



Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Sites and States: Summary JDAI Sites Compared to Home State Totals

November, 2012

Introduction

This is a summary of a longer report that compares JDAI sites—both individually and collectively—within a state to the state as a whole, to evaluate part of the impact of JDAI. The report covers 23 states that met the criteria for being active in the program prior to 2010 and having available data.

JDAI targets the “front end” of the juvenile justice system to reduce youth detention rates without negatively impacting public safety. One way to measure these rates is with a widely accepted calculation of Average Daily Population (ADP). Skeptics argue that such reforms would result in increased youth arrests or that decreases had to do with demographic shifts; neither of these ideas seems to have basis in fact; detention rates do not appear to directly correlate with arrest rates—which did not increase in the vast majority of JDAI sites—or changes in the size of the youth population.

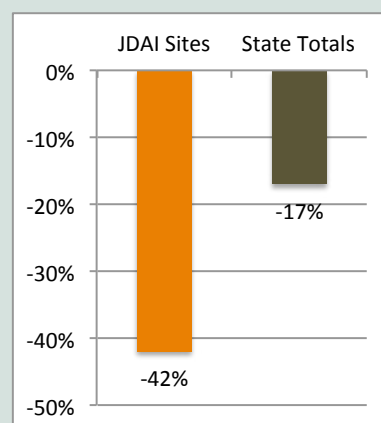
Over the years, increases in youth detention have had a disproportionate impact on youth of color. Validated risk assessments are the primary tool for increasing consistency and fairness into detention decisions and reducing bias.

Although JDAI is not directly designed to impact post-adjudication placements, many JDAI sites have reduced the number of youth committed to state facilities—the “deep end” of the system—showing a collateral benefit. Researchers analyzed the available commitment data as well as ADP.

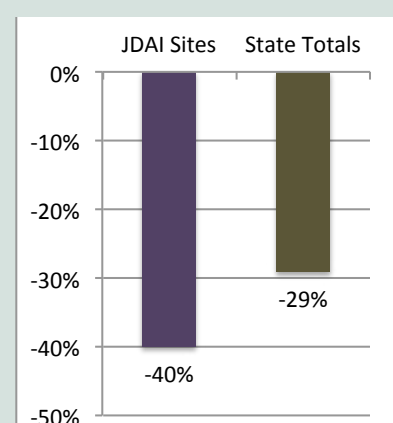
Key Findings: Aggregate Changes between Baseline Years and 2010

- The aggregate decline in ADP in JDAI sites was almost 2.5 times greater than the state totals (-42% versus -17%).
- In the 23 states, 22 had aggregated JDAI declines of at least 15%, and 20 had declines of at least 25%.
- The aggregated decline in commitments in JDAI sites was also significantly larger than that for the state totals (-40% versus -29%).

Aggregate Percent Change in
ADP Counts



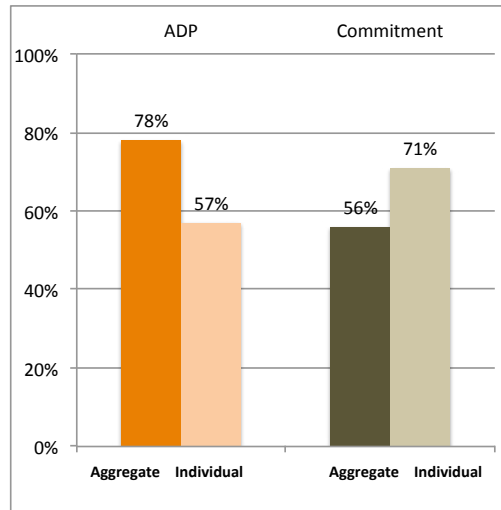
Aggregate Percent Change in
Commitment Counts



Overall, the results of this analysis are supportive of the positive impact of JDAI. With respect to aggregate ADP, 19 of the 23 states had an overall drop. In 18 out of 23 states, JDAI sites outperformed the state as a whole (i.e., they showed a greater decrease, a decrease instead of an increase, or less of an increase). In 78 of 83 individual JDAI sites, there was a decrease in ADP. In 47 sites, the change in ADP was more favorable than that of the state as a whole. The proportion of DMC has remained steady, despite the decreases in ADP.

With respect to commitments, 21 of the 23 states had an overall decrease. In 13 of the 23 states, the commitment outcome was more favorable in combined JDAI sites than in the state as a whole (a greater decrease or a decrease instead of an increase). In 68 of the 81 sites with relevant data, there was a drop in commitment. In 58 sites, the change in commitments was more favorable than that for the state.

Percent of States Where JDAI Showed More Favorable Outcomes than State Totals



Challenges

A decentralized effort to reform juvenile detention, by its very nature, defies a straightforward scientific evaluation. There are several factors that posed specific challenges to this evaluation. The JDAI model has been implemented differently across sites and has changed over time. The relevant data are usually collected and reported by local and state jurisdictions, which results in tremendous variation. In addition, JDAI sites are included in, not separate from, state totals.

The 2010 JDAI Annual Results data have limitations—such as being insufficiently complete or idiosyncratic—which have been assessed and thoroughly documented by the Casey Foundation. Researchers found striking inconsistencies among both sites and states in the way that terms are defined, the kinds of data that are collected, and the standards applied for maintaining and reporting data.

Conclusion

The longevity of JDAI is due in part to a learned value of thorough and thoughtful reflection; it is premised on being driven by data. To facilitate program evaluation, sites need to spend energy, attention, and resources to collect adequate data. More consistent and complete data collection is the key to more meaningful evaluation, ongoing analysis, and mid-course corrections. Using a variety of measures would offer a more multi-dimensional view of the program and its impact.

Enhanced evaluation design could help define the future national discourse on what works in juvenile justice reform efforts. The findings from a carefully designed data collection scheme can have important implications for the Casey Foundation in how it continues to implement JDAI and how it may design future juvenile justice reform efforts.

Full report: http://www.law.berkeley.edu/files/JDAI_Rep_1_FINAL.pdf

Method

The quantitative comparison data were drawn from several sources that allowed for an analysis of percent change from just before the beginning of implementing the model up to the latest date for which data were available.

The Casey Foundation's 2010 Annual Report compiled input from sites and provided ADP and commitment data for each site's baseline year to 2010.

The Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement (CJRP, a project of OJJDP) provided state-level ADP and commitment data from 1997 to 2010.

Relying primarily on national data provided some consistency across states and sites with respect to definitions and data collection methods. The CJRP has a standard definition of detention, which facilitates comparisons among states.