

June 1, 2005

To: Shelly Maluo, Pierce County Juvenile Court Director
From: Stephanie Vetter, JDAI Technical Assistance Team Leader
Re: DMC Committee Agenda for 2005

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to Pierce County's DMC Committee.

Setting Goals

First, it's imperative to set very specific goals and priorities within the DMC Committee agenda around points in the juvenile justice system that reflect disparate treatment. To help identify these goals staff should present the committee with a few "low hanging fruits" – target populations in detention which, when addressed, will have a significant impact on detention utilization and DMC, like warrants, length of stay (LOS), violations of probation (VOP's), and detention admissions overrides. The committee's goals should focus on two or three of these target populations according to a local analysis of what's driving detention populations. Goals should be specific, realistic/attainable, and measurable.

Data Analysis

Second, to accomplish this, the committee will need access to data analyses that clearly identify these target populations and that measure the success or failure of strategies implemented to address these problems. Data analysis is the mechanism to help committee members objectively frame discussions about race, replacing discussions and policy recommendations based on worse case scenario and myth; data analyses is required to measure progress and will help the committee stay aligned with goals and priorities.

The committee has already decided to address the target population of youth with warrants, so I use this as an example. In this case, I would recommend *not* using the recent analysis completed on youth with warrants as it is flawed in several fundamental ways, including: (1) the sample size is too small to draw any statistically significant findings; and, (2) it is not the analysis recommended by the AECF. Below, I have included an excerpt from *Pathways 9, Special Detention Populations: Strategies for Handling Difficult Populations*, pp. 1-4, which I strongly recommend for PCJC's warrant analysis. The second bullet below addresses the "basic characteristics" of youth detained on warrants which includes the racial breakdown of this population.

B. JDAI Strategies and Solutions for Minors with Warrants

1. Analysis of the warrant caseload

A quantitative analysis of youth detained on warrants to identify the level and nature of the problem should include:

- *The number of warrants issued, type, issuing authority, and whether for new offense, FTA, escape or "holds."*
- *The basic characteristics of minors detained on warrants including offense and risk score.*
- *The number of admissions to detention, length of stay, and beds used by minors with various types of warrants.*
- *A description of the process for issuing and curing warrants, including reasons for nonappearances.*
- *A review of options to detention that may be appropriate for minors who pose minimum risk to the public.*

Best Practices

Finally, after goals have been identified and prioritized and local data has illustrated the scope of the problem, best practice models and strategies should be applied, and timelines should be set for the

purpose of collecting new data for benchmarking to determine what impact a particular strategy has had on the target population. The strategies documented in the *Pathways* have been proven to be successful in reducing detention populations safely and in moving the dial on DMC; there is no need to recreate the wheel. A benefit of being a JDAI replication site is that Pierce is part of a national network of sites involved in system reform. I would highly encourage Pierce to utilize this national network by reaching out to colleagues around the country as the need arises. Technical assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation is also available when the committee identifies a specific need or feels stuck in some way, so please contact me or Rand Young, WA Statewide JDAI Coordinator, to arrange technical assistance.

Next Steps

This all should be incorporated into a committee work plan that identifies: committee goals for the next year, the target populations to be addressed; who will be working on what; timelines- how long it is expected to take; and projected resources, costs, and barriers. Please refer to the “JDAI through a Racial Lens” framework for guidance as the work moves forward. Additionally, as the DMC agenda becomes more specific and a work plan is developed, you might consider developing subcommittees that are organized around the priority populations; this allows for members to work within their areas of interest, keeps the overall agenda moving at a strong pace and further cultivates DMC champions.

The DMC Forum planned for the near future could be a great mechanism to promote JDAI, to showcase PCJC’s successes and to recruit additional champions for the fight against structural racism. However, I must caution that this should not dilute the committee’s agenda. Intentionality and strong leadership play key roles in achieving reductions in DMC. JDAI uses detention as the entry point to realize those reductions as opposed to using the community or prevention strategies as the entry point. JDAI is the methodology for detaining the right youth (youth that pose the highest risk to public safety) and for keeping those youth who do not pose a risk to public safety, in the community where they can be appropriately supervised and receive services.

I thoroughly enjoyed addressing Pierce County’s DMC committee in January 2005, and I certainly commend the strong community involvement that is reflected in its membership. There is no doubt that a required element in successfully addressing DMC is the mobilization of communities of color; Pierce is clearly succeeding on this front. Keep up the good work.