



JDAI NEWS

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Newsletter
October 2019

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Our JDAI team is rebuilding and expanding! Please welcome our two newest JDAI Coordinators: Natalie Steiner and Ash Baca. We are so excited to add these two to our team. Please check out their bios below to get to know them. Stay tuned as we hope to be welcoming more coordinators to the team as we continue to grow!

Meet Our New Coordinators

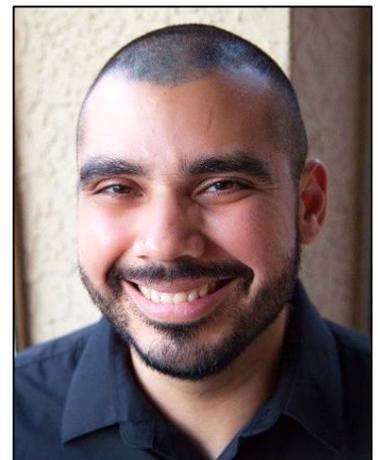


Natalie Steiner
Natalie.Steiner@djj.state.fl.us
Central Region

Natalie Steiner hails from Indianapolis, Indiana and has lived in Florida since 2010. Natalie received her bachelor's degree in criminology from the University of South Florida (USF) in 2017. Her career in juvenile justice began at the Pinellas Juvenile Assessment Center as an assessor. She was promoted to community liaison, where she spent time developing the outreach program with juvenile arbitration, juvenile diversion and juvenile probation. Natalie is currently fulfilling a master's degree in criminal justice at USF.



Ash graduated from the University of Central Florida in 2010 with a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. He promptly received a job offer to teach English as a second language in Taiwan, where he taught for three years. Upon returning, he continued teaching as a middle school social studies teacher at a Title 1 school. While in this role, he also took on the position of iPad administrator of the school, ensuring constant process improvement and working with students and teachers in using the technology effectively. Ash is pursuing a Master in Arts in Industrial-Organizational Psychology at Touro University Worldwide.



Ashley "Ash" Baca
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South Region

For more information about JDAI or find previous JDAI Newsletters please visit our website:
[http://www.djj.state.fl.us/research/latest-initiatives/juvenile-detention-alternatives-initiative-\(jdai\)](http://www.djj.state.fl.us/research/latest-initiatives/juvenile-detention-alternatives-initiative-(jdai))



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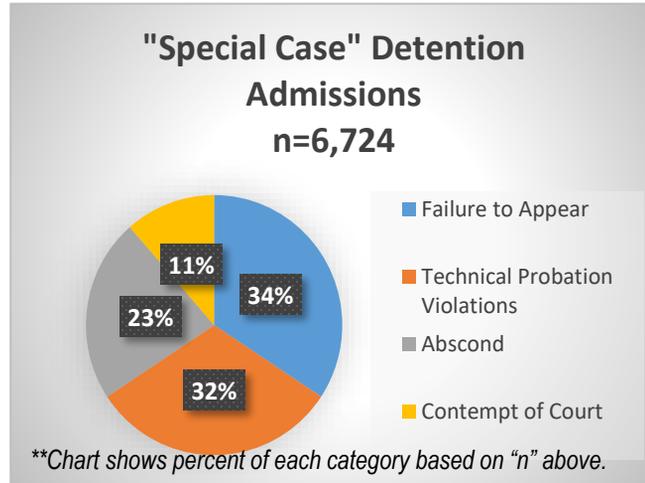
“Special Cases”

Research shows that secure detention can have a profoundly negative impact on a youth’s mental and physical health and well-being, their education, and future employment. For these reasons, it is imperative that we are diligent in monitoring what youth are entering our juvenile detention facilities and the reasons why they are being detained.

One of the JDAI core strategies and the highlight of this newsletter is “Special Cases.” This strategy is focused on reducing the number of youth detained for probation rule violations or failing to appear in court, and the number of youth held in detention awaiting transfer to a residential facility.

In the state of Florida, during Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-2019, roughly 35% (n=6,724) of the overall admissions to secure detention fell into this category.

In this edition, we will be diving a little deeper into these “Special Cases”, with a specific focus on failure to appear, technical violations of probation, and mental health in detention.

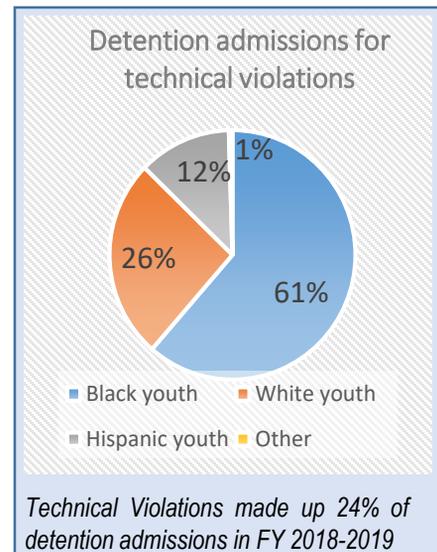


To learn more about special cases, please contact Karin Butterfield at Karin.Butterfield@dji.state.fl.us.

Technical Violations

Technical violations refer to non-compliance with a rule of community-based supervision that is not the commission of a new offense. Examples include school attendance or discipline issues and curfew non-compliance, as well as violations of court orders (contempt of court), and absconding from supervision.

Technical violations can be executed by law enforcement or filed by a juvenile probation officer. While it is necessary to hold youth accountable for technical violations, the challenge comes when determining the appropriate measure of accountability. Statutes suggest that secure detention placements are primarily reserved for those that are either a risk to public safety or a risk of flight. Although these referrals didn’t meet either of these categories, the results of their screening was an admission to secure detention. Florida Statutes 985.435(4) challenges courts to identify and utilize alternatives to secure detention (ATSD) as a means of accountability. The alternative consequence component is designed to provide swift and appropriate consequences to any noncompliance with technical conditions of probation. Some examples could include increased reporting at the probation office, essay, use of supervised release programs or community service hours.



The mode or most frequently occurring length of stay for technical probation violations and contempt of court in FY18-19 was 2-4 days. This means most youth were released at the detention hearing or shortly thereafter. For these reasons, we challenge every circuit to step up to the standards set forth in statutes to utilize ATSD programs.

To learn more about technical violations, please contact Natalie Steiner at Natalie.Steiner@dji.state.fl.us.



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Failure to Appear (FTA)

Did you know there were more than 2,300 admissions during FY 2018-2019 for missed court hearings? Florida Statutes only allows for the use of secure detention as a means of accountability for youth who “willfully” fail to appear in court. The question is, “Were all of these hearing missed willfully?” Many factors can be considered when thinking about why youth fail to appear in court. These factors include, but are not limited to a lack of transportation, ineffective hearing notice, and even simply forgetfulness.

Although we must emphasize the importance of appearing in court and hold juveniles and their families accountable, we must also work to build an understanding of the circumstances that led to the failure to appear and work to develop preventative measures to reduce these factors.

Average Length of Stay	Median Length of Stay
6 days	2 days

Failure to appear admissions accounted for 12% of all admissions to secure detention during FY 18-19.

Several sites have implemented a reminder call/text program, or letters sent to the guardians in an effort to reduce failure to appear rates. Other sites offer differential warrants which allow to be given a new notice to appear for court instead of going into secure detention. Supervised release programs will proactively identify barriers to court appearance and identify ways to overcome them. In a concerted effort, we must continue to attempt to discover the causes and develop practical solutions to reduce this population of juveniles in secure detention. How can your circuit help?

To learn more about failures to appear, please contact Ashley “Ash” Baca at Ashley.Baca@dji.state.fl.us

Mental Health

This article is aimed at providing a brief look at youth who are deemed incompetent to proceed. Juvenile competency is questioned when a court official raises concern that a youth is currently unable to rationally participate in court proceedings that require the youth to assist legal counsel with resolution of the case.

According to a 2007 study, in most competency cases, a light is cast on the specter of a youth’s mental disorder or developmental disability. The study indicates that 70 percent of justice-involved youth suffer from a mental disorder, while one in five have a mental illness and experience functional impairment (Hammond (2007). With this information, and our knowledge of the potential harms associated with secure detention the question arises, “Is secure detention an appropriate place for youth who are incompetent to proceed?”

Florida Statute 985.19(f):

A child is competent to proceed if the child has sufficient present ability to consult with counsel with a reasonable degree of rational understanding and the child has a rational and factual understanding of the present proceedings.

There are several examples of states that have established collaborations authorized by legislation or through organic alignment of various community-based mental health service providers and other principal stakeholders (Hammond, 2007). Such collaborations strive to provide services within a coordinated continuum of care for justice-involved youth with mental health challenges. Further, there is an emergence of mental health courts attempting to divert youth from juvenile justice systems, along with efforts to provide youth and their families with effective mental health and family services aimed at reducing recidivism. It is important the Florida comes together as a state to determine a better response to these special cases. Continual detention placements and/or deeper involvement in the justice system will not resolve long-term mental health needs. There has to be a way to facilitate stability for affected youth without long term negative impact of a criminal record or adjudication.

*Hammond (2007). Mental Health Needs of Juvenile Offenders

To learn more about mental health and detention, please contact Ira Thomas at Ira.Thomas@dji.state.fl.us



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LETTER FROM A JDAI COORDINATOR

Dear reader,

The role of a JDAI coordinator is vast, however it is often narrowly viewed due to its title. While working to create alternatives to secure detention is a focus of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative, it is not the sole purpose. When we are asked “What does a JDAI coordinator do?”, we find it difficult to provide an easy answer that will encompass all of the various responsibilities that fall within the eight core strategies. It is our hope that through these coordinator letters you will see the depth of the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative and gain a greater understanding of the role of a coordinator.

As we’ve noted throughout this quarter’s letter, the reduction of non-law admissions is one of the areas of focus coordinator’s work to address. Department policies and Florida Statutes requires the use of least restrictive appropriate options or alternatives to secure detention to exercise accountability in the resolution of these incidents. On July 1, 2019, the Department introduced a continuum of community-based supervision or alternative detention options known as Supervised Release along with the implementation of the new Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (DRAI). Youth placed in one of these programs are subject to weekly reviews by the circuit’s Supervised Release Review Committees (SRRC). With the JDAI principals in mind, these reviews are designed to proactively plan for the youth’s successful adherence to program guidelines and court hearing attendance, review compliance and respond to issues of noncompliance, and discuss any modifications that may be appropriate. As a team, the committee looks at each case individually, gathering input from the Supervised Release Trackers (SRT) as well as the youth and family. This continual monitoring and ongoing discussion can help the Department identify ways to assist the client and help them be successful.

The intent of the committee reviews is to monitor and facilitate movement on the supervised release continuum to increase or decrease the level of supervision necessary based on the youth’s compliance. In some areas across the state, judges have given the Department the discretion to make the necessary adjustments, through our committee reviews, without requiring the youth to go back before the Judge. This means that violations of Supervised Release can be addressed in the “swift and appropriate manner” required by statute. This is very similar to the use of alternative consequences for probation violations as referenced on page 2. This is a big step in the right direction in utilizing progressive responses for technical violations in lieu of reliance on secure detention. Coordinators will continually monitor the use of and success of these programs to identify improvement areas that will facilitate increase success rates.

~ A JDAI Coordinator