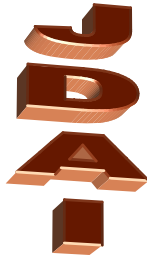


TIPS FROM SANTA CRUZ COUNTY A JDAI MODEL SITE



Expediting the Placement Process

Post-dispositional delays in the placement of youth are a common challenge for juvenile justice personnel. Youth who are ordered by the court to participate in residential treatment programs often languish in secure detention due to bureaucratic delays in processing or a lack of adequate treatment slots. The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation has identified this problem as a contributing factor in the unnecessary use of detention resulting in crowding and other negative outcomes for young people. By visiting the Annie E. Casey Foundation's website and the JDAI Pathways series, readers can learn more about how to address case processing issues related to this population. The following document is a list of tips and strategies utilized by Santa Cruz County, California, one of the four JDAI Model Sites, in their efforts to address this challenge.

A. WORK AHEAD

1. Create a Placement Screening Process that is closely tied to the Placement Supervisor so that the Placement Unit knows who is about to need placement in advance of the court's order.

The Placement Unit can begin to call placements, identify openings, and select suitable programs all in advance of the formal order.

2. Establish a collaborative relationship with the eligibility unit that approves the funding application (California). This allows for placement of the child even when some of the paperwork is still being gathered.
3. Enlist the help of community based organizations (CBO's) or intake workers to gather critical information early and keep on file in cases where placement may appear to be likely. This practice prevents delays due to bureaucratic requirements which take time to get in place.

B. ENSURE ADEQUATE RESOURCES

1. Constantly survey placement vacancies, and be familiar with the profile of youth they serve. Know the availability of existing resources to make sure that there are a sufficient number of programs to meet demand. This is a constant process – don't be caught short! If program space is inadequate, youth can languish in detention awaiting openings.
2. Develop your own county operated programs and partnerships to fill the need, and/or work with existing programs to expand or alter their program's purpose or target population to meet your needs. Realize that resource development is part of the job.

C. CHANGE PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

1. Circumvent post court processing. Work with court staff to expedite placement files. Do not delay placement process waiting for files to arrive.
2. Keep log of referrals and track days to placement. We can't expedite what isn't measured.
3. Develop a value of "everyday counts" and move youth to service and treatment as quickly as possible – make this measure an outcome measure for workers which is reported to management and the JDAI core working group.
4. Never delay placement due to lack of transportation – utilize detention staff, CBO's, program staff, etc., to ensure constant transportation access.

D. DEVELOP AGREEMENTS WITH PLACEMENT PROGRAMS AND WORK TO REDUCE FAILURES

1. Create performance outcome measures for placement providers that require them to expedite intake and adopt a "never give up" approach to treatment.
2. Develop a multi-disciplinary team approach between provider and placing agency, so that the team works together to avoid failure and share JDAI values. If programs feel that they are supported rather than "dumped on," they will prioritize and expedite intake of your referrals. This means that this way of working requires a low placement staff to child ratio to allow for more intensive work.
3. Track average length of stay pending placement and placement failure rates by gender and ethnicity to determine if there is disproportionate or disparate handling. Work to eliminate disparities.



WANT TO KNOW MORE OR DISCUSS YOUR CHALLENGES? CONTACT:

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