



# Harris County JDAI

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*National JDAI News: 2012 Inter-Site Conference coming to Houston to showcase Harris County's JDAI.*



YAC Representatives Jeremy Craft and Drew Darnell (bottom) talking to youth at Field Services CUPS 2.

## Harris County Continues Reforms

Harris County is completing its fourth year as an Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) site. The goal of this initiative is to implement reform strategies to safely reduce reliance on secure detention while at the same time reduce juvenile crime and keep communities safe.

Harris County JDAI is a leader in these efforts, working smarter and harder to use evidenced-based prevention and intervention programs to divert young people from the juvenile justice system. Successful reforms and programs include:

### **Mental Health Court – 314th District Court**

- Created by Judge John Phillips, started in February 2009, the first speciality court for youth with serious mental health issues.
- 87% success rate working with community partners including MHMRA, Depelchin Children’s Center, United Way, System of Hope, & Intracare.

### **GED Program Success**

- 18 out of 28 youth earned their Graduate Equivalency Degree since the beginning of an innovative program thanks to the vision of Judge John Phillips (314th District Court).

### **Gang Court Begins in Judge Glenn Devlin’s 313th District Court**

- A specialized court to deal with youth who admit active membership in illegal street gangs.
- The 9 – 12 month program will focus on intensive therapy and family intervention to get youth to renounce their gang affiliation & abide by laws.

### **Girls Court Pilot Program to Begin in 315th District Court**

- Judge Michael Schneider and Associate Judge Angela Ellis are starting a “girls court,” for young girls who are victims of human trafficking or have resorted to prostitution to survive on the streets.
- The court will offer intensive supervision and therapeutic services, including placement in a safe community, to protect these victims.

### **Deferred Prosecution Program**

- 4,000 juveniles have been diverted to either the 90-day or 180-day non-petitioned Deferred Prosecution Program with a 90% success rate.
- \$2.4 million estimated savings to the county in attorney appointments, issuance of service, court staff time, etc.

*“We continue to be excited by the results. By reviewing what works, being open to creative solutions, focusing on keeping kids in their communities, and implementing best-practices, we are making a difference in the youth and families we serve – one kid at a time.”*

*Judge John Phillips, Chair – JDAI Management Oversight Committee*



## JDAI Task Forces at Work!

Harris County's JDAI Task Forces are continuing their work to implement the core strategies in reforming juvenile justice in Harris County. Below is an update for each task force:

### Risk Assessment Instrument (RAI)

- Chairs – Tim Broussard and Susan Bonich
- Revised RAI approved and implemented.
- 2-Year validation study scheduled for completion by December 2011.
- 24% reduction in detention population after RAI.

### Self-Inspection

- Chairs – Dennis Englade and Keri Brown
- Increased programming and other services to youth in detention based on initial self-inspection corrective action plan.
- Follow-up self-inspection began May 2011 to review programming, safety, environment, training, access, and classification/intake.

### Alternatives to Secure Detention

- Chairs – Terri McGee and Beverly Malazzo
- Developing a continuum of services for release of medium-risk cases.
- Completed report on standards/guidelines to evaluate current alternatives to detention and developing recommendations for needed alternatives.

### Special Detention Cases

- Chairs – Julia Ramirez and Eric Laird
- "Alternative and Response Grid for Violation of Probation" implemented and being evaluated.
- Dramatic decrease in outstanding WRITS and warrants.

### Case Processing

- Chairs – Lupe Mendiola-Washington and Adriana Ponce
- Developing a "Know Your Rights" information pamphlet for youth.
- Developing plan for placement of "Information Kiosk" on 1st floor of Juvenile Justice Center.

### Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)

- Chairs – Gloria Moreno and Timmie Washington
- Juvenile Law 101 – Class for pre-court youth & their parents providing information from DA's office, Houston Bar Association, Juvenile Probation, and YAC Representative to help prepare them for court.
- Finalizing "White Paper Executive Summary" on data/case review of VOP youth.

### Youth Advisory Council (YAC)

- Chairs – Sylvia Latapie and Carlos Cruz
- Exploring possibility of developing scholarship opportunities for YAC Representatives.
- Youth representatives have provided over 150 hours of service to juvenile probation youth.

Task Force co-chairs and members have volunteered countless hours to make JDAI successful. These stakeholders, representatives from juvenile probation and every segment of Harris County, are making a difference in the lives of youth and their families involved in the juvenile justice system.

*"Community stakeholders have provided critical input in the detention self-inspection process. We have made a difference in the day-to-day operation of the detention center and improved services for youth."*

*Dennis Englade, Co-Chair – Self-Inspection Task Force*

## Juvenile Drug Court "SOARS"

A special court docket – *Sobriety Over Addiction and Relapse (SOAR)* – created in 2010 by Judge Michael Schneider (315th District Court) is a therapeutic and community-based approach to juvenile offenders who are significantly impacted by a serious alcohol or drug problem. Emphasizing rehabilitation over punishment for post-adjudicated youth, the goal is to effectively address underlying drug abuse issues related to offending behaviors, while emphasizing public safety and personal responsibility.

The program, designed to work with 15 - 20 youths annually for a minimum of 12 months, is collaborating with The Council on Alcohol and Drugs – Houston, Turning Point, Odyssey House, the Harris County Psychiatric Center, and other community partners to provide comprehensive counseling and treatment to the youth and their families. The first five youth graduated from the program in June.



*"Judge Ellis and I are excited by the results and the hard work these kids and their families have demonstrated to begin a life free of drugs. The pride on the faces of our drug court graduates makes it all worthwhile."*

*Judge Michael Schneider – 315th District Court*

## Detention Population and Juvenile Crime Down

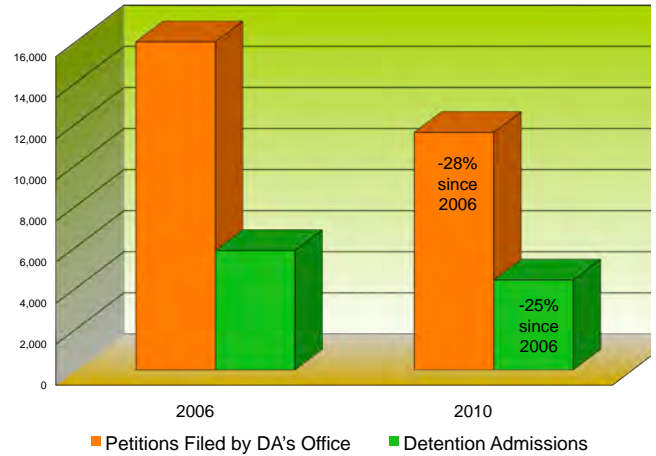
Harