



HARRIS COUNTY JDAI

Volume I, Issue I

June 2009

Special points of interest:

- JDAI National Initiative
- Harris County JDAI is part of Annie E. Casey Foundation's national efforts to reform juvenile justice.
- Task Forces at Work!
- Mental Health Docket
- Deferred Prosecution Program

"We are fortunate to have Harris County's support in our efforts to make Harris County Juvenile Probation the best in the country."

Harvey Hetzel
Executive Director
Harris County Juvenile Probation

Inside this issue:

Executive Steering Committee	2
Management Oversight Committee	2
RAI Implemented in Harris County	2
JDAI Task Forces at Work	3
Mental Health Docket	3
Harris County Facts	4
Deferred Prosecution Program	4

JDAI National Initiative

For 15 years, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention while at the same time reduce juvenile crime and keep communities safe. JDAI is being replicated in over 80 jurisdictions across the United States with the overall objectives to:

- Eliminate inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention.
- Minimize juvenile's failures to appear in court and incidence of delinquent behavior.
- Redirect public finances to successful reform strategies.
- Improve conditions in secure detention facilities.
- Reduce racial & ethnic disparities.

The intent of JDAI is to change policies, practices, and programs to ensure that only those youth who are the greatest risk to public safety are held in secure detention. The initiative is focused on the belief that even under the best of conditions, secure detention comes with inherent dangers and should be used for two reasons only: to protect public safety and to ensure youth, who pose a flight risk, will appear in court.

The JDAI effort is founded on eight interrelated core strategies to accomplish the core objectives:

1. Collaboration;
2. Use of Accurate Data;
3. Objective Admissions Criteria - Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI);



JDAI National Juvenile Justice Reform

4. Non-Secure Alternatives To Detention;
5. Expedited Case Processing;
6. Strategies for Special Detention Cases;
7. Reducing Racial Disparities (DMC); and
8. Improving Conditions of Confinement.

JDAI uses data to drive decision-making and to guide changes to policy and practice.

JDAI in Harris County

In September 2007, Harris County was selected to participate in JDAI. Dallas County Juvenile Probation is the only other JDAI site in Texas.

Stakeholders throughout Harris County are involved in an ongoing process to reform

juvenile justice with a focus on community-based alternatives to detention.

The Executive Steering Committee, chaired by County Judge Ed Emmett and co-chaired by Commissioner Sylvia R. Garcia, is overseeing the initiative. Task Forces,

comprised of agency and community partners, represent each of the eight core strategies. JDAI has already impacted juvenile justice throughout the United States and Harris County is proud to be a part of this exciting initiative.

Executive Steering Committee

The Executive Steering Committee (ESC) oversees all of Harris County's JDAI juvenile justice reform efforts.

Members include:

- **Ed Emmett**, Chair, Harris County Judge
- **Sylvia R. Garcia**, Vice Chair, Commissioner, Harris County
- **Sylvia Bolling**, Director & Founder, Aldine Y.O.U.T.H. Center
- **Tom Brooks**, Deputy Chief, Intake Court Services – Juvenile Probation
- **Rev. D.Z. Cofield**, Senior Pastor, Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church
- **Dr. Ralph Draper**, Superintendent, Spring ISD
- **Adrian Garcia**, Sheriff, Harris County

- **Ana Hernandez**, Representative, State of Texas – District 143
- **Harvey Hetzel**, Executive Director, Juvenile Probation
- **Harold Hurtt**, Chief, Houston Police Department
- **Patricia Lykos**, District Attorney, Harris County
- **Ernest “Uche” Orieh**, PEENA (People for the Economic Empowerment of Native Africans)
- **Joe Rubio**, Deacon and Vice President, Catholic Charities
- **Dr. Steven Schnee**, Executive Director, MHMRA
- **Mike Schneider**, Judge, 315th District Court
- **Kay Sim**, Executive Director, Houston Bar Association

The ESC meets on a regular basis to lead Harris County's JDAI juvenile justice reform efforts, and all meetings are open to the public.



Sylvia R. Garcia, Raquel Mariscal, Sylvia Bolling, and John Rhoads at May 27, 2009 ESC Meeting.

