

New Jersey JDAI Detention Specialist Description of Responsibilities and Requirements

Overview

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has selected New Jersey as a replication site for the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The JDAI was developed in response to national trends reflecting a drastic increase in the use of secure detention for juveniles, despite decreasing juvenile arrests, and the resulting overcrowding of youth detention centers nationwide. The goal of this systems-change initiative is to create more effective and efficient processes surrounding the use of detention, and by so doing, to reduce detention populations while ensuring public safety and court appearance rates.

To help jurisdictions accomplish this goal, the eight “core strategies” of the JDAI provide a framework for conducting a thorough, data-driven examination of the use of secure detention, and for using that information to develop and implement plans for system improvement. Briefly, these eight core strategies include:

- recognizing the importance of collaboration and leadership in effective detention systems;
- reliance on data to inform policy and program development;
- implementing effective, objective admissions policies and practices;
- enhancing available alternatives to secure detention;
- reducing delays in case processing and corresponding length of stay in detention;
- focusing on challenges presented by “special populations,” including youth admitted for violations or probation and warrants, and youth awaiting dispositional placement;
- establishing a process for detention facility self-inspection to address conditions of confinement;
- identifying strategies to reduce racial disparities in the use of secure detention.

In partnership with other state and local entities, and with support from the Casey Foundation, the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC) is the lead agency in implementing JDAI in New Jersey.

Requirements

A Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice or related field.

One year of experience working in juvenile justice, social justice, youth-serving, or similar field, and/or conducting research in the above.

Knowledge and Abilities

Knowledge of and experience working with SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences); experience with other analytical software helpful (SAS, Microsoft Access).

Knowledge of various research methods and statistical techniques, both quantitative and qualitative.

Experience with data collection, data analysis, and preparing analytical reports.

Ability to interpret and explain research results and data findings.

Strong writing skills.

Ability to think critically, analytically, and independently, as well as communicate effectively, in order to contribute to and lead discussions regarding strategies for justice-system reform, and to help plan for and implement those strategies.

Ability to work productively and proactively without constant, direct supervision, and to manage time effectively.

Ability to work cooperatively, collaboratively, and diplomatically with a variety of key actors, and to facilitate challenging discussions and problem-solving.

Responsibilities

Become an expert in the purpose and use of secure detention and detention alternatives, as well as in the principles and language of juvenile detention reform. Learn to understand and anticipate the barriers to reform.

Work actively and collaboratively with Local JDAI Steering Committees and the JJC's Office of Local Programs & Services to help facilitate the implementation of the JDAI.

Participate on the Local JDAI Steering Committee and its Subcommittees, attending and facilitating meetings, providing information and guidance regarding JDAI strategies and detention best-practices, and working to develop local policy and practice that achieve the goals of the JDAI.

Collect and analyze extensive data regarding juvenile justice processes and the population of youth in the juvenile detention system over time, including those referred to detention, those in secure detention, and those placed in detention alternatives. Tasks include, but are not limited to, contributing to the development of appropriate methodologies (both quantitative and qualitative), developing research instruments, reviewing court, detention, and program files, interviewing juvenile justice personnel, and developing, maintaining, and manipulating databases.

Prepare and present analytical reports and related information regarding the use, efficiency, and effectiveness of the local detention system; draw conclusions and explain results; help Local Steering Committee identify where improvement is needed and the appropriate strategies for making those improvements.

Help monitor the progress of the JDAI. Document and track policies and practices implemented; evaluate whether strategies implemented achieve intended outcomes; prepare related reports; make appropriate recommendations.

Serve as liaison between the Local Steering Committee, the JJC's Office of Local Programs & Services, and the State Steering Committee, sharing information, addressing questions, and reporting progress.

Train/educate staff and juvenile justice personnel in the principles of JDAI via one-on-one discussions, group presentations, and participation at JDAI conferences.

**STATE OF NEW JERSEY
JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMISSION
OFFICE OF LOCAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES**

**THE ROLE OF THE DETENTION SPECIALIST IN THE
THE JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE (JDAI)**

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has selected New Jersey as a replication site for the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). The JDAI was developed in response to national trends reflecting a drastic increase in the use of secure detention for juveniles, and the resulting overcrowding of youth detention centers nationwide. The goal of this systems-change initiative is to create more effective and efficient processes surrounding the use of detention, and by so doing, to reduce detention populations while ensuring public safety and court appearance rates.

To help jurisdictions accomplish this goal, the JDAI provides a framework for conducting a thorough, data-driven examination of the use of secure detention, and for using that information to develop and implement strategies for system improvement. While the work of the JDAI is carried out by the Local Steering Committee established within each county, there are several supports provided by both the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Juvenile Justice Commission (JJC). One such support is the Detention Specialist assigned to each county. The Detention Specialists, part of the JJC's Office of Local Programs & Services, will work actively and collaboratively with Local Steering Committees to help facilitate the implementation of the JDAI.

To help clarify the role of the Detention Specialist in the implementation of the JDAI, the following provides an overview of the Detention Specialist's primary responsibilities.

- Collecting and analyzing data regarding detention processes and the population of youth in detention, and reporting this information to the Local Steering Committee in order to inform the development of local strategies for JDAI implementation. The JDAI requires the collection of case-level and aggregate data within each county. Extensive data collection will be conducted through the review of detention center files, family court files, management information systems, etc., consistent with JDAI requirements. The Detention Specialist will work with the Local Steering Committee to identify the most appropriate, reliable, and valid sources of the data, within the guidelines established by the JDAI. Examples of the types of data collected for youth in detention include demographics, delinquency/court history, dates admitted to/released from detention, and prior admissions to detention.
- Contributing to the work of the Local Steering Committee. Together with a management representative from the JJC's Office of Local Programs and Services, Detention Specialists will actively participate in Local Steering Committee meetings, providing support and guidance as appropriate.
- Serving as liaison to the JJC and the State Steering Committee. In this capacity the Detention Specialist, together with a management representative from the JJC Office of Local Programs and Services, will directly address questions and concerns raised by the Local Steering Committee when possible, and will otherwise communicate these questions and concerns to/obtain responses from the JJC and State Steering Committee.