



OJJDP FACT SHEET

John J. Wilson, Acting Administrator

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Resources for Juvenile Detention Reform

by Bart Lubow and Dennis Barron

Between 1985 and 1995, the average daily population in the Nation's publicly operated juvenile detention centers increased by approximately 72 percent,¹ resulting in a 642-percent increase in the number of overcrowded detention centers. Today, more than 6 out of 10 youth admitted to juvenile detention are placed in overcrowded institutions. Most of the crowding is due to greatly increased rates of detention for minority youth. In 1985, 56 percent of youth in detention were white, while 44 percent were minority. By 1995, those numbers were reversed as detention rates for African American and Hispanic youth increased by 180 and 140 percent, respectively, while the rate for white youth decreased by 13 percent.²

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

The Annie E. Casey Foundation of Baltimore, MD, launched the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) in 1993. The project was designed to demonstrate that jurisdictions could reduce their reliance on secure detention without sacrificing public safety. Three sites—Chicago, Portland, and Sacramento—completed a rigorous and challenging implementation phase and did, in fact, reduce admissions and case processing times. Two of the sites now operate below their detention centers' rated capacities. Failure-to-appear and pretrial rearrest rates improved in many instances, and nowhere did they increase beyond pre-JDAI levels. Despite the punitive policies characteristic of juvenile justice in the 1990's, which resulted in the detention of more youth for a wider range of offenses, these sites demonstrated that jurisdictions could manage their populations and improve related outcomes.

The Initiative is described in *Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform (Pathways)*, a series of 12 monographs published by the Casey Foundation. Each monograph offers detailed information about detention reform strategies and lessons learned from the three sites. Individually, these publications are handy references for jurisdictions or agencies seeking to improve specific areas of juvenile detention practice. As a collection, *Pathways* presents a

roadmap for comprehensive reform of the detention system. Titles in the series include:

- ◆ *Planning for Juvenile Detention Reform: A Structured Approach.*
- ◆ *Collaboration and Leadership in Juvenile Detention Reform.*
- ◆ *Controlling the Front Gates: Effective Admissions Policies and Practice.*
- ◆ *Consider the Alternatives: Planning and Implementing Detention Alternatives.*
- ◆ *Reducing Unnecessary Delay: Innovations in Case Processing.*
- ◆ *Improving Conditions of Confinement in Secure Juvenile Detention Centers.*
- ◆ *By the Numbers: The Role of Data and Information in Detention Reform.*
- ◆ *Ideas and Ideals to Reduce Disproportionate Detention of Minority Youth.*
- ◆ *Special Detention Cases: Strategies for Handling Difficult Populations.*
- ◆ *Changing Roles and Relationships in Detention Reform.*
- ◆ *Promoting and Sustaining Detention Reform.*
- ◆ *Replicating Detention Reform: Lessons Learned from the Florida Detention Initiative.*

The series also includes an overview, *The JDAI Story: Building a Better Juvenile Detention System*. Individual monographs or the entire series are available free from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

OJJDP Detention Initiatives

About the same time that the JDAI Initiative was taking place, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) funded a research project conducted by Abt Associates of

Cambridge, MA, that revealed the deplorable conditions of the facilities in which many of the Nation's youth were being held. The findings of this study were published in the OJJDP Report *Conditions of Confinement in Juvenile Detention and Correctional Facilities* (1994).

Shortly thereafter, OJJDP awarded a grant to the National Juvenile Detention Association (NJDA) of Richmond, KY, in partnership with the Youth Law Center (YLC) of Washington, DC, to address the many issues surrounding crowding in juvenile confinement facilities. Unlike the Casey Initiative, this project assisted less populated metropolitan areas and rural jurisdictions with their crowding problems. NJDA and YLC also addressed crowding in States that are responsible for facilities in both detention and correctional systems.

Based on this project, NJDA and YLC published two documents. *Crowding in Juvenile Detention Centers: A Problem Solving Manual* is a step-by-step guide on how to develop a systemic approach to deal with crowding and to address the unnecessary use of detention. The manual offers guidance on how to clarify and reach consensus on the purpose of detention and discusses important principles that must be considered in that process. It identifies a range of programs and services designed to expand the continuum of options so that secure detention is reserved for only those youth who truly need to be securely confined. The manual also provides suggestions for improving court processing to reduce detention admissions and the average length of stay.

Crowding in Juvenile Detention Centers: Practitioner Perspectives on What to do About It is a collection of articles written by juvenile justice practitioners on key topics and issues that arose during successful efforts to prevent and reduce crowding. The two organizations also compiled a Litigation Compendium, which lists court cases from around the country that considered crowding in juvenile facilities, and a Resource Compendium, which lists relevant publications on crowding. Both are available from the NJDA Web site (see below).

For Further Information

The Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform monographs can be viewed and ordered from the Annie E. Casey Foundation Web site (www.aecf.org) or by calling the Foundation's Publications Line at 410-223-2890 and pressing #2 to place an order.

For information about the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, contact the Foundation at

701 St. Paul Street
Baltimore, MD 21202
410-547-6600

For NJDA and YLC publications, contact the National Juvenile Detention Association at

Eastern Kentucky University
301 Perkins Building
521 Lancaster Avenue
Richmond, KY 40475
606-622-6259
Internet: www.njda.com

Information on other publications resources related to juvenile detention reform is available from the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, 800-638-8736, or online at www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org.

¹ Data cited in this Fact Sheet are taken from the Census of Public and Private Juvenile Detention, Correctional and Shelter Facilities, 1985-1995, unless otherwise indicated.

² M. Wordes and S.M. Jones, 1998. Trends in juvenile detention and steps toward reform, *Crime and Delinquency* 44(4):544-560.

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