

JDAI had begun as a pilot initiative in 1998 with the participation of Sacramento County in California and Cook County in Illinois. The initiative was predicated on an attempt to address severe overcrowding in juvenile detention facilities and accomplish fiscal savings without endangering public safety. Through JDAI, the participating counties developed less costly, community oriented alternatives to "secure" detention.

It is not surprising that law enforcement and prosecuting agencies were initially skeptical of such a program, questioning whether such efforts would jeopardize community safety by releasing juveniles to the community pending the outcome of their charges.

JDAI, however, does not mean that all juveniles charged will be released from secure detention, i.e., a detention facility. Rather, JDAI works toward ensuring that those juveniles who should be in secure detention are held in such a facility and those who can be released, based upon nature of the charge(s), lack of prior record, etc., are released to appropriate and reliable detention alternatives within the community.

Proposition For Placing a Juvenile-Defendant in Secure Detention

JDAI supports the proposition that a juvenile-defendant should be placed in secure detention if that juvenile poses a danger to the community or presents a risk of failure to appear at scheduled court proceedings. Such a proposition echoes the New Jersey Legislature's 2006 amendment to the juvenile detention criteria.

N.J.S.A. 2A:4A-34 specifically states that:

- ♦ no juvenile charged with an act of delinquency shall be placed in a detention facility unless detention is necessary to ensure the juvenile's presence at the next hearing as evidenced by the juvenile's recent willful non-appearance at a proceeding
- or
- ♦ recent failure to remain where placed by the Court or court intake service or the juvenile has an active bench warrant for failure to appear
- or
- ♦ the physical safety of persons or property of the community would be seriously threatened if the juvenile were not detained
- and
- ♦ the juvenile is charged with a first, second or third degree crime or the following fourth degree crimes:
 - ♦ aggravated assault
 - ♦ bias intimidation
 - ♦ stalking
 - ♦ criminal sexual contact
 - ♦ failure to control or report a dangerous fire
 - ♦ possession of a prohibited weapon or unlawful possession of a weapon.

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Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) -- continued

It is anticipated that in Union County, JDAI will assist in ensuring uniform compliance with New Jersey's revised detention criteria.

JDAI in Union County

Union County is currently in the infancy stages of JDAI. Various persons and agencies have been identified as "stakeholders" in the Union County Juvenile Justice system. As a team, the stakeholders through numerous committees and sub-committees are examining our current system, identifying gaps, areas of improvement, methods to expedite juvenile cases and structuring reliable and efficient detention alternatives with the protection of the public at the forefront. JDAI is a data and locally driven initiative. Consequently, the sub-committees are focusing on the uniqueness of our County's population, issues, trends, etc. and compiling data to identify areas of improvement and policies that are locally relevant. It is recognized that what is appropriate for Essex or Monmouth Counties, may not be appropriate for or necessary in Union County.

**One of the stated goals of the Union County JDAI
is to identify existing detention alternatives, and their levels of success --
i.e., successful completion of the alternative by the charged juvenile
with no incidents of re-offending,
recognizing any gaps in service and any needed areas of improvement.**

Currently, in Union County, a juvenile may be released from detention by the Court and placed on one of three alternatives:

1

Electronic Monitoring

A juvenile may be electronically monitored either through the Juvenile Probation Department, if the juvenile is on probation for unrelated matters at the time of release, or through the Youth Services Bureau (YSB).

2

Home Detention

This alternative is a home-based program for pre-adjudicated youth awaiting disposition, requiring that the juveniles remain in the home at all times unless in school or at another Court approved activity.

3

Union County Youth Shelter

Juveniles may be released to a non-secure housing facility designed for juveniles with family crisis issues.

1. Electronic Monitoring

A juvenile may be electronically monitored either through the Juvenile Probation Department, if the juvenile is on probation for unrelated matters at the time of release, or through the Youth Services Bureau (YSB).

The target population for YSB Electronic Monitoring is Union County youth 11 through 17 years of age who, aside from juveniles in secure detention, pose the greatest risk of failing to appear and/or re-offending prior to case disposition. (Bear in mind that no one under the age of 12 years may be admitted to the detention facility unless charged with murder or arson). The court ordered program for pre-adjudicated juveniles utilizes 24 hour per day equipment monitoring and weekday staff supervision. Juveniles on YSB EM are required to phone in daily and are required to report to the YSB office once a week. YSB staff will also make random home and/or school visits and telephone calls. Generally excluded from participation in this alternative are juveniles charged with first degree offenses and sexual offenses, juveniles upon whom a waiver application has been filed to transfer their pending matters to adult court and juveniles on probation or parole at the time of release.

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Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) -- continued

Electronic monitoring through the Probation Department is reserved for those juveniles who would otherwise be in secure detention, but who are released by the Court and were serving a term of probation at the time of admission to the detention facility and who pose some risk of failing to appear and/or re-offending prior to disposition. The program provides for 24 hour equipment supervision, field visits by the Probation Officer and a requirement that the juvenile continue to report to his supervising Probation Officer;

2. Home Detention Program

This alternative is a home-based program for pre-adjudicated youth awaiting disposition, requiring that the juveniles remain in the home at all times unless in school or at another Court approved activity.

Similar to the electronic monitoring alternatives, the target population for home detention in Union County is youth 11 through 17 years of age who pose some risk of failing to appear and/or re-offending prior to case disposition. Generally excluded from participation are juveniles on probation, juvenile parole, enrolled in the Juvenile Intensive Supervision Program or juveniles with first degree charges. On home detention, juveniles are required to phone in daily and must report to the Home Detention office once a week. Home Detention staff will also make random home and/or school visits and telephone calls; and

3. Union County Youth Shelter

Juveniles may be released to a non-secure housing facility designed for juveniles with family crisis issues.

The target population is youth 12 through 17 years of age with lower level delinquency complaints and a legitimate family crisis situation. Generally excluded are violent and sexual offenders and juveniles with a history of altercations. The program capacity is six juveniles.

Future Possibilities

As part of JDAI, Union County is assessing the effectiveness of the above alternatives and exploring the possibility of creating additional stand alone or supplemental alternatives. Additionally, Union County envisions a scenario in the future where a juvenile charged as a delinquent can be placed immediately on an alternative if the juvenile is denied entry into the detention facility by the intake screener.

Currently, absent an arrest warrant, if a police department takes a juvenile into custody and attempts to lodge that defendant in the Juvenile Detention Center, they may be denied entry at the discretion of the detention Intake Screeners. Often times, a police officer may feel uncomfortable having that juvenile merely released to his parent(s) or guardian(s) without court-ordered restrictions pending the outcome of their case.

Through JDAI, Union County hopes to formulate a plan whereby intake screeners have remote access to the Family Automated Case Tracking System (FACTS) and the Central Registry after-hours. Upon being contacted by a police department seeking to lodge a juvenile in the detention facility, the intake screener will have all necessary information regarding the juvenile's prior court involvement and bench warrant history available in order to make a sound decision.

If the juvenile is found to be eligible for a detention alternative by the Intake Screener, the juvenile may be immediately placed on that alternative without having been admitted to the detention center, e.g., immediately referred to the electronic monitoring program and fitted with a device by on-call program staff. Such a system would further work towards the stated goals of ensuring public safety and future court appearances by the juvenile. Again, this system is not presently in effect and will ultimately require training of all local police departments and the Intake Screening department prior to implementation.

Consider this to be an introduction to the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative and its anticipated impact on the Union County Juvenile system. Additional written articles and/or policies pertaining to JDAI will be forthcoming, as well as continued requests for input from the law enforcement community.

Union County welcomes JDAI.