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## USING MEDIA ADVOCACY TO PROMOTE DETENTION REFORM

A PRACTICE GUIDE TO JUVENILE DETENTION REFORM

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

A PROJECT OF THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

**The Annie E. Casey Foundation** is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. 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. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at [www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org).

**The Justice Policy Institute (JPI)** ([www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org)) produced this practice guide with support from the Casey Foundation and the important contributions of Stephanie Vetter, JDAI publications manager, to equip juvenile justice reformers with the tools needed to effectively communicate with the media and the public. JPI enhances the public dialog on incarceration through accessible research, public education, and communications advocacy. JPI works with the Annie E. Casey Foundation and JDAI sites to promote alternatives to detention and to develop communications and media strategies that will sustain reforms.

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## INTRODUCTION: HOW TO USE THIS PRACTICE GUIDE

**T**he news media is a key battleground for influencing people’s perceptions and promoting sound public policy—particularly in the field of juvenile justice. This practice guide provides tips for “media advocacy,” or ways to engage with the press to promote reforms. This can be done in a variety of ways:

- Developing proactive strategies to highlight juvenile justice reforms, particularly the most important outcomes and achievements;
- Responding to juvenile justice stories in the news and helping to correct common misconceptions;
- Cultivating relationships with media officials and establishing spokespeople as informed, trusted sources; and
- Promoting juvenile justice systems’ latest data and statistics in the press.

Written specifically for juvenile justice advocates and officials, this handbook provides step-by-step media approaches to promote the system reforms achieved through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). Those interested in learning all the nuts and bolts of media advocacy may choose to read this guide from cover to cover. Others may want to quickly reference tips on a specific subject, for example, preparing for a TV interview or submitting an opinion piece (op-ed) to a local newspaper. This practice guide is designed to meet the needs of both types of readers.

This practice guide also provides an overview of how the media can help achieve reform goals; offers tips on how to coordinate a proactive media campaign and create a winning public message that resonates; and outlines the time-tested details of writing a press release, giving an interview, and getting a message out.

One last note: Most agencies have existing communications staff. Usually, the public information officer (PIO) has a wealth of information and maintains important media relationships. Be sure to coordinate all media activities with the PIO and comply with the agency’s policies and procedures.

## THE PURPOSE OF MEDIA ADVOCACY

Juvenile justice system officials are all too familiar with examples of news that sensationalizes an isolated incident of youth crime and triggers more punitive, reactive legislation and policies. Predictions by the media of hyper-violent adolescent “superpredators” in the 1990s paved the way for legislation that required certain youth be tried as adults, and led to increased incarceration of young people generally. The roving bands of “super-predators” never materialized, but the policies and practices that funnel young people into confinement remain in many jurisdictions.

Some media stories can help promote positive change, influencing policymakers, judges, and politicians, as well as the general public. Through media advocacy, juvenile justice officials can proactively generate coverage that helps advance reform and that bolsters public support for the juvenile justice system. A high-impact media event in New Orleans, for example, helped launch a campaign that resulted in dramatic reforms for that state’s juvenile justice system. Whether highlighting a new best practice or countering negative coverage of a youth committing a crime, strategic media outreach can create political momentum to advance detention reform.

Media advocacy can:

- **Win Hearts and Minds.** Although public opinion overwhelmingly supports juvenile justice reform, the status quo seems safer and more politically palatable. People need motivation to change. Much too often the public relies on newspapers, television, and the Internet to help them *form* opinions and *prioritize* issues. But, media coverage does not always support reform goals. Research on media coverage of youth and crime shows that the press disproportionately covers youth associated with violence. If stakeholders want to advance a reform agenda, they need to work with the media to show how changing the system can improve and protect public safety, reduce costs, and give young people a second chance.

For example, in 2007, a California newspaper reported on remarkable local JDAI results: “The population of juveniles increased 9.9 percent across the county from 1996 to 2005, while the number of juveniles arrested for both misdemeanors and felony offenses dropped 40.5 percent during the same period... The dip in youth crime also has brought admissions to Juvenile Hall down to its lowest level in 10 years, falling 51.4 percent since 1996, according to the report.” The article goes on to tout community partnerships that provide appropriate services to the youth most in need. (*Santa Cruz Sentinel*, Nov. 26, 2007; see Appendix I). Stories like this deliver several important messages that support reform efforts. First, the article reinforces that data should drive juvenile justice policy. Second, the article uses relevant data to prove that a reduction in juvenile incarceration

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has positive public safety implications. And finally, the article emphasizes the importance of broad-based community engagement in system reform.

- **Influence Public Policy.** Decision-makers must filter through thousands of issues that affect their communities. Like most people, they rely on the news media to help identify key issues. Importantly, leaders and decision-makers also rely on the press to help gauge public opinion. In the juvenile justice field, elected officials, officers of the court, and community leaders need to be reminded that the public actually supports juvenile justice reforms that both reduce detention and hold young people accountable. Across the country, media campaigns have helped fuel public policy victories. For example, in Louisiana and Mississippi the media informed the public about abusive, unconstitutional conditions inside juvenile prisons. This coverage contributed to the eventual closure of several facilities, important reforms to each state's juvenile indigent defense system, and the creation of community-based alternatives to incarceration. In Connecticut, a sustained media campaign helped convince policymakers to "raise the age" at which children can be tried and convicted in adult court.

- **Advance Organizational Goals.** Media advocacy can be proactive or reactive. Proactive media advocacy can publicize successes and support reform goals. For example, when JDAI work leads to lower recidivism rates and saved tax dollars, the affected community needs to hear about it. On the other hand, negative stories may hinder reform efforts. If rising crime rates or high-profile cases appear in the headlines, it is crucial to reframe the discussion to highlight the public safety benefits and cost-effectiveness of JDAI.
- **Influence How a Story Is Reported.** A good media strategy can help control how a story is reported and how an organization or initiative is perceived. Juvenile justice issues will always appear in the media; the question is whether that coverage will advance or hinder positive reforms. JDAI sites have the important task of ensuring that the media not portray detention reform as a "jail break," but instead, as an effective public safety strategy that holds youth accountable.

One recent *Associated Press* story in Louisiana gets this message right. "Locking up juveniles before trial may make them more likely to commit crimes afterward" (Nov. 28, 2006; see Appendix II). Shaping the way people think about juvenile justice won't happen overnight, but the right communications strategy and messaging can have an important impact on advancing detention reform.

## PROACTIVE MEDIA STRATEGIES: HOW TO PROMOTE DETENTION REFORM

JDAI has a powerful story to tell about an approach to juvenile justice that is data driven, fair, cost-effective, and accountable for public safety. With the right communications approach, sites can help generate positive stories and coverage to advance support for this important initiative.

Since one of JDAI's core strategies is **data-driven decision-making**, sites have many statistics and figures to help support messages about the benefits of detention reform. The focus on **reducing racial and ethnic disparities** also allows sites to engage in media work around the notion of **fairness**. As JDAI helps communities reduce the inappropriate use of detention in ways that also enhance public safety, sites can tell a story about the **counter-intuitive** and newsworthy idea that **reducing the number of detained youth can promote safety**.

Over time, stories can applaud the reforms that reduce detention and promote safety. For example, in April 2007 an editorial in New Orleans' *Times-Picayune* said the following about the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina: "Flooding shut down both juvenile detention centers that were used to house 10- to 16-year-olds while they awaited trial. Instead of rebuilding those centers, the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, the New Orleans Police Department and agencies that work with youth decided to try a new approach, one that stresses alternatives to locking up kids. That's a wiser course—one that the state of Louisiana finally turned to in 2003 when it adopted legislation meant to transform a troubled juvenile justice system from one that relied almost solely on incarceration to one that stressed rehabilitation and alternatives to jail" (Apr. 10, 2007; see Appendix III).

JDAI media coverage can also deliver the message that the core strategies not only promote public safety, but also simultaneously conserve tax dollars. A feature in the *California Bar Journal* highlights this fact by quoting a county official who estimates that her jurisdiction "has saved millions of dollars in lockup costs, which statewide range from \$70,000 to \$100,000 per year per child...[T]he county was lucky it didn't get a grant it had sought for a new juvenile detention center with an operational cost of \$1.5 million a year, [because] [t]hey don't need it" (Feb. 2007).

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, when government resources were especially scarce, an article on JDAI in New Orleans paid particular attention to the cost-savings aspect of the program. The *Times-Picayune* article notes that "Nonviolent offenders are kept under supervision through electronic monitoring and surprise drop-in visits by court staff—at a cost

that is less than a 10th the cost of detention, according to juvenile court officials. Typically, about two-thirds of the juveniles arrested are accused of a nonviolent offense, mostly petty crimes, officials said.” The article goes on to specifically note the savings generated when courts implement alternatives to detention. “[C]ompared with detention, community monitoring is money-saving, Bell said. Detaining a child costs the city between \$130 and \$150 a day. Attaching an electronic monitor to his ankle is \$12 a day, tracking him through a cell-phone monitor is about \$4 a day. Assigning a youth advocate runs between \$20 and \$50 a day” (April 8, 2007).

In Chicago, a letter to the editor highlights the savings that JDAI can bring while reducing detention and promoting safety: “Estimated costs for these alternatives range from \$35 to \$95 a day, while the costs of locked secure care in a new facility begin at \$90 a day and may run significantly higher. Implementing the Casey initiative should result in significant cost savings to Cook County taxpayers” (*Chicago Sun-Times*, Dec. 15, 1994; see Appendix VI).

### **a) It’s All About Relationships**

The first step in building a successful media strategy is researching and reaching out to the reporters who cover juvenile justice issues. Establishing a genuine rapport with reporters won’t guarantee favorable coverage, but it can set up chosen spokespeople to be a source when juvenile justice issues are in the news. Here are points to keep in mind while building relationships with the media:

**Engage JDAI Key Stakeholders.** JDAI’s collaborations provide sites with a network of local and national experts, including judges, police chiefs, district attorneys, community leaders and, importantly, young people and family members. These powerful spokespeople can explain how detention reform has impacted public safety, increased positive outcomes for youth, promoted fairness, and improved the juvenile justice system overall. Because it is important for all stakeholders to understand and follow agency media protocol, as well as to understand the jurisdiction’s media strategy, outreach and education to this group is vital.

**Create a Detailed Press List.** Before beginning, it is important to establish the lay of the land. Make a list of every reporter in the region who covers crime, juvenile justice, or the children/youth “beat.” This is the press list. Don’t forget to include television reporters, web publications, and the alternative press as well. Read through recent articles to get a sense of the reporters’ interests, and their sympathies and potential biases. This list is an internal document to use and keep updated.



