WHAT IS JDAI?

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is a process that is focused on continued juvenile justice system improvement through the lens of the detention population. JDAI helps restructure policy and practice to create system improvements that reach far beyond detention alone. This initiative yields safe reductions in the number of youth detained through a set of interrelated strategies (see left panel for complete list of strategies).

MAJOR INITIATIVES

Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI): Objective screening tool used to determine temporary supervision status pending adjudicatory hearing.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED)/ Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC): RED refers to the unequal treatment of minority youth in the juvenile justice system including disparate outcomes for similarly situated youth. DMC is defined as the disproportionate number of minority youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Conditions of Confinement: Using national best practices to ensure children entrusted to detention care are housed in a safe and secure environment with their medical, educational, and mental health needs adequately met.

Domestic Violence Shelters/Respite: Placement that is available for a youth charged with domestic violence as an alternative to secure detention or for a child and/or a family in need of services.

Police Youth Relationships: Creating a positive, safe environment for juveniles and police to explore the value of having mutually respectful interactions.

MEET OUR STATE COORDINATOR

Minnie Bishop currently serves as the JDAI Statewide Coordinator and the DMC Statewide Coordinator for DJJ. She is responsible for oversight of the JDAI sites and ensuring implementation of policies/practices supporting equity within the juvenile system. She first joined DJJ in 2003 at the Juvenile Assessment Center; she later became a Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO) and was promoted to a senior JPO. Ms. Bishop became a Learning Consultant responsible for training JPOs statewide. She served as Statewide Transition Coordinator and later became Chief Probation Officer for Circuit 2. Ms. Bishop is a proud graduate of the Florida State University.
AGAPE

Dr. Mikah Owen, a Jacksonville pediatrician who works for UF Health and Agape Community Health, spearheaded an initiative created to provide a medical home for marginalized juvenile justice involved youth. This idea sparked from the Conditions of Confinement assessment. The Agape Community Health Center is the only federally qualified health center in Jacksonville. Agape offers medical, dental, behavioral, and pharmaceutical health services for all patients regardless of insurance.

To learn more about AGAPE, please contact Amy Read.

EVENING REPORTING CENTERS

The evening reporting center is an alternative to secure detention for eligible youth to remain in the community while awaiting case resolution. The program emphasizes enhanced supervision while ensuring youth do not recidivate or miss any court appearances. Additionally, the program connects youth and families to valuable community resources including: homework assistance, tutoring/GED preparation courses, recreational sports, gaming, reading. Youth may earn certifications in food handling/serving and hospitality. Certified youth are able to gain employment with weekly financial stipends, preparing them for future career endeavors. Community service projects further facilitated pro-social relationships with local mentors. This 18-month pilot came to an end in September 2017 boasting a 91% success rate! As a result, Palm Beach County is finalizing the implementation of three additional evening reporting centers across the county.

For more information about the ERCs, please contact Randi Taylor.

COURT REMINDER PHONE CALLS

In the first quarter of 2017, there was a total of 124 pick-up orders issued for Failure to Appear (FTA), with 57 of those orders requiring a hold in secure detention. Increased FTAs motivated the Pinellas Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition (PERC) to implement a telephonic court reminder program. Calls are made to youth and families to remind them of upcoming court dates and to identify potential barriers to attending court. Since the program’s implementation, FTAs have decreased as shown in figure 1.

Want to know more about the court reminder program? Please contact Karin Popkowski.

![Figure 1. Number of FTAs by Quarter](chart.png)
Community Service Partnership

Over the past few months, the Broward Detention Center, JDAI and Broward College have been exploring the establishment of a community service partnership between the college’s athletic department and DJJ.

This relationship is envisioned to be an ongoing, consistent program where student athletes will provide structured, prosocial athletic activities for the children entrusted in DJJ’s care while at the detention center. With over 140 student athletes participating in several sports, we look forward to cultivating a sustainable program to both enrich our children and the students of Broward College.

For more information, please contact Akilya Drake.

Meet Our Team

Marybel Cortez
NW Florida

Marybel Cortez was born and raised in Blackfoot, Idaho. In 2014, Marybel received her bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Boise State University, where she was a McNair Scholar and conducted independent research. Marybel was introduced to the Department of Juvenile Justice in 2015 as a research assistant. Later, Marybel joined the JDAI team as support staff while completing her master’s in Criminology from Florida State University in 2016. Marybel became the regional JDAI/DMC Coordinator for Northwest Florida in 2017.

Karin Popkowski
Central Region

Karin Popkowski is a JDAI Coordinator in Central Florida. Born and raised in Florida, Karin obtained her Bachelor’s degree in Criminology from the University of Florida (GO GATORS!!!). Karin has worked for the Department of Juvenile Justice since 2006—starting as a Juvenile Probation Officer. Additionally, Karin worked as a Senior Juvenile Probation Officer and Juvenile Probation Officer Supervisor before joining the JDAI team in 2016. Karin is the mother of four handsome boys, with the newest addition of twins who joined the family in September.

Randi Taylor
South Region

Randi Taylor was born and raised in New England, and she has lived in Florida for 14 years. She graduated from the University of Central Florida with her Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice, a minor in psychology, and a certificate in Behavioral Forensics. Randi participated in research with the Department of Criminal Justice at UCF. She joined the Department as a Juvenile Probation Officer in 2014. In 2015, Randi received the Probation Officer of the Year award in Circuit 5. Later that year, Randi joined the JDAI family as the JDAI Coordinator for South Florida. She is currently pursuing her Master’s in Criminal Justice at her alma mater.

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Meet Our Team

Amy Read is a Jacksonville native and is the newest member to the JDAI team. She was first introduced to the Department as an intern from the University of North Florida. Amy graduated with her Bachelors in Criminal Justice from UNF in 2014 and was soon hired as a Juvenile Probation Officer. After a year, she was promoted to Senior Juvenile Probation Officer and began working with the Girls Court Program in Duval County. Amy is currently working on her Master’s of Social Work degree at FSU and recently bought a new home with her husband in Jacksonville.

Sarah Blumberg is a JDAI Coordinator in Central Florida. Sarah received her bachelor’s degree in Human Development from Eckerd College in 2012. Sarah has been with the Department since 2014. Sarah joined the Department as a Juvenile Probation Officer and later advancing to the Senior Juvenile Probation Officer position. Sarah joined the JDAI team in 2016 and is currently working on her master’s degree. Sarah coaches little league for her two nephews and is actively involved in the community.

Akilya Drake is a JDAI Coordinator for South Florida. Prior to joining the DJJ team, Akilya worked as the Assistant General Counsel for the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Senior Prosecutor for the Department of Children and Families in Miami-Dade, and Public Affairs Counsel/ Self-Service Administrator at the Palm Beach County Clerk & Comptroller’s Office. Akilya received her Bachelor’s of Science Degree in English Education from the University of Central Florida, her Juris Doctor from Loyola University of Chicago with a concentration in Child and Family Law, and is currently pursuing a Master’s in Public Administration at Florida International University.

RED/DMC Update

In December 2016, a statewide Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities conference was held in Orlando. Attendees learned about the topic and analyzed data specific to their circuits, and formed a sub-committee dedicated to this work.

Since then, each sub-committee produced an action plan to kick-start several exciting projects.

Examples of the ongoing work include:
- raising community awareness and education regarding RED/DMC;
- cultivating relationships between law enforcement and youth;
- identifying and addressing school-based offenses;
- increasing civil citation utilization;
- and developing a detention alternatives continuum.

To learn more about this work, contact any of the coordinators in your region.