Management Oversight Committee

The Management Oversight Committee (MOC) oversees all of JDAI's Task Forces. Members include:

- **John Phillips**, Chair, Judge, 314th District Court
- **Tom Brooks**, Vice-Chair, Deputy Chief, Intake Court Services – Juvenile Probation
- **Nancy Baird**, Site Coordinator, Harris County JDAI
- **Sylvia Bolling**, Director/Founder, Aldine Y.O.U.T.H. Center

- **Luis Gavito**, Director, Charter & Safe Schools Initiative, HISD
- **Bill Moore**, Juvenile Division Chief, Harris County DA's Office
- **Andrea Hinckson**, Director of Policy & Government Relations, Mental Health America of Greater Houston
- **Ron C. Lewis**, Attorney, Marshall & Lewis LLP
- **Rev. Leslie Smith**, CEO, Families Under Urban & Social Attack (FUUSA)

- **John Trevino**, Assistant Chief, Houston Police Department

“We are committed to providing a fair juvenile justice system and protecting the public.”

*Judge Mike Schneider
315th District Court*

Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) Implemented

On January 30, 2009 the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department began using a Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) on all youth brought to the detention center. The RAI Task Force, chaired by Tim Broussard, Intake Administrator, and Susan Bonich, Field Services Administrator, was the first task force. Members,

representing stakeholders from throughout Harris County, began their work last year to develop the RAI. “Over 1,000 RAIs have been administered,” according to Tim Broussard, “and we are excited about how well the RAI is working. Intake staff now have a more objective method to determine whether to release or detain a youth.”

Harris County's Definition of Detention

Detention is the temporary and safe custody of juveniles. Generally, secure detention should be utilized for youth who by nature of their offense(s) or conduct are found to be a danger to self/others, or are believed to be a flight risk. Less restrictive alternatives to secure detention are preferred.

JDAI Task Forces at Work!

Harris County's JDAI Task Forces began their work in 2008. All task forces, based on JDAI's core strategies, are active and are making great progress in our efforts to reform juvenile justice in Harris County. Below is an update on each task force:

Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI)

- Purpose – Develop objective Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI) for intake personnel to decide whether to detain or release a referred juvenile.
- Chairs – Tim Broussard and Susan Bonich, Juvenile Probation Administrators.
- Status – RAI complete and implemented January 30, 2009.

Self-Inspection

- Purpose – Examine all aspects of Juvenile Detention's policies, practices, and programs to prepare a comprehensive report on findings and monitor implementation of corrective action plans.
- Chairs – Dennis Englade, Juvenile Probation Officer and Malukah Marrus, Researcher, Southwest Juvenile Defender Program – University of Houston
- Status – Initial Self-inspection completed, report of findings and recommendations due June 2009.

Alternatives to Secure Detention

- Purpose – Develop a continuum of services for release of medium risk cases; expedite the release of medium risk cases; conduct a utilization study of current alternatives; evaluate current programs for efficacy and racial and gender disparities; and identify appropriate programs/services for alternatives to secure detention.
- Chairs – Judge Beverly Malazzo, Juvenile Court Referee and Rebecca DeCamara, Projects Director – Juvenile Probation.
- Status – Initial meeting in October 2008, ongoing meetings to accomplish goals.

Case Processing

- Purpose – Expedite the flow of cases through the juvenile justice system; reduce lengths of stay in custody; expand the availability of non-secure program slots; ensure that interventions with youth are timely and appropriate.
- Chairs – Helen Jackson, retired Harris County District Attorney's Office and Guadalupe Mendiola, Court Services – Juvenile Probation
- Status – Initial meeting in January 2009, ongoing meetings to accomplish goals.

Disproportionate Minority Confinement (DMC)

- Purpose – Develop special strategies aimed at eliminating bias and ensuring a level playing field for youth of color.
- Chairs – Judge Mike Fields, Harris County Criminal Court #14 and Gloria Moreno, Agenda Director, Commissioner Sylvia Garcia's office.
- Status – Initial meeting in February 2009, ongoing meetings to accomplish goals.

Special Detention Cases

- Purpose – Evaluate and develop new practices for youth in custody as a result of probation violations, writs and warrants, and those youth awaiting placement.
- Chairs – Julia Ramirez, Deputy Chief, Field Services – Juvenile Probation and Maggie Hindman, Harris County JDAI Expediter.
- Status – Initial meeting May 2009, ongoing meetings to accomplish goals.

Task Force members represent a cross-section of stakeholders who are interested in and committed to Harris County's JDAI efforts to reform juvenile justice. Thanks to everyone who is involved and welcome to others who want to get involved!

Mental Health Docket Helps Troubled Kids

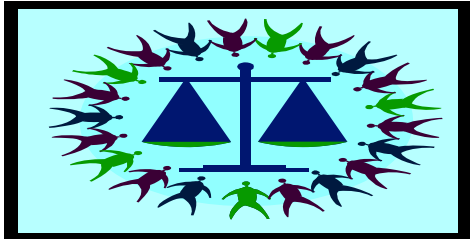
Nearly half of the youths locked up in the Harris County Juvenile Detention Center suffer from mental health problems. Thanks to 314th District Court Judge John Phillips and the Harris County Commissioners Court juveniles with mental health issues are now assigned to Judge Phillip's Mental Health Docket. This pilot program focuses on rehabilitation over punishment.

If chosen to participate, the parent and the child must meet with Judge Phillips and the mental health team to discuss their progress — or lack thereof — during regularly scheduled review hearings. Mental health juvenile court hearings are held around a conference table, with a judge, prosecutor, probation officer, psychologist, counselors, and the child and his or her family working together to find

solutions. The mental health docket is a major step in our reform efforts.

"I want to do whatever I can to help these youth, who have serious mental health issues, be successful citizens of our community."

Judge John Phillips
314th District Court

**ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION — HARRIS COUNTY
JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE**


For Additional Information Contact:

Nancy Baird
Harris County JDAI Site Coordinator
Harris County Juvenile Probation
1200 Congress
Houston, Texas 77002
nbaird@sbcglobal.net

Thomas Brooks
Deputy Chief Intake Court Services
Harris County Juvenile Probation
thomas.brooks@hcjpd.hctx.net

Annie E. Casey Foundation
Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)
<http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org>

Did you know these facts about Harris County:

- Encompasses 1,778 square miles (3rd largest in United States)
- 4 million people live in Harris County
 - ◇ 39% Anglo
 - ◇ 37% Latino
 - ◇ 19% African American
 - ◇ 5% Asian
- 41 Incorporated Cities
- 20,885 Referrals to Juvenile Probation Department in 2008 — (23,164 in 2007)
- 6,600 Youth adjudicated in 2008 — (7,791 in 2007)
- 6,597 Youth Admitted to Detention in 2008 (6,639 in 2007)
- 14,608 Petitions Filed by DA's Office in 2008 (15,706 in 2007)
- 301 Youth Committed to Texas Youth Commission in 2008 (532 in 2007)
- 1,500 — Juvenile Probation Staff
- 130 Law Enforcement Agencies Referring to Juvenile Probation
- 26 School Districts in Harris County
- \$ 105.5 million — Juvenile Probation's Budget (2008)
- Over 200 Community Stakeholders Actively Involved in Harris County's JDAI
- 34% Reduction in Average Daily Population (ADP) in Juvenile Detention Center from 2007 (prior to JDAI — 274 ADP) to 2009 (205 ADP) — based on April data



Annie E. Casey Foundation
Harris County
Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)

Deferred Prosecution Program Begins

Teens who get into trouble for the first time get a second chance to straighten out their lives, thanks to a new Deferred Prosecution Program launched by Harris County District Attorney Pat Lykos. First time juvenile offenders who commit a non-violent misdemeanor offenses are diverted into juvenile probation's community supervision program.

In the past, youthful offenders who were charged with Class A or B misdemeanor offenses (shoplifting, trespassing, etc.) had a petition filed and had to appear in court — expensive to families and taxpayers.

With the deferred prosecution program, it is estimated 4,000 fewer petitions will be filed in 2009. These youth will be handled in a more efficient and cost-effective way.

After an initial screening by the District Attorney's office, the probation department will contact the family. The youth and his or her family will enter into a contract with the county and be provided services by the juvenile probation department. If the youth successfully completes the program, no criminal charges will be filed and they will have no criminal record.

"That's good news for kids since a juvenile's record is not always wiped clean," according to Bill Moore, Juvenile Division Chief, with the DA's office, "especially when you're talking about a college that has access to juvenile records. By law they can look up that information."

"The deferred prosecution program gives at-risk youth the opportunity to develop wise decision-making skills, control their impulses, and channel their energy into constructive pursuits."
Patricia Lykos, Harris County DA