**Introduce Yourself and Stay in Contact.** A quick phone call or an e-mail message is an easy way to let reporters know what JDAI is and what it does. Stay in contact by keeping them up-to-date with developing issues. Of course, don't inundate them with calls on trivial matters. Reporters want to stay on top of important developments and emerging news, so use key events, such as anniversaries or annual program reports, as a way to stay in contact.

**Always Respond to Reporter Inquiries.** Become a trusted source by responding to reporters' questions in an accurate, timely manner. If you do not have an immediate answer to their questions, put them in touch with people who do. This way, you become the "one-stop" source for a busy reporter. If there is a need to get back to them with an answer or a contact, be sure to ask about their deadline and get back to them on time.

**Understand That Reporters Want to Write Fair and Balanced Stories.** Journalists take pride in providing fair and objective coverage, and may bristle if they believe they are being pushed to promote a particular interest or agenda. The best way to be a long-term source is to make sure the information conveyed is clearly organized, well-researched, and, above all, accurate.

**Avoid Using Acronyms or Jargon.** Reporters are not necessarily experts, so don't assume that a reporter has a detailed understanding of the juvenile justice system. Be sure to explain complicated issues in layman's terms. Reporters may use your words to describe the issue, so the language should be accessible to a broad audience.

**Provide Documentation in Writing.** Be sure to follow up on meetings or conversations with reporters by providing them with any relevant documents. Most reporters will require primary sources for the facts you share. For example, provide data showing that juvenile crime fell as fewer young people were detained.

**Be Available.** Make sure that a reporter can easily find contact information for the public information officer (PIO) or staff responsible for dealing with the media. Including information on websites and phone messages is very helpful. Also, have someone available to speak with the press in the evenings. Many reporters spend traditional work hours researching, and begin writing in the evening. Ensure that key reporters have the cell phone number and after-hours contact information for the staff responsible for interacting with the media. If someone is available to answer questions that arise quickly, the story will incorporate more of your perspective.

## **b) Working Successfully With Reporters**

When working with reporters, be sure to respect their time and deadline pressures. Remember, just as you have to pitch your ideas to them, reporters need to convince their editors of the value of their stories. Help them do their job by providing newsworthy information in a timely manner.

Keep the following in mind:

**Understand Deadlines.** In most circumstances, the best time to pitch to a reporter is mid-morning or early afternoon. The later the information is received, the more likely the reporter will be “on deadline.” Newsrooms are under tight deadlines, so if a reporter says he or she can’t talk now, respect that and try to connect later. Arguing with a reporter operating on deadline rarely helps, unless you’ve really got a stop-the-presses scoop. Similarly, if reporters request additional information, be sure to determine their deadline and get back to them in the appropriate time frame.

**Look for Media Openings.** Slower news cycles include weekends, holidays, and certain times of the year. The JDAI site in Washington, DC, for example, placed a major story profiling the system’s football team by pitching it for the weekend edition. Legislative recesses can also be an ideal time to pitch stories because this is generally a slower news cycle. That means less competition for valuable airtime! If a relationship has been established with a reporter, ask about the best time to pitch a story. When pitching an editorial, submitting an op-ed, or even just writing a letter to the editor, the editorial will be more successful if it is relevant to other recent news stories published or aired by the outlet.

**Give reporters time to do their jobs, and provide advance copies of reports or an exclusive advance interview when possible.**

**Give Reporters Lead Time.** Want to get on a reporter’s bad side? Hand her a 50-page report one day before the news is supposed to break. Be mindful that reporters are busy juggling multiple assignments. Give reporters time to do their jobs, and provide advance copies of reports or an exclusive advance interview when possible. It’s also a good idea to give news editors and producers an advance call because they are the people who will ultimately decide whether the story runs.

**Know When You Are “On the Record.”** When talking to a reporter, assume that the conversation is on the record, or subject to being quoted, unless otherwise specified. If you are not willing to be quoted, be sure to preface the conversation by saying that it is off the record. In general, it is best to only give off-the-record information to trusted reporters. Keep in mind that a journalist will rarely build a story around off-the-record conversations, so be ready to speak for publication or identify someone who can.

**Don’t Exaggerate Your Case.** Leading a reporter down an inaccurate path may jeopardize the relationship and future dealings with that media outlet. Don’t stretch the truth. If a reporter asks about something you don’t know, it’s okay to say, “I don’t know,” or better yet, “I’ll have to get back to you with that information.”

**Be a News Source.** Reporters will call you more often if they feel that you are a resource for newsworthy information on juvenile justice. When promoting a story, help the reporters do their job by finding the right news hook. For example, connect issues to a local political race, the state budget crisis, a one-sided crime series, government accountability and transparency, a human face for juvenile justice reform, or a national movement for change. When reporters call with a question about juvenile justice that you can't answer, put them in touch with someone who can. Reporters will call you more often if they see you as a resource.

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### c) Making the Pitch

There are a number of ways to get a story into the media, ranging from a simple press release to a major public event. A good media strategy should take into account goals, resources (both time and money), and the relative newsworthiness of the story.

Here are a few tips on making a successful pitch:

**Make the Story Relevant.** Think about what generally gets published in the target media outlet and develop a hook to make the story newsworthy.

- **Timing.** Issuing a press release can help to both frame and amplify the message. Tying a story to relevant anniversaries, holidays, or annual events (back to school, etc.) increases its newsworthiness. For example, talking about how JDAI may help young people return to school would be an excellent story to pitch in late August or early September when students are starting the school year.
- **Localize.** Like politics, all news is local, and the trend in newsrooms to prioritize local news is only intensifying. If a national report on juvenile justice trends is released, see if there are statistics on your jurisdiction's outcomes or local anecdotes that can localize the story.
- **Events.** Public events make great news hooks, but they can also be time consuming and complicated to organize. It may be inefficient to organize an event simply to create a news hook, but, by all means, take advantage of upcoming events. Do media a courtesy by alerting them to interesting public events, such as a testimony at the board of supervisors regarding JDAI.

**Don't Just Tell—Show.** Journalists love visuals. When working with television news outlets, visuals are a requirement. For print media, having a visual component to generate photos can ensure better placement, greater emotional impact, and sometimes more column inches for the story. Finding a visual hook can be simple:

- **Take a Reporter on a Tour of a Local Facility or Program.** Never underestimate the emotional power of showing, firsthand, the people affected by public policies. Tours of evening reporting centers or other well-run detention alternatives are particularly effective ways of contrasting the image of “youth in jail.” Keep in mind, however, confidentiality issues. Work out an agreement with the reporter to protect the identities of youth—don’t show faces or reveal identifying information.
- **Select Youth to Serve as Spokespeople.** Youth voices are authentic, personal, and powerful. For example, when the Justice Policy Institute released a report detailing successes in Multnomah County, a young person who had benefited from JDAI spoke to reporters at a media event. The young person’s firsthand account of how his life was shaped by detention alternatives provided reporters with a human-interest angle that made the story more personal and powerful. However, keep in mind that young people will need coaching and training before being put in touch with reporters. Also, make sure to get consent from parents or guardians before putting media in touch with a young person. In general, it is best to ask the paper to conceal the youth’s identity—a policy already in place at many papers.
- **Stage an Event.** If resources permit, public events can increase reporters’ interest and encourage them to bring a photographer along. System reformers may consider collaborating with advocates to maximize the impact of the event and economize resources. For example, a jazz funeral to mourn the dying dreams of Louisiana’s incarcerated youth saturated print, radio, and television news outlets. Advocates in Los Angeles and Mississippi frequently hold community- and youth-led events to draw support for reform efforts. System stakeholders who are actively engaged in reform efforts can play an important role in this context.

#### d) Utilize Various Forms of Media

Many people pitch to newspaper reporters, but don’t forget that there are also other types of media.

- **Television.** Since nearly one-third of Americans receive their news exclusively from television, reaching out to local television reporters is part of a comprehensive media strategy.
- **Radio.** Whether it’s a call-in show or a drive-time news program, regional radio outlets can provide a valuable forum to explore juvenile justice issues in great detail.
- **Web Publications and Blogs.** Web-based publications, including electronic magazines and blogs, are a growing part of the media landscape. Web media often include links to

letter-writing campaigns and other action items that can engage people. After being handed a JDAI publication during a speaking engagement, a writer of an influential political blog in Colorado recently promoted the initiative and asked, “How can we get JDAI to Colorado?”

- **Editorial Boards.** Newspapers include more than just news stories. Policymakers, elected officials, and their staff read the editorial page as a barometer of public opinion. Set up a meeting with a newspaper’s editorial board to discuss critical issues in greater detail, or consider submitting an op-ed. Keep in mind that editorial writers can be some of the toughest people to get on the phone. So start by building a relationship with their gatekeepers, the editorial assistants. JDAI sites in Maryland, California, Louisiana, Oregon, and Washington have generated supportive editorials on detention reform—sometimes immediately after a news reporter has written a positive piece about JDAI.

#### e) Opportunities for Media Outreach

JDAI sites should proactively seek media opportunities to lay the groundwork for sustainable reform. Listed below are examples of opportunities that might present a news hook in your jurisdiction:

- When Annie E. Casey Foundation representatives are providing local stakeholders with an overview of JDAI, the site might invite the media to bring them onboard as early as possible.
- When data support the progress of reforms, sites should package the data in digestible fact sheets or a press release to encourage media to cover the successes.
- If JDAI has helped conserve taxpayer dollars, reporters should be given information on the actual cost-benefits and encouraged to write a story.
- When detention populations fall and public safety either improves or is not adversely affected, sites should provide data to the media in a press release or fact sheets.
- On the anniversary of the site’s launch, update media with detention reform progress and success.
- If an article creates a false perception of juvenile crime, respond to reframe the issue.
- When a system has made a significant personnel change, update the media.
- If a site is opening a new program, invite the media to visit and to participate in any formal ceremonies.
- When a site receives regional or national recognition for its reform work, make sure the media are informed.

## CREATE A COMPELLING MESSAGE

**D**uring the early 1990s, advocates conducted focus groups and polled the public to determine which juvenile justice reform messages resonated the most (*Public Opinion on Youth, Crime, and Race*, 2001). Polling showed that the public is ready to support juvenile justice reform if those reforms are tied to key concepts like accountability and fairness. The public believes that youth should be held accountable for their actions, but that doesn't mean they have to be incarcerated. And, there is little support for simply locking up youth. Instead, the public overwhelmingly (90 percent) supports rehabilitation and treatment, because they believe in second chances for young people (*Public Opinion...*, 2001).

