Highlighting Statewide Detention Reform

Access to Books, Authors, & Opportunities – Palm Beach Regional Juvenile Detention Center

When taking a close look at the optimum standards of detention care, Palm Beach became aware that youth had limited access to a diverse array of interesting and relevant literature. With the support of the Circuit 15 Detention Advisory Board and the Public Defender’s Office, the local detention center partnered with Barnes & Noble, the Palm Beach County School District, Mandel Public Library, and the Little Free Library to provide new and popular books towards the center’s library and access to opportunities to meet those in the literature world. The Little Free Library has “planted” a unique masterpiece of a book exchange box in over 75,000 locations across 88 countries, and they will be planting one specifically in PBRJDC next month. Detained youth were able to brainstorm how a local artist would design their book exchange box. This new partnership, along with changed local practice, has granted youth the access to not only read hundreds of novels, prose, and literature while in the detention center, but they can also take any book home with them upon release! The detention center has also implemented a process to receive feedback from youth to dictate ongoing additions and supplements to the library’s stock. The collection includes popular series, religious and spiritual texts, and cultural pieces.

The Mandel Public Library has also graciously partnered with PBRJDC to bring in a highlighted author to speak at both the detention center and to youth being held at the local jail on adult chargers; they present on their recent best-selling and/or awarded literature and the library has donated the books to the youth for them to take home, read, and the State Attorney’s Office has also granted community service work opportunities for book reviews and/or discussions. Recent highlighted authors have been Jason Reynolds and Ibi Zaboi, and speakers will continue to come, as a tradition has been created!

For more info, click here to contact: Randi Taylor
Conditions of Confinement – JDAI Site Facility Assessments

The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) not only focuses on the reduction of unnecessary and inappropriate detention placements, it also directs effort to improve conditions in secure detention facilities. Starting in **2015**, JDAI began its goal to assess detention facilities by utilizing optimum standards created by the Annie E. Casey Foundation; these benchmarks represent the most comprehensive and demanding set of publicly available standards for juvenile detention facilities.

The facility assessment process required each site to assemble a multi-disciplinary team to be trained, conduct the audit, and submit a report. Teams were comprised of stakeholders from various professional and educational backgrounds, such as the Public Defender’s Office, State Attorney’s Office, mental health providers, law enforcement, faith partners, school staff, county staff, Office of Health Services, and DJJ staff.

The assessment was organized into different categories called CHAPTERS, which incorporated every facet of facility operations: **Classification and Intake**, **Health and Mental Health care**, **Access**, **Programming**, **Training and Supervision of Employees**, **Environment**, **Restraints, Room Confinement, Due Process, and Grievance**, and **Safety**.

Once the assessments were completed, each site completed reports and developed action plans. These action plans were used to bring uniformity, standardization, and inclusivity to the internal policy governing detention care, both locally, and statewide.

Statewide Department Policy Changes

Detention Services continues to work with the collaborative teams to identify policy enhancements that will move Florida closer to full compliance with the platinum star standards for detention center options. Here are just a few of the policy changes that have occurred so far.

- Behavioral expectations will be explained to youth during the admission process, during orientation, and be posted in all living areas.
- Orientation booklets and other informational materials are offered in multiple languages.
- Youth with physical disabilities will receive appropriate accommodations according to the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Special Needs youth must be provided access to the same grievance procedures as other youth.

**Moving Forward**: Re-evaluations will be completed to review effectiveness of policy changes and to determine what changes still need to be made moving forward.

For more info, click here to contact: [Karin Popkowski](mailto:kpopkows@dj.state.fl.us)
Performers’s Academy – Duval Detention

The Performer’s Academy is a non-profit organization in Jacksonville, FL, that recently piloted a performing arts program with the direction of Managing Director, Ebony Payne-English, for youth who are held in secure detention. This program gives participants a safe and healthy outlet for self-expression through music creation by using the arts as an emotional and behavioral development program. The Performer’s Academy has collaborated with the University of North Florida to measure any developments with pre- and post-tests. Additionally, the Department of Juvenile Justice is tracking data on each youth to determine if this program has any significant impact on youths’ behavior in the detention center.

The pilot program was 8 weeks—4 weeks with the boys and 4 weeks with the girls. The last class was held on 10/2/18 and both cohorts wrote, produced, and recorded multiple songs. You can listen to a sample of their music at the links below:

Boys: [link]
Girls: [link]

For more info or to hear more songs, click here to contact: Amy Read

New DRAI Update – Did you know?

The new DRAI improves public safety by producing more accurate results, ensuring all youth receive a risk score, and allowing for the use of expanded supervision options for youth who score in the middle category. State-level predictive outcomes indicate that 60% of youth screened should receive the same outcome on the current and new instruments, but 40% of screened youth receive different outcome with the use of the new instrument. Here is an overview of data statewide. The analysis uses data from calendar year 2016 to determine the difference between the current DRAI and the new DRAI.

**Release Category Comparisons CY 2016:**

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<th>Existing DRAI</th>
<th>New DRAI</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Release</td>
<td>26% (n = 12,378)</td>
<td>23% (n = 11,089)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervised Released</td>
<td>19% (n = 9,203)</td>
<td>35% (n = 17,061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure Detention</td>
<td>55% (n = 26,912)</td>
<td>42% (n = 20,343)</td>
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Dear Reader,

“Right Youth, Right Services, Right Time” defines the mission and purpose of our roles as JDAI/DMC Regional Coordinators. In partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, we support the vision that all juvenile-justice involved youth shall have the opportunity to develop into healthy, productive adults. We strive to accomplish this through system improvement via data-driven policies and practices. Promoting system accountability through the reduction of inappropriate secure detention placements is a priority for creating long-lasting productive outcomes for youth and their communities.

Placement in secure detention has a lasting impression on youth that can affect their personal lives and level of system involvement indefinitely. While detention is necessary for youth that pose a risk to public safety, data suggest that more youth are detained for technical reasons rather than violent crimes or other law violations. For youth that do not meet that description, accountability and services implementation can be accomplished through community and family-based interventions. Unnecessary use of secure detention can be traumatic, exposes youth increased anti-social behaviors, and increases the likelihood the youth will transition into deeper parts of the system. At best, inappropriately detained youth are physically and emotionally separated from the families and communities who are the most invested in their success. Across the state, our JDAI sites are re-examining and amending juvenile detention policies to reduce unnecessary reliance on secure detention and improving the conditions of confinement to provide the optimum level of detention care.

Having been in the shoes of a detention officer and caring for detained youth, I know the sacrifices that each one of our detention officers make during every shift they work. These officers work long hours on their feet providing safety and security to some of our most troubled youth. So often the roles of our detention officers are over looked or minimized. However, I know the difficulties and challenges that our officers face each day. During those 8, 12 or 16-hour work days, we serve as the caregivers, encouragers, protectors, entertainers and role models to the youth in our facilities. While most are celebrating holidays and special events with their family and friends, our detention officers are still answering the call of duty and service to our young people. The role of these selfless men and women far exceed babysitting and 10 checks. We share encouraging words to confused and upset young people, provide interactive activities to energized teens, ensure medical needs are met on time, create opportunities for self-expression and so much more. Our detention officers play a crucial role in the reduction of recidivism through the interactions and lasting impacts made in the lives of the youth in their care.

This newsletter is dedicated to the 1,100 men and women detention officers who exhibit courage, integrity, pride, honor, perseverance and commitment of service across the state of Florida. We salute the heroes of our detention centers. “A hero is an ordinary person who faces extraordinary circumstances and acts with courage and self-sacrifice.” – Unknown. . . Yup, that describes you, our detention officers.

—A JDAI Coordinator