Recent polling data released by the Center for Children's Law and Policy (CCLP) show that more than 70 percent of the general public agree that incarcerating youthful offenders without rehabilitation is the same as giving up on them. The Center also reported that nine out of 10 people surveyed believe that "almost all youth who commit crimes have the potential to change" (*Potential for Change*, 2007). Separate research conducted by the MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice found that when given the choice, the public is more willing to pay for juvenile rehabilitation than incarceration (*Rehabilitation Versus Incarceration of Juvenile Offenders*, 2007).

The way that detention reform is described will influence the way the issue is covered in the media and, ultimately, the way the public will respond. Remember, public opinion is on your side; all you need to do is describe your position in a way that is clear, heartfelt, and taps into the values that Americans share.

### a) Public Opinion on Juvenile Justice Messages

**Phrases That Resonate.** According to polling, Americans prefer affirmative, solution-oriented alternatives to incarceration. Here are some key words that resonate with the public:

- Rehabilitation
- Counseling
- Potential to change
- Community service
- Mentoring
- Accountability
- Victim compensation

Detention reformers will note, of course, that a number of these words are really not appropriate or relevant to the detention phase of juvenile proceedings. (For example, we don't impose community service on those *accused* of delinquency, nor do we address victim compensation issues until there has been an adjudication.) Still, these words reflect the public's preference for a system that seeks to ensure safety and to help youth get back on the right track.

The polling results also show that the public generally identifies with values-based notions of youth, such as the ideas that:

- Young people should not be housed with adults.
- Youth do not belong in adult prisons.

**Emphasize Youth Accountability.** Public opinion polling found that the public is ready to embrace juvenile justice reform if it's explained in the appropriate way. One major roadblock is the perception that "reform" means being "soft on crime" by not holding young people accountable for their actions. On the other hand, the public does not believe that accountability always requires incarceration. It is important, therefore, to explain that detention alternatives do not "let youth off the hook," but instead provide a different response that is more effective and less costly. Polls show that the public recognizes young people's potential for change. Your message, therefore, might emphasize that JDAI seeks to avoid the negative impact that detention often has on youth behavior.

**Focus on Rehabilitation.** By and large, polling has shown that the American public does not support simply locking up young offenders and forgetting about them. However, they also don't believe in the "youth excuse"—the idea that behavior can be excused because of age. People do tend to support practical approaches that reduce youth crime, and rehabilitation and treatment meet these criteria. They also like programs that involve supervision, mentoring, and counseling. It's useful to emphasize these public notions and tap into shared values. For example:

- Most youth have the capacity to change for the better;
- A system that simply locks up young people will lead to more crime, not less; and
- Spending money to rehabilitate youth is more cost-effective than incarcerating them.

Notice that the practical arguments for detention alternatives also tap into those shared values discussed above. When talking about detention reform, it is worth mentioning

**It is important, therefore, to explain that detention alternatives do not "let youth off the hook," but instead provide a different response that is more effective and less costly.**

that youth have the capacity to change, that the undisciplined use of detention can aggravate delinquency, and that detention reform is more cost-effective than inappropriately detaining youth.

**Highlight Fairness.** Polling shows that the public generally understands the concept of disproportionate minority contact. However, they are more open to the message if racial unfairness is also linked to economic unfairness, and if it is linked to a systemic problem that can be resolved by concrete measures. For example, instead of pointing to a racially unfair system, it helps to talk about concrete ways to make it more fair.

A 2006 op-ed in Boston's *Bay State Banner* resonated the message of fairness and JDAI: "If Massachusetts can mirror the successes of other sites that have put a nationally heralded youth detention initiative to work, the plan could significantly reduce racial disparities in the juvenile justice system" (Dec. 28, 2006; see Appendix V).

**Explain Technical Terms.** Although using concepts such as "detention alternatives" and "failure to appear rates" can't always be avoided, those ideas should be clearly explained so that people who don't work in the system can understand them. For example, "When young people are in a detention alternative, such as day reporting centers, we are able to safely supervise them in the community before they need to return to court." Take the time to explain the word detention, if it is not clear. (See the box, "What We Mean When We Say Detention.")

**Phrases to Avoid.** Polling also tells us which concepts fail to resonate with the public.

- **"Excuse" Language.** Americans tend to be turned off by language that excuses youthful offenders. Talking about youthful mistakes, immaturity, and abuse early in life does not generate public sympathy.
- **Confusing Concepts.** The public does not clearly understand the following phrases: "prosecuting youth as adults," "juvenile facilities," "juvenile justice system," "group homes," and "nonviolent" offenses.
- **"Juveniles."** In the public mind, the word "juvenile" has negative connotations. Instead, use the terms "youth," "young people," or "kids."



### **What We Mean When We Say “Detention”**

Advocates and officials know the ins and outs of the juvenile justice system, but the practice of detention is not necessarily clear to wider audiences. People may even think “detention” refers to after-school punishment! Public opinion polls show, however, that the public supports alternatives to incarceration for young people—and that sentiment encompasses detention alternatives. People tend to think of detention as a form of “youth incarceration” and they don’t necessarily care about the technical differences between various forms of confinement.

Still, experience shows that it helps to paint a clear picture of detention, to help the public better understand why it needs to be changed. When referring to detention, explain what detention is, how it is supposed to be used, and why it is a problem when used inappropriately. The following paragraph from a Justice Policy Institute press release on the *Dangers of Detention* provides sample language:

“Detention is generally the pretrial ‘jailing’ of youth not yet found delinquent. Although detention facilities are meant to temporarily house those youth who are likely to re-offend before their trial or who are unlikely to appear for their court date, most detained youth do not meet these criteria. More than two-thirds of detained youth are charged with property offenses, public order offenses, technical probation violations, or status offenses (like running away or breaking curfew). Rather than promoting public safety, studies show that unnecessarily detaining youth may contribute to future offenses. Studies from around the country show that incarcerated youth have higher recidivism rates than youth supervised in other kinds of settings.”

### **b) Tips for Messaging**

Framing a story—or determining the elements to be included and excluded—helps influence whether the media covers an issue and how extensively. Context is critical for effective framing. The key to influencing targeted audiences is to use language that fits within the context and is familiar to the audience.

JDAI’s Help Desk ([www.jdaihelpdesk.org](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org)) has excellent resources that provide valuable arguments and facts to inform messaging. Take special note of the detention reform briefs

**Use concepts that have wide appeal to everyone, including the idea of increasing public safety, giving young people a second chance, keeping costs low, and promoting fairness.**

on public safety and cost savings, the *Dangers of Detention* and *Beyond Detention* reports, and the JDAI newsletter. These sources all provide valuable arguments and facts that support detention reform.

Here are a few general concepts to keep in mind for all media interviews and messaging:

**Avoid Jargon.** When creating talking points, remember that the audience may not have much knowledge of the juvenile justice world. Speak in plain language and avoid any insider acronyms, terms, or jargon that may not make sense to the uninitiated. For example, instead of saying, “One of the core strategies of JDAI is to expedite case processing,” it is better to say, “JDAI helps move young people through the system more quickly, and reduces the time they are detained without compromising public safety.”

**Tap Into Shared Values.** Remember that most Americans generally share many of JDAI’s values. Think about why you care about detention reform. Use concepts that have wide appeal to everyone, including the idea of increasing public safety, giving young people a second chance, keeping costs low, and promoting fairness.

One recent news report from Missouri offers a good example of messaging that taps into these shared values. Speaking about a decline in youth detained by the state, the spokesman, Jeff Eisenbeis of Family Court, said, “Not only are we keeping less kids, we are keeping the right kids. Jail is necessary for some juvenile offenders but can be harmful to others by increasing the likelihood that they will join a gang, carry a weapon or re-offend” (*Kansas City Star*, Jul. 19, 2007; see Appendix IV).

**Personalize the Story.** Youth and families served by JDAI can be powerful ways to tell the system’s story. Use personal examples and anecdotes, and draw connections to the public policy changes JDAI promotes. A California newspaper recently used personal stories with a particularly powerful effect. The story centered on a young woman, Ruby, whose childhood had been plagued with abuse and neglect. The reporter focused on how JDAI had helped her turn her life around. “Rather than going to a group home, she began recovering with help from a team of specialists in her community. It helped her put her life back on track, providing services—from counseling to bus tokens—so she could get to school” (*Ventura County Star*, Jul. 8, 2007).

Similarly, because JDAI is a collaborative endeavor that involves multiple system stakeholders, it produces “messengers” who are not traditional. Having prosecutors or probation

officials serve as spokespersons in support of JDAI's core strategies sends a powerful message that detention reform is good for public safety.

### c) Find the Right Voices

When it comes to media, the right messenger can be as important as the message itself. Your message will be much more powerful if it is echoed by a diverse group of people.

**Recruit Champions for JDAI.** Spokespeople from related advocacy organizations and supportive community leaders are a natural place to look for additional voices. However, reporters will be especially interested in hearing from people the public would not expect to support alternatives to detention. Perhaps there is a crime victim who supports alternative measures, or a police officer, prosecutor, or judge. Unlikely allies can make compelling media, but as with any media spokesperson, it is imperative to ensure that your unlikely allies will stay on on-message and are comfortable with JDAI's underlying principles and strategies.

**Utilize Voices from the Community You Serve.** Youth who have been affected by systems change (or their families) can be authentic voices in the media. Personal stories, told in their own words, often add a powerful emotional component to a story and help humanize a policy issue. To do this effectively, contact young people who are doing well since they left the juvenile justice system.

**Use JDAI Spokespeople.** After identifying a diverse collection of voices, don't be shy about taking advantage of them. They can speak at press conferences, offer quotes for press releases, author introductions for reports, draft op-eds, or be guests on radio or television shows. JDAI sites have used judges and elected officials (including mayors, governors, county commissioners, and congresspeople) as spokespersons. Supporters who are unexpected allies are especially effective as guests to radio and TV public affairs shows. These shows offer an opportunity for a longer, more substantive conversation about detention reform. Having the message come from an unlikely ally could help broaden support for system reforms and program innovations.

### d) Keep Goals in Mind

Remember that a news story is not an end in itself. People often make the mistake of promoting a terrific news story that draws attention to their issue, yet they drop the ball when it comes

**When it comes to media, the right messenger can be as important as the message itself. Your message will be much more powerful if it is echoed by a diverse group of people.**

to holding decision-makers accountable for fixing the problem. When the media spotlight shines on juvenile justice, cast it on the right targets. The coverage is not the end in itself—detention reform is the goal that is served by effective public relations strategies. For example, if a site is working to reduce racial disparities in detention, a media strategy might try to elevate public support for racial fairness in the juvenile justice system.

To do this most effectively, ask: Who has decision-making authority? Is it a regulatory agency, a state legislature, the governor? Who is blocking your reform efforts? Who simply needs a prod in the right direction? What are the systemic and/or cultural obstacles to reforming detention, and how can public relations help address those challenges? Your message should include recommendations urging decision-makers to support your agenda. Help reporters understand who holds the levers of power and how they can be tipped.

One JDAI site that has successfully developed a goal-focused media strategy is Multnomah County. From the very first days as a JDAI site, Multnomah County has prioritized public relations as an important tool for achieving the goal of detention reform. To ensure that the primary daily paper had sufficient understanding of the issue of juvenile justice and the goals of JDAI, the publisher of the *Oregonian* was asked to serve as co-chair of the initial JDAI steering committee.

The county also effectively worked with the coordinating department's public information officer to inform the media about reform successes. Multnomah County issued a half-dozen press releases on the initiative's outcomes, including the county's progress in lowering racial disparities, reducing the use of detention, and declining juvenile crime rates and recidivism. By working with the media at several key opportunities, the site helped to shape coverage that generated public support for detention reform. By

involving judges and prosecutors, Multnomah County fostered a deeper commitment to help sustain the initiative. Goal-oriented media outreach helped build an enduring relationship between Multnomah County and the local newspaper, so that when challenges to the initiative emerged, the news and editorial divisions knew about JDAI, how it works, and understood it to be an important policy innovation for the county.

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## PREPARING FOR AN INTERVIEW: TRICKS OF THE TRADE

**B**efore contacting a reporter or participating in a scheduled interview, a little preparation can go a long way. Not being able to communicate a basic message or to answer general questions will jeopardize the story's chance of being published.

### a) General Tips for Effective Interviews

**Practice.** It's always a good idea to have main points written out before beginning an interview. This will help focus on key messages and goals and ensure that crucial points aren't left out. Also, think about questions that a reporter is likely to ask and be prepared with good answers.

**Keep It Simple.** News stories are never going to give the level of detail that a book or academic journal would. Do the reporter a favor and break the message down into understandable info-bites. It is helpful to write out the major points of the story, such as, "Detention reform helps improve public safety, saves money, and gives young people a second chance." Too much detail or extraneous information may confuse or turn off the reporter. The JDAI detention reform briefs on public safety and cost savings found on the JDAI Help Desk provide simple examples of how detention reform benefits communities.

**Stay on Message.** Oftentimes reporters have a predetermined angle on a story or set of messages they want to use to shape a story. One way to deal with this reality is to limit your message to no more than three main ideas, and repeat them during the interview. Bringing the message back to the same three points will shape the overall story. Also, have a pithy quote or two ready and try to casually work them into the conversation. If you have backup data, use them to illustrate your main points.

**Remember Your ABCs.** When a reporter asks a question, remember these three steps: Address the question, Bridge or transition the question, and Communicate your message. This is a time-tested strategy of communications that, if practiced, is surprisingly effective. For example, if a reporter says that communities are concerned about rising crime, you can:

- Address the question by acknowledging that, "Communities deserve to feel safe";
- Bridge the question by pointing out that, "Communities can be safe without detaining youth unnecessarily and inappropriately"; and

- Communicate your message clearly by stating, “Detention reform ensures that systems run effectively, that youth who need to be are detained, and it helps prevent future offenses by keeping youth who pose little risk to public safety in other appropriate settings.”

**Print media often allows deeper insight into a story, but television provides a much broader audience. Remember that most Americans get their news from TV.**

**Never Lie or Raise Your Voice.** It sounds obvious, but often people get flustered when they get a question they hadn’t anticipated. It is always okay to say that you don’t know the answer to a particular question. Even when dealing with a fairly aggressive reporter, it is never helpful to sound hostile or aggressive. Again, preparing and practicing for the interview beforehand will help you keep your cool.

**Relax.** Reporters are busy people and you likely understand juvenile justice issues far more than they do. This isn’t a political debate—the reporter is not going to try and trick you into saying something you don’t want to say. If something came out wrong, explain that to the reporter, and restate your message. Reporters understand that the juvenile justice system is complicated, and they want the story to be explained clearly and effectively.

**Gather Intelligence.** At the beginning of an interview, it’s appropriate to ask what direction the reporter is considering taking the story, whom else she will interview, and when the story will be printed or aired.

#### **b) Lights, Cameras, Action! Tips for TV**

Print media often allows deeper insight into a story, but television provides a much broader audience. Remember that most Americans get their news from TV. All of the tips for effective interviews above apply to TV, but there are a few more specific guidelines to keep in mind when appearing on television.

**Use Sound Bites.** Broadcast media rarely goes into the same level of detail as a print story, so a message must be broken down into understandable sound bites. Have a short, pithy quote ready to work into the story. Too much detail or information could confuse or turn off the audience.

**Get to the Point.** Television and radio stories may use only a 10–30 second cut. The shorter your comments, the less likely they are to be edited.

**Consider Your Tone and Appearance.** Your message will be better received if you are well groomed and professionally dressed. Avoid large pieces of jewelry, stripes, or intricate patterns—they will not look good on camera.

### c) Making the Most of Talk Radio

Talk radio is a hotbed for political debate. Because the medium is so simple and influential, it's a great place to get your message out.

**Know the Show.** Figure out in advance the political leanings of the host and audience. This will help when crafting your message.

**Be Conversational and Concise.** Talk radio interviews sound best when they are calm, conversational, and concise. Avoid sounding too expert or aloof.

**Anticipate Challenges.** Hardball questions from hosts and callers are all a part of the game in talk radio. Don't get frustrated—anticipate the challenging questions, and keep your cool while staying on message. Remember to state your name and organization clearly, and offer a phone number or website address at the end of your interview.

## CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS

Unfortunately, difficult cases do occur. A young person may leave the juvenile justice system or detention alternative and commit a serious crime, or a youth may suffer an injury in the care of the juvenile justice system. These cases often capture the media's attention and public opinion may begin to sway in favor of increased incarceration. There are ways to diffuse this negative attention and keep the press, and the public, focused on the larger picture. To help illustrate an appropriate response, consider a scenario where a young person on a pretrial electronic monitoring program commits a new, serious crime.

### a) Dealing with Difficult Cases

To address the problem publicly, an effective media strategy should:

**Acknowledge Responsibility.** Take responsibility for the system's role in the crisis, but do note where that responsibility is shared. Here's a message that does both:

We are all saddened by this tragic, but rare, case. Our juvenile justice system's detention policies and practices have been carefully developed by judges, law enforcement personnel, probation and other stakeholders. They emphasize detaining those youth who pose risks to public safety and finding alternatives for youth who can be safely released. Collectively, we carefully monitor whether those policies and practices are accomplishing these goals. Unfortunately, no system is perfect and not all human behavior is predictable. Our practices are, however, constantly monitored for public safety outcomes and, although this type of outcome is an exception, we will examine this case thoroughly and make appropriate adjustments."

**Explain the Context.** Never minimize a tragedy. Always be open and transparent about the nature of what occurred. However, put the offense in its proper context. It often helps to shift the problem away from the individual case to a larger context. For example:

"It is our job to protect every young person in our care, and we are all saddened by this tragic, but rare, case. He is one of 3,000 young people we manage in our detention alternative programs in the community every year. Thankfully, 95 percent of the young people in our care are back home and back in school, with no re-arrests prior to their court hearings."

**Be Solution Oriented.** Acknowledge the problem, but discuss what measures are being taken to ensure that the situation will not reoccur:

"While 95 percent of young people in our care successfully leave our system without incident, in this rare case, the youth was not successful in our detention alternative program. We are working to figure out exactly what happened so that this does not happen again."



**Explain the Downside of Changing Course.** In the aftermath of a crisis there may be public pressure to change the detention reform process. Be sure to clearly explain why increasing detention is not a satisfactory alternative:

“If the electronic monitoring program was ended, young people charged with stealing bicycles would be packed into detention facilities where they would get worse, not better. Those youth would be far more likely to engage in more serious crime in the future.”

**Find the Right Voices.** When a system is under fire, it is often preferable to have non-traditional, supportive voices to carry the message. Having law enforcement personnel, for example, affirm their support of policies and practices following a “bad” case sends a powerful message that the system is committed to public safety. Similarly, “outside” sources—people who don’t work in the system and who, therefore, are not viewed as its defenders—can say things those in the system cannot. For example, an outside advocate could say:

“Now, more than ever, we need to stick to policies and practices that are proven to work. This one case should not cause us to forsake recent progress. We need to support our well-trained staff in the difficult tasks of helping young people return to their homes, get back into school, and stay out of trouble.”

**Other Scenarios.** The escape or high-profile crime of a youth under the custody of the juvenile justice system is not the only situation that demands a media response. Other situations that could merit a response include:

- An attack on detention reform as “soft on crime”;
- Concern about the loss of jobs as juvenile detention rates decrease;
- A district attorney who runs for office on a tough-on-kids platform; or
- An injury or death of a youth in the care of the juvenile justice system.

These situations merit a response, but the messaging will need to be developed on a case-by-case basis.

### **Case Study: Responding to the Crime Victims United Attack on JDAI**

An inflammatory report, fraught with inaccuracies, by a group calling itself Crime Victims United, attacked Multnomah County’s JDAI initiative, arguing that the juvenile justice system is broken, that youth are not held accountable, and that law enforcement does not support detention reform. (The report was dedicated to a youth who was fatally shot wearing an electronic monitoring bracelet.)

Multnomah County stakeholders worked with the Justice Policy Institute (JPI) and a local advocacy organization to devise and implement a public relations strategy that would shift the focus of the conversation away from the attacks, and back on the science-based approaches and data-proven successes of the initiative. The report's findings were assessed and an organized, timely response was agreed upon to set the record straight.

A letter to the editor was submitted to the local paper, the *Oregonian*, authored by the Multnomah County Community Justice Department director. Simultaneously, the PIO for Multnomah County developed a fact sheet that addressed the factual errors in the report, highlighted best practices and presented system data. This fact sheet contained important messaging and was used to help separate fact from fiction with all the major JDAI stakeholders, including CVU.

Then, a letter and position statement were submitted by a local advocacy organization to the *Oregonian*. Each of the documents provided an alternative narrative frame, and outlined major arguments supporting JDAI. The statements emphasized that 1) the *inappropriate* use of detention can increase delinquency and put youth at harm, 2) detention is the most expensive and least effective option, 3) the public supports detention reform, and 4) the initiative is a deeply collaborative effort with measurable successes.

The *Oregonian* connected with another JDAI stakeholder, the presiding juvenile court judge, who emphasized that contrary to the CVU's allegation that JDAI isolates the juvenile justice system, one of the initiative's biggest strengths, in fact, is its ability to bring together major stakeholders, including the district attorney, judiciary, police, and other stakeholders, who set policies for the juvenile justice system.

In the end, the *Oregonian* ran an editorial supporting efforts to limit detention, and highlighting reform successes. The editorial echoed some of the main themes in the position statement. "[JDAI] is supported and supervised by leaders among police, prosecutors, the defense bar and judges. The evidence suggests that alternatives to juvenile detention work better in the long run. An Oregon study, for example, found that group detention can lead to worse results because juvenile offenders learn criminal behavior from one another. In Multnomah County, two-thirds of first-time offenders have not committed new crimes. That compares favorably with other Oregon counties" (June 9, 2008).

While the CVU report continues to stir up controversy, the media work and editorial provided a major counterpoint to the report's rhetoric and misinformation.

## b) Taking the Call: How to Respond When Bad Things Happen to Good Systems

We all dread that difficult moment when a reporter calls for a comment about a tragedy involving a youth connected to the juvenile justice system. Perhaps a young person engages in a violent crime while involved in a detention alternative program. Or, maybe months (or years) after a young person was under your system's supervision, he engages in a serious offense, and a victims' rights organization is asking what role the juvenile justice system played in the case. No matter how the case comes about, the media will be looking for a response from the juvenile justice system.

While responding to tragic cases is challenging, it is almost always better to respond, but only AFTER taking the time to think through your message. Here are some concrete tips on what to do when you get that call:

- **Don't Let the Story Run Without Your Input.** As tempting as it may be to avoid difficult stories, remember that the story will run whether you choose to respond or not. If you choose not to respond, the story that appears won't have the benefit of your perspective. Without your input, a story may have erroneous information about your system's role in the case. Choosing to respond will give you an opportunity to alter the way the story is told, to put your role in the best possible light. Besides, in a story that directly involves your system the absence of your quote could look suspicious and may say much more than any quote you would have provided.
- **Get Back to the Reporter in Time.** You don't need to give a quote the moment the reporter calls, but you absolutely must respond in time for the reporter's deadline. If the reporter calls before you are ready to respond, get her deadline and call her back after you've had a few minutes to collect your thoughts.
- **Assemble an Ad-Hoc Team to Help Develop Your Message.** Before talking to the media, talk to your most trusted colleagues to hone your message. Present your thoughts for responses, and let them help determine what works and what needs to be improved. If there is time, try to run your message by someone who has experience working with the media. Include system stakeholders and your agency's PIO, if applicable.
- **Review the "Messaging" Section and Write Out Talking Points.** Don't just "wing it" when you finally call the reporter. Review the messaging section of this practice guide, write down your talking points, and even practice once or twice. Try to imagine what the reporter might ask, and then figure out how you would respond.
- **Avoid Sounding Defensive.** Remember that it is legitimate for reporters to ask probing questions—they are just doing their job! Be composed and thoughtful. Don't think of the situation as a personal attack, but think of it as a communal problem that everyone is trying to understand. Patiently help the reporter and the public see your side.

- **If You Can't Respond to the Media, Identify Someone Who Can.** In some juvenile justice systems, there may be policies in place that prevent the agency head from directly responding to the media without permission from his or her supervisor. In that case, provide talking points to your director with recommendations on ways to respond. In some cases, it may be necessary to contact someone outside of the agency who can deliver the message that you'd like to present. Ex-colleagues, academics, juvenile justice reform advocates, or community-based organizations engaged in detention reform may have helpful spokespeople who can discuss why one case shouldn't threaten a larger reform effort.

### c) Context on the "Rising Crime" Debate

With news headlines increasingly covering crime "spikes" and "rises," it is important to both acknowledge the public's genuine desire to feel safe, and to de-escalate exaggerated fears and youth scapegoating.

The Justice Policy Institute has collected a number of resources to put "rising crime" in context on its website ([www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org)), and JDAI has produced a detention reform brief titled, "Detention Reform Is an Effective Public Safety Strategy," which can be found at [www.jdaihelpdesk.org](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org).

When contextualizing rising crime:

- Acknowledge that upticks in crime are a cause for concern, but systems should not abandon the use of sound juvenile justice practices embodied by JDAI because of those small increases. Explain that small increases in crime cannot be read as a trend.
- Point out that detention alternatives promote safety. The best research on the impact of pretrial detention suggests that detention can prolong youth delinquency and increase the likelihood that youth will re-offend.
- Mention that young people make up a very small portion of the nation's crime problem. Most surveys show that juveniles represent no more than 15 to 20 percent of all arrests, and a smaller portion of all crimes that lead to a conviction.
- Reinforce the cost savings of detention reform. While some young people may need to be detained, most do not. Detention is the least effective and most expensive way of ensuring that youth show up to court. By reducing the use of detention, communities free up public safety resources, which can be used to support more cost-effective public safety strategies.

## SUPPORT YOUR ARGUMENTS: KEY RESOURCES ON PUBLIC OPINION AND JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

**N**ow that you know the right language to use and avoid, you are ready to communicate and deliver effective messages on detention reform. Always have data and research to back up arguments. Check out the following resources or visit [www.jdaihelpdesk.org](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org) for more information:

- “Beyond Detention: System Transformation Through Juvenile Justice Reform” by Richard Mendel. (October 2007). *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform 14*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. ([www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Docs/Documents/JDAI%20Pathway%2014%20-%20beyond%20detention.pdf](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Docs/Documents/JDAI%20Pathway%2014%20-%20beyond%20detention.pdf))
- “A Road Map for Juvenile Justice Reform,” 2008 *Kids Count Essay*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. ([www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={8E672045-4819-4067-B7D1-5C6C47A25604}](http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications.aspx?pubguid={8E672045-4819-4067-B7D1-5C6C47A25604}))
- *Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities* by Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg. (November 2006). Justice Policy Institute. ([www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org))
- “JDAI Detention Reform Briefs” on public safety, cost savings, and racial disparities. (2007). (<http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Pages/PolicyBriefs.aspx>)
- JDAI News Section. *National JDAI Newsletter* reports detention reform practices, policies, and programs. ([www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Pages/JDAINews.aspx](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Pages/JDAINews.aspx))
- The Justice Policy Institute. Fact sheets, press materials, and research on juvenile justice. ([www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org))
- *Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook*. (2003). Information on pre-trial detained youth, by state. (<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/cjrp/default.asp>)
- *Changing Public Attitudes Toward the Criminal Justice System* by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc. for the Open Society Institute. (February 2002). ([www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/articles\\_publications/publications/hartpoll\\_20020201/Hart-Poll.pdf](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/justice/articles_publications/publications/hartpoll_20020201/Hart-Poll.pdf))

- *Easy Access to FBI Arrest Statistics (EZAUCR), 1994–2005*. Developed for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention by the National Center for Juvenile Justice. Provides access to juvenile arrest statistics at the national, state, and county level. Arrest statistics are presented for 29 detailed offense categories. (<http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/ezaucr/>)
- *FOCUS: Attitudes of U.S. Voters Toward Youth Crime and the Justice System*. (January 2007). National Council on Crime and Delinquency. ([www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/zogby\\_feb07.pdf](http://www.nccd-crc.org/nccd/pubs/zogby_feb07.pdf))
- *Off Balance: Youth, Race, and Crime in the News*. (2001). Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth. ([www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/media/](http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/media/))
- *Potential for Change: Public Attitudes and Policy Preferences for Juvenile Justice Systems Reform*. (2007). Washington, DC: Commissioned by the Center for Children’s Law and Policy. (<http://modelsforchange.net/pdfs/CCLPPollingFINAL.pdf>)
- *Public Opinion on Youth, Crime, and Race: A Guide for Advocates*. (2001). Washington, DC: Building Blocks for Youth. ([www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/advocacyguide.html](http://www.buildingblocksforyouth.org/advocacyguide.html))
- *Rehabilitation Versus Incarceration of Juvenile Offenders: Public Preferences in Four Models for Change States* by Alex Piquero and Laurence Steinberg. (2007). Models for Change. (<http://modelsforchange.net/pdfs/WillingnesstoPayFINAL.pdf>)
- “Attitudes Toward Approaches to Lowering the Crime Rate in the United States, selected years 1989–2006.” *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*. ([www.albany.edu/sourcebook/tost\\_2.html#2\\_i](http://www.albany.edu/sourcebook/tost_2.html#2_i))

## OP-EDS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR, AND PRESS RELEASES

**A**n op-ed is an opinion piece that appears adjacent a newspaper's editorial page and often highlights an alternative viewpoint or a new perspective on a current issue. Op-eds allow for a controlled message and can be an excellent way to introduce juvenile justice issues.

It is no easy feat to get an op-ed placed in a major national paper such as the *New York Times* or *Wall Street Journal*; those slots are usually reserved for well-known public figures. Those outlets may not be the most helpful for local reform. But, mid-sized newspapers are often quite willing to consider a voice from the community and they can be extremely effective in influencing public opinion.

### a) The Elements of an Op-Ed

**Find a Compelling Author.** Newspapers often look for experts to frame discussions in op-eds. They are far more likely to publish an op-ed by a writer recognized as a leader in the field. This can be a politician, a manager of a rehabilitation facility, a law enforcement official, or a well-known community advocate. Sometimes, an unexpected voice can be a powerful advocate. For example, a longtime policeman who advocates treatment over incarceration or a district attorney looking for innovative options to combat crime can make excellent authors for an op-ed.

**Know the Word Limit.** Most newspapers have a specific length requirement for opinion pieces, although these can vary from paper to paper. Normally, about 750 words is the limit—approximately two typed pages. Carefully study the op-eds published in the target newspaper to get an understanding of their requirements, including length.

**Hook the Reader at the Start.** You'll have a relatively small amount of space to make your point, so do so early in your piece. Long, rambling introductions will always be trimmed by an editor, and may even cause an editor not to consider your piece for publication at all. Get right to the point.

**Stick to the Point.** Focus on one or two main ideas. It's tempting to include multiple points and statistics, but the result could be a confusing jumble of minutia. Streamline points by including only the points that reinforce your primary argument. The main idea should be introduced early, reinforced with data or anecdotes, and then restated at the end.

**If the topic of juvenile justice reform surfaces in your media market, submit an op-ed within days to respond to the news cycle.**

**Find Your Voice.** A unique voice and a clear, interesting writing style are the best way to set an op-ed apart from the pack. Have a point of view. The op-ed page is not the place for hedging. It's okay—even encouraged—to be provocative, but be reasonable as well. Use humor, irony, or anecdotal stories if appropriate.

**Be Straightforward.** Write with clear, powerful, and direct language, using action words whenever possible. Use adjectives and adverbs sparingly since these can dilute your message. Most importantly, don't use clichés. Come up with an innovative way to express your idea.

**Be Timely.** Op-eds don't make the news, they respond to current issues or important hooks.

If the topic of juvenile justice reform surfaces in your media market, submit an op-ed within days to respond to the news cycle. If the issue isn't already in the news, you must find an appropriate hook to make it newsworthy. The anniversary of a program, new data, or a national report that you can localize are all effective hooks.

**Include Your 411.** Include a brief bio at the end of your submission of no more than one short paragraph (25–50 words). This establishes you with editors as a qualified voice for juvenile justice. Don't be offended if they trim this down to a one-sentence description for publication. Include your phone number, e-mail address, and mailing address for verification.

**Follow Up.** Once your op-ed is submitted, you can call an editorial page editor to make sure it was received. You'll also have the opportunity to make a pitch about why it is timely and compelling.



Op-Ed Example

### **THE PATH TO JUVENILE CRIME**

By Lucy Wieland, *Asian American Press*, January 21, 2007

A young man called James first came to juvenile court when he was five-years-old. He was removed from his mother's care due to neglect. When he was seven, I was the judge who terminated the parental rights of his mother and made him eligible for adoption. Only, he never got adopted. Over the next 10 years he came back to juvenile court again and again for curfew violations, running away, truancy and juvenile petty offenses like disorderly conduct. Now, he's on probation for aggravated robbery and has been arrested for running away from his foster home.

I'd like to say that James is an isolated example. Unfortunately, that's not the case. Last month I met with police officers from Minneapolis' juvenile apprehension arrest team to review the case files of some of the serious juvenile offenders the team has arrested. It was a first for several reasons. A new information system in juvenile court now allows us to see a juvenile's entire history in a simple printout. In addition, the newly formed juvenile unit in the Minneapolis police department is bringing a renewed focus to identifying and apprehending serious juvenile offenders.

As we looked through the files, something jumped out at us. These kids were no strangers to our juvenile court. As we looked more closely, we realized just how well we knew them. Three of them were children whose parental rights had been terminated by the court, and they had never been adopted. Another three had a history of being children in need of protection and services (CHIPS) because they had been abused or neglected. Following those early encounters with the judicial system, we had seen most of these kids many more times as they came back to court as runaways, for curfew violations, and for truancy. There in black and white was something many of us had suspected over the years, but had never seen documented with such clarity. Children who started out as "children at risk" a few years ago were now being jailed as serious juvenile offenders.

Another example is the story of "Marcus" (not his real name). Marcus first appeared in juvenile court at the age of 14 for a curfew violation. Over the next four years he came to court 15 more times, for multiple cases of running away, curfew violations, tobacco, and truancy. At 16, he was charged with stealing a car. He was placed in a voluntary placement for being developmentally disabled. Then at 17, he was charged with a burglary. Now at 19, he's in state prison as an adult. It's a scenario we see repeated far too often with tragic results for these children and for society at large.

So, what can we do about it? One part of the solution is an initiative in our juvenile court called the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The JDAI is a nationwide program aimed at lowering crime, and reducing crowding and racial disparity in juvenile detention centers. There were 3,826 admissions to the Hennepin County juvenile detention center in 2005, of which more than 80% were juveniles of color. Many of these juveniles are not a risk to public safety and are being held for low-level offenses that don't justify detention. We want to change this because research indicates that locking up low-level juvenile offenders is actually harmful and results in a greater likelihood that they will commit further crimes in the future. JDAI aims to eliminate the inappropriate use of secure detention, reduce racial disparity in detention and develop alternative strategies for these children. Judge Tanya Bransford, the presiding judge of Hennepin County's juvenile court, believes the initiative is crucial, saying: "JDAI will help us to improve public safety and the lives of the youth in the juvenile system by using objective criteria to determine when youth should be detained and when they should be diverted to community resources in order to return them to law-abiding behavior."

While JDAI is a very important initiative, addressing the problems of juvenile crime requires more, and the court and the police cannot solve these problems alone. Truancy in particular is a public health hazard for Minneapolis children. It results in no high school degree, inability to find gainful employment, and a lack of hope for the future. Curfew violations, substance abuse, and citations for running away are red flags that need to be addressed. Not all juveniles arrested for minor charges became delinquents. But when there are multiple citations, it usually reflects trouble at home, either lack of parental supervision, oppositional behavior, or emotional problems.

Historically, the juvenile court and juvenile probation have minimized these low level offenses, because the courts are busy handling cases of serious delinquents. But to stem the rise in juvenile crime, we must find ways to reach these children before they become serious offenders. The children at risk in our community are not invisible. Police officers, social workers, teachers, and neighbors know who they are. We need to do a better job of reaching out to these children, before they become another statistic for the juvenile apprehension unit.

*Lucy Wieland is Chief Judge of the Fourth Judicial District.*

## b) Writing a Letter to the Editor

Letters to the editor (LTEs) should address and discuss recent news coverage. LTEs can serve two purposes: first, to offer a counter-perspective to an unbalanced or inaccurate news piece, backed by the author's factual and personal experience; and second, to support positive press coverage by commending a journalist's good work.

**Respond Promptly.** Your letter will have a better chance of being published if it is timely and responds to a recent news piece (usually one that was published in the last 1–3 days). Make sure you cite the article referenced.

**Keep It Short, Concise, and Clear.** Usually newspapers have a 150- to 200-word limit for LTEs. The paper reserves the right to edit and shorten your letter to meet its format. They usually trim from the bottom, so begin with your strongest points.

**Personalize It.** Briefly explain why this issue is important to you. A personal perspective is the point of the letters page.

**Be Polite.** In print, your passion may be misinterpreted. Never question or challenge a reporter's motives. Rather, focus on inaccuracies.

**Be Interesting.** Wit is encouraged. Major newspapers receive hundreds of letters each day, so a sharp point or an interesting turn of phrase can distinguish yours from the rest.

**Read the Letters Page.** This will help provide a sense of the kind of letters the newspaper publishes.

**Include Your Contact Information.** For verification purposes you must include your name, phone number, home and e-mail addresses, and your professional position or group affiliation (if it applies to the issue).

**Follow Up.** Call the LTE page editor to make sure your letter was received. You'd be surprised how often a great letter falls through the cracks.

Letter to the Editor Example

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### **IT'S CLEAR WHAT WORKS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE**

By Marsha Weissman, Center for Community Alternatives, *The Post-Standard*, Syracuse, New York, December 14, 2006

Your editorial Dec. 6 on the need for improvements in the state Office of Children and Family Services facilities is timely and important. It is an opportune moment to revisit and revamp New York's juvenile justice system.

The confluence of data on the consequences of a juvenile justice record, as well as solid information on best practice, offers the new state administration a chance to reform juvenile justice services.

The data on what isn't working in the juvenile justice system is clear and compelling. Research shows that rather than being rehabilitative, the system opens the door to a lifetime of incarceration and social and economic marginalization, particularly for young men of color.

Most young people who have been incarcerated go on to the adult criminal justice system. Moreover, much like the adult system, the juvenile justice system disproportionately charges, convicts and incarcerates poor young people of color.

The research on what works is equally clear and compelling. Significant efforts around the country decisively demonstrate it is possible to move to community-based alternatives to detention for young people without compromising public safety.

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative sponsored by the Annie E. Casey Foundation now involves 60 jurisdictions across the country. In New Jersey, for example, the number of youth in detention declined by 20 percent, and the number of juvenile arrests declined by almost 4.5 percent. Missouri's juvenile justice system includes small facilities housing no more than 10 to 12 youth, near their home communities, and focuses on quickly and effectively returning young people home. The recidivism rate for youth in the Missouri system is 7 percent. Individual jurisdictions such as Portland, Ore.; Chicago; and Richmond show similar results: fewer young people locked up, a reduction in racial disparity and lower recidivism rates.

State and federal standards call for treating youth differently than adults, and adherence to "the least restrictive alternative." A human rights perspective articulated in treaties and standards, like the U.N.'s Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty, calls for children to be incarcerated "as a last resort and for the minimum necessary period." To live up to these standards, New York must invest in community-based services that keep children in their homes and communities.

*Marsha Weissman is executive director of the Center for Community Alternatives in Syracuse.*

### c) Writing a Press Release

In most cases, a press release is the primary way to inform reporters of an event, report, or newsworthy issue. When writing a press release, envision the news article that you would like to see published. The reporter should be able to write a story from the press release, so choose the most newsworthy angle.

**Getting Your Release Read.** Remember that reporters get dozens of releases each day. Following these basic guidelines will help ensure that your release gets read—a crucial first step! Most reporters spend only about 30 seconds determining whether a release is newsworthy, so write a catchy, attention-grabbing **headline**. The headline should include your main idea, and not exceed two lines. The **lead**, the opening paragraph of the release, should generally expand the main point and clarify the context that was not in the headline. Make your most important points in the first paragraph.

**The Format.** A press release is designed to be sent to journalists and media outlets in order to encourage development of news articles on a particular subject. Just like other fields, one must follow “industry standards.” If a press release isn’t formatted in the proper way, it may be misrouted and, most likely, discarded, so it’s vitally important to format the press release using the following standards:

- In the top *left* corner, type “For Immediate Release” and the date.
- Type your organization’s contact information in the top *right* corner. Include the names, telephone, and cell phone numbers of two primary contacts.
- Place “###” at the end of the release. This is how journalists mark the end of their news copy. If your release is more than one page (it should never exceed two), type “MORE” at the bottom of page one, and include a short headline in the upper right-hand corner of subsequent pages.
- Print the release on your organization’s letterhead.

**The Body.** Avoid dense or complicated prose. Keep paragraphs short and concise, no longer than three or four sentences. Again, reporters will only briefly review a release, so readability and clarity are important. In many cases, three to five bullet points can help make the release clear and dynamic. Include an interesting and riveting quote from someone involved in the program or issue, and a very brief description of your organization or coalition in the last paragraph.

**Distribution.** Generally, a press release should be e-mailed or faxed two weeks before the day of the event. If you are promoting an event, it is advisable to send a shorter **advisory** a few days before the event to be sure it can be scheduled in the media’s calendars.

Send the release to the appropriate reporter, editor, and producer at each news outlet. This may involve researching contacts beforehand. If the right reporter doesn’t see the release, they

can't write the story. At the same time, avoid mass distribution of a release to a large group of reporters at the same newspaper, TV, or radio station. This only annoys the pressroom and may damage your credibility.

**Follow Up.** Always follow up by phone with each press contact. This step is crucial. Reporters receive dozens of press releases each day, and often neglect to give them appropriate attention unless they are prodded. At the very least, call to make sure the targeted reporters have received your release, and be ready to resend it if they haven't received it.

When following up by phone, be ready to answer questions about the release. Sometimes the reporter will take the opportunity to interview you at that time.

**Release a Press Statement.** Sometimes a news opportunity demands a thoughtful response in the form of a press statement. A statement is particularly helpful when responding to a crisis or hot news item. A press statement should be no more than a few paragraphs long, on a single page.

Distribute it to the same media list, and make a special effort to follow up with television and radio outlets. Make sure the author of the statement is available for additional comment, as many reporters will want to get a "live" quote.

Press Release Example

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 28, 2006

CONTACT: Laura Jones (202) 558-7974, ext. 307 or cell: (202) 425-4659

**NEW REPORT: Incarcerating youth can aggravate crime and frustrate education, employment and health for young people.**

NEW ORLEANS—Inappropriately incarcerating youth in secure detention centers across the country can contribute to their future delinquent behavior and harm their education, employment and health, according to a new policy brief to be released on Nov. 28 at a major national conference promoting alternatives to detention.

*The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities* shows that rather than promoting public safety, detention—the pretrial “jailing” of youth not yet found delinquent—may contribute to future offenses. Studies from around the country show that **incarcerated youth have higher recidivism rates than youth supervised in other kinds of settings**. A study conducted by the Wisconsin legislature found that “placement in secure detention . . . does not deter most juveniles,” and that in the four counties studied, 70 percent of the youth held in secure detention were arrested or returned to detention within one year of release. Another study on youth sent to a detention diversion program in San Francisco found that youth diverted from detention had half the recidivism rate of young people who remained in detention or in the juvenile justice system. Studies in Florida that controlled for the severity of young people’s offenses showed that detained youth are more likely to receive formal judicial intervention and be committed to state care than their peers who committed similar offenses but were not detained.

Detention is widely misapplied, according to the report by the Justice Policy Institute, a Washington, D.C.-based group that studies adult and juvenile justice policies. Although detention facilities are meant to temporarily house those youth who are likely to re-offend before their trial or who are unlikely to appear for their court date, many of the youth in this country’s 769 detention centers do not meet these criteria. **Seventy percent of youth in detention are held for nonviolent charges**. More than two-thirds are charged with property offenses, public order offenses, technical probation violations, or status offenses (like running away or breaking curfew). Youth of color are impacted disproportionately by the overuse of detention. In 2003, **African-American youth were detained at a rate 4.5 times higher than whites; and Latino youth were detained at twice the rate of whites**. In the same year, black youth were four times more likely to be incarcerated in Louisiana than whites and received longer dispositions than white youth even though there was little difference in the severity of offenses committed or in prior offense histories.

“Not only does inappropriately detaining youth cost taxpayers millions of dollars a year, but the overuse of detention generally does not make our communities any safer,” said Bart Lubow, head of JDAI (Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative), a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation that works to build better futures for disadvantaged children and their families. “Across the country, jurisdictions are looking for more effective policies and practices to promote community safety and better outcomes for youth. JDAI sites have reduced adolescent detention, strengthened juvenile justice systems and saved money—all without compromising public safety. Detention reform is a catalyst for system-wide change that is working to build better futures for communities and youth.”

The recent recipient of the prestigious National Council on Crime and Delinquency's *Katie Nichols Award* for meaningful achievements in improving juvenile justice systems and empowering communities across the country, Casey's JDAI has proven that simple changes can result in reduced detention populations and money saved, while maintaining public safety. JDAI uses objective admissions criteria to replace subjective decisions that inappropriately place low-risk youth in custody. Core reform strategies include: collecting standardized data on the detained population to help officials monitor problems and develop solutions; establishing objective screening instruments to ensure that only high-risk youth are detained; and expanding effective alternatives that provide youth with the supervision and services they need.

For a copy of the report *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities*, visit: [www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org). To learn more about JDAI, visit: [www.aecf.org/initiatives/jdai](http://www.aecf.org/initiatives/jdai).

*The Justice Policy Institute is a Washington, D.C.-based think tank dedicated to ending society's reliance on incarceration and promoting effective and just solutions to social problems.*

# # #

This practice guide is intended to provide the basic information needed to generate media coverage that advances detention reforms and bolsters public support for the juvenile justice system. Whether the media goal is to influence public policy, to advance organizational goals, to influence how a story is reported, or to win the hearts and minds of public opinion, all media messaging is case-specific, depends on a variety of factors, and should involve the jurisdictional leaders of the local or state JDAI collaborative.

The JDAI Help Desk at [www.jdaihelpdesk.org](http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org) is an online resource containing many more examples of JDAI messaging and press coverage throughout the nation. Questions about media advocacy related to JDAI can be submitted online to the help desk.

Or, if there is a question about placing a positive story in regional media, or if advice is needed about responding to negative press attention, the Justice Policy Institute is available to help. For more information, contact the communications department of the Justice Policy Institute at 202-558-7974 or [www.justicepolicy.org](http://www.justicepolicy.org).



## APPENDIX I–VI: EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE COVERAGE

### Appendix I

#### **Fewer kids committing crime, admissions drop at Juvenile Hall, report shows**

By Daniel Lopez

*Santa Cruz Sentinel*

November 26, 2006

WATSONVILLE—If you were a kid 10 years ago in Santa Cruz County and committed a crime, your chances of spending time in Juvenile Hall were pretty good.

But that was a decade ago. The county's juvenile justice system has since undergone extensive reforms, and statistics show more kids are staying on the right side of the law.

"We have always been very innovative and wanted to do the right thing for our youth," said Laura Garnett, the county Probation Department's juvenile division director.

In 1999, the department partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to provide juvenile offenders alternatives to detention.

Garnett said a screening process to determine which offenders are high risk and need to be detained and which could benefit from alternative programs has helped reduce the number of kids admitted to Juvenile Hall.

"It's not a go easy on crime, ... it's going after the core behaviors," she said.

According to the 2006 Community Assessment Project report released Monday, the population of juveniles increased 9.9 percent across the county from 1996 to 2005, while the number of juveniles arrested for both misdemeanors and felony offenses dropped 40.5 percent during the same period.

"We are following the national trend as far as crime going down," said Patty Sapone, Santa Cruz deputy chief of police.

The dip in youth crime also has brought admissions to Juvenile Hall down to its lowest level in 10 years, falling 51.4 percent since 1996, according to the report.

"It takes time to see results from the things you implement," Sapone said.

Establishing partnerships with community organizations also are proving effective to keep kids clear of trouble and turning others back on the right path, Garnett said.

“It used to be you really had to get in trouble to get services,” she said.

Nane Alejandrez, executive director of Santa Cruz Barrios Unidos, a community group aimed at keeping kids out of gangs, said more opportunities to help youth in the justice system has allowed his organization to increase its effort to reach youth.

Alejandrez said collaboration with other services are making the fight pack an added punch in some instances.

“We can sort of double team them,” he said of the work they do with youth.

Despite the decreases in youth crime, one area that saw an increase was driving under the influence, according to the report. Juvenile misdemeanor arrests for drunken driving in the county increased 18.5 percent, while the state average dropped 19.5 percent in the past decade.

“We know substance abuse is one of our kids’ biggest issues,” Garnett said, adding there is no clear reason why. “It’s a constant battle.”

Still, she remains optimistic those figures can decline, too.

“We have a community where people are willing to step up and make things happen, not just talk about it forever and ever,” Garnett said.

Contact Daniel Lopez at [dlopez@santacruzsentinel.com](mailto:dlopez@santacruzsentinel.com)

## Appendix II

### **Study: Juvenile pretrial lockup may make more crimes more likely**

By Janet McConnaughey

*Associated Press*

November 28, 2006

Locking up juveniles before trial may make them more likely to commit crimes afterward, according to a new report by the Justice Policy Institute, a Washington-based think tank that seeks alternatives to incarceration.

Young people in a San Francisco program to keep young people out of detention are half as likely to commit later crimes than those who stay in detention or the juvenile justice system, said the report by Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg.

“Detention centers do serve a role by temporarily supervising the most at-risk youth,” they wrote. “However, with 70 percent being held for nonviolent offenses, it is not clear whether the mass detention of youth is necessary—or being borne equally.”

Overall, they wrote, about 500,000 juveniles are held before trial each year. A study for the Wisconsin Legislature looked at four counties and found that 70 percent of the juveniles held before trial were arrested again within a year.

The 20-page “policy brief” was being released Tuesday, as part of a conference for the 75 court systems, including New Orleans, working with the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative.

A news release from the institute said New Orleans was chosen for the conference because of its success in changing the juvenile crime system after Hurricane Katrina hit Aug. 29, 2005.

Both juvenile arrests and pretrial incarceration have dropped dramatically, said New Orleans Juvenile Court Chief Judge David Bell, who was elected one of the city’s six juvenile court judges eight months before the hurricane.

In the eight months prior to Hurricane Katrina, there were approximately 5,700 juvenile arrests. “And on any given day, there were a minimum of 108 kids in detention,” Bell said.

So far this year, he said, slightly more than 300 juveniles have been arrested, and the detention facility has held about 13 people a day.

“That’s not 13 new arrests, but 13 kids a day,” he said.

And, he said, the city’s 147 murders this year have not been fueled by juvenile crime. “Post-Katrina, we have yet to have one child in Orleans Parish arrested for murder,” he said, adding that there was one juvenile arrested for attempted murder.

Sgt. Jeffrey Johnson, a New Orleans Police Department spokesman, said that before the storm detention was automatic for arrested juveniles.

Now, he said, police call a detention judge who decides whether to hold the child. The following morning, the district attorney decides whether to release them or take them to a judge at noon.

New Orleans’ juvenile courts have just received a grant to create a center where juveniles will be assessed for danger to themselves and the community almost as soon as they are arrested, Bell said. Plans are for police to call the center, which would decide whether the juvenile should be released directly to his or her parents, be fitted with an electronic monitor, or be held, he said.

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### Appendix III

#### Editorial: Juvenile jail loss is gain

*Times-Picayune*

April 10, 2007

Before Hurricane Katrina, youngsters in New Orleans who committed petty crimes were locked up in juvenile detention centers, places where they sometimes forged relationships with more hardened young offenders.

But that's no longer the case. **Flooding shut down both juvenile detention centers** that were used to house 10- to 16-year-olds while they awaited trial. Instead of rebuilding those centers, the Orleans Parish Juvenile Court, the New Orleans Police Department and agencies that work with youth decided to try a new approach, one that stresses alternatives to locking up kids.

That's a wiser course—one that the state of Louisiana finally turned to in 2003 when it adopted legislation meant to transform a troubled juvenile justice system from one that relied almost solely on incarceration to one that stressed rehabilitation and alternatives to jail.

If New Orleans were to rebuild the detention centers, that would likely mean a continuing reliance on them. The first months after Katrina bear out that theory. The city rented beds in other facilities, and they were kept full.

But Orleans Parish Juvenile Court Chief Judge David Bell called for officials to take a harder look at who was being sent to detention centers. The Juvenile Court judges met with other officials who serve youth and with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The result is a far more nuanced approach to detention. Now, a child who is arrested is sent to the Police Department's juvenile division intake, where a screener assesses a risk level. Those accused of a crime against a person, carrying a handgun or dealing drugs are still put into detention.

But two-thirds of children who are arrested are accused of nonviolent, mostly petty offenses, according to police. Under the new system, those youngsters are released to parents or guardians to await court dates unless there's trouble at home or the youngster has a long criminal record. Those who are sent home are supervised through electronic monitoring and frequent, non-scheduled visits by court personnel.

That's not only less expensive, it also makes more sense than confining children who've committed misdemeanors like loitering and trespassing with those who are involved in far more serious crime.

Judge Bell cited a Justice Policy Institute study that found 70 percent of detained youth were either arrested again or returned to detention within a year. A National Institutes of Health study also found that incarceration makes youngsters more likely to reoffend.

The goal of juvenile court is to straighten youngsters out, not to grow the next crop of criminals. New Orleans officials deserve credit for realizing the shortcomings of the juvenile system and seizing an opportunity to reform.

Beyond that, it's refreshing to see one piece of the city's criminal justice system, which has been floundering since the storm, working together effectively and initiating bold change.

## Appendix IV

### Family Court Cites Success in Sorting Jackson County Juveniles Before Sending Them to Jail

By Christine Vendel

*Kansas City Star*

July 19, 2007

*"Not only are we keeping less kids, we are keeping the right kids."—Jeff Eisenbeis, Family Court*

Jail is necessary for some juvenile offenders but can be harmful to others by increasing the likelihood that they will join a gang, carry a weapon or re-offend.

That's the theory behind an apparently successful new effort at Jackson County Family Court.

In the mid-1990s, officials at Family Court did little sorting of juveniles. Violent, non-violent and simply truant youths were tossed into the same juvenile jail facility to await their court dates. The facility regularly broke its maximum capacity of 68 youths.

"We were routinely over 100," said Jeff Eisenbeis, deputy court administrator at Family Court. "It was a catastrophe waiting to happen.

"When it was overcrowded, it was harder on the staff to control the kids and it was harder on the kids. The kids who didn't really need to be there were making friends, and not the kind of friends you want them to make."

In recent years, Family Court officials began trying to figure out which youths truly needed to be kept behind bars and which ones could be treated through community-based programs.

Last year, the effort coalesced as the Family Court became part of a national initiative to find alternatives to incarcerating youth, called the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative.

Eisenbeis reported the results of the program's first year at the Kansas City police board meeting this week.

Eisenbeis said the county's juvenile jail detained 1,221 youths in 2005, for a daily population average of 64, but reduced those figures 16 percent in 2006 to 1,030 youths and a daily population average of 54.

"Not only are we keeping less kids, we are keeping the right kids," Eisenbeis said. "We've cut the re-arrest rate almost in half."

Eisenbeis said 13 percent of youths were re-arrested in 2005, compared to 6 percent of the youths in 2006.

The rate at which youths failed to appear at their court dates stayed the same in 2005 and 2006 at 3 percent.

Youths are typically locked up to prevent them from committing more crimes and to ensure they show up for their court dates.

"Locking everyone up is not successful," Eisenbeis said.

He said Family Court officials are now differentiating between youths who committed what would be considered felonies in adult court and so-called "soup-spitters"—a term for defiant youths who make their parents or probation officers angry but aren't a threat to the community.

Family Court also has opened a separate 14-bed facility for non-violent youths who may need to stay in a structured facility but don't need to be behind bars; for example, a boy who has been fighting with his mother.

Lowering the juvenile jail population should eventually free up money to use for community-based programs that keep youths with their families and attending school, such as community reporting centers.

"We're working to redirect resources into programs that are more effective," Eisenbeis said.

While overall crimes committed by youths have been declining over the last decade, violent crimes by youths increased 26 percent last year. Jackson County recorded 312 violent offenses by juveniles in 2006, up from 247 in 2005. No one knows the reason for the increase.

## Appendix V

### **New juvenile justice plan expected to close racial gaps**

By Dan Devine

*Boston-Bay State Banner*

December 28, 2006

If Massachusetts can mirror the successes of other sites that have put a nationally heralded youth detention initiative to work, the plan could significantly reduce racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

The state's Department of Youth Services (DYS) announced last month it would launch the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) with pilot sites in Worcester and Suffolk counties.

The initiative relies on establishing objective admissions criteria to replace subjective decision-making when young people enter the system, ensuring that only high-risk youth are held and that those considered less likely to commit another offense before their trials—or flee—are not subjected to locked detention.

Other jurisdictions using JDAI have seen across the board reductions in youth detention populations without a decrease in public safety. Several of JDAI's model sites have also shown a significant decline in the proportion of minority youth involved in the system when compared to figures from before the initiative was put into practice.

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's 2004 census of juveniles in residential placement showed that in 2003, African-American youth were detained at a rate four and a half times higher, and Latinos at twice the rate, of their white counterparts. According to those figures, minority youth represented 61 percent of all youth detained in 2003, despite accounting for only about one-third of the nation's youth population.

Numbers from the same year indicated an even larger disparity existing in Massachusetts. The 2004 state Executive Office of Public Safety (EOPS) report said that although minority youth accounted for about 24 percent of the Massachusetts juvenile population, they made up nearly 58 percent of the detention placements and 62 percent of youths committed to DYS that year.

Racial disparities were the subject of three state studies in the 1990s, all of which concluded that the problem of "overrepresentation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system" did

exist in Massachusetts. The reports stopped short of saying the system was biased nor did the state offer any recommendations on how to solve the problem.

DYS Commissioner Jane Tewksbury, who made the call to bring JDAI to Massachusetts, said her understanding is that the drop in minority contact comes from the initiative's emphasis on taking subjectivity out of the equation.

"I can only speak from what I've heard from the other jurisdictions, which is that when you introduce a more objective risk assessment analysis, it just happens. It's the validated risk assessment tool that actually looks at risk that seems to reduce the disproportionality in the decision-making," said Tewksbury. "The more you have a guided discretion, the better the decision."

And the better the results. One year after the JDAI site in Santa Clara, Calif., started using objective screening decisions, 276 fewer youth of color were referred to juvenile hall and 162 fewer youth of color were detained than the previous year. Another California site, in Santa Cruz County, opened a neighborhood evening center for high-risk Latino youth and saw its average minority population in juvenile hall drop from 64 percent to 47 percent.

The JDAI site in Multnomah County, Ore., lowered the proportion of minorities in detention from 70 youth (73 percent) before JDAI to 16 youth (50 percent) in 2003 by using strategies specifically aimed at reducing disparities, such as shelter care, home detention and a day reporting center. Multnomah also doctored its intake procedures, developed an culturally sensitive method of assessing an offender's risk of flight or committing another crime and creating a seven-person team to review every detention decision.

Elyse Clawson, executive director of the Crime and Justice Institute and a consultant on the development of the state's Suffolk and Worcester county sites, served as the director of the Department of Community Justice in Multnomah County when it became a JDAI model. She said her team never identified overt or intentional racism in Multnomah, but the initiative's emphasis on data collection and objectivity gave them the opportunity to discard faulty programs in favor of ones that might be more effective.

"We did, over time, begin to identify certain places where we could substantially reduce minority representation in the system," said Clawson. "But it's something you have to pay attention to always. ...It's not something you ever stop working on, caring about and thinking about."

The process must continue because no answer is ever absolute. A Sept. 29 story in *The Oregonian* of Portland, Ore., reported that the disparity was once again growing in Multnomah County, as African-American youths were significantly more likely to be arrested, detained and



sentenced in 2005 than white youths. While the difference was still substantially lower than the national average, the re-emergence of the gap was troubling, particularly for one of JDAI's signature success stories.

Officials with Multnomah's Department of Community Justice continue to examine their policies and explore changes to their risk assessment criteria to stem the tide. It's that kind of flexibility and responsiveness that has Clawson's current colleagues believing they can turn around the statistics in Massachusetts.

"It's hard in JDAI, because you can't stop who comes to the front door. But with the right tools and the right set of policies, you can work to reduce the number once they come to the front door," she said.

## Appendix VI

### Juvenile Detention Center a Costly Error

By Steven Drizin

*Chicago Sun-Times*

December 15, 1994

With little notice and even less deliberation, the Cook County Board approved a plan to spend \$7 million on a new juvenile pretrial detention facility. The County Board ignored recommendations of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a plan developed by a task force selected and supervised by the county and Circuit Court in an effort to obtain millions of dollars of funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The county board knew the task force favored developing community-based detention options, which are far less costly but do not compromise public safety.

Worse yet, the board knew that on the strength of the task force's plan, the Casey Foundation had agreed to provide \$1 million to implement the plan for 1995 and promised an additional \$1.25 million in 1996 if sufficient progress was reported. The board's decision has jeopardized the county's receipt of the Casey money.

For the last two years, the task force—composed of judges, detention and corrections officials, state's attorneys, probation officers, defenders and community-service providers—has studied the source of youth detention overcrowding. The task force has determined that at least

one-fourth of the current population of the detention center does not need to be there for public safety reasons. The task force has recommended that the county further invest in home-detention programs, contract with reputable community-service providers for intensive supervision of minors in secure group homes, and consider electronic monitoring to ensure that children appear in court and the public is protected.

Estimated costs for these alternatives range from \$35 to \$95 a day, while the costs of locked secure care in a new facility begin at \$90 a day and may run significantly higher. Implementing the Casey initiative should result in significant cost savings to Cook County taxpayers.

The juvenile detention center is chronically overcrowded. It houses an average of 650 children a month, more than 150 over capacity. The county may need to build a new juvenile detention center in the future. But for now, the county should take advantage of the millions of private dollars available to it and implement the task force plan to reduce overcrowding. Before any contracts are bid and any groundbreaking ceremonies are held, the county board should reconsider its decision to build a new juvenile detention center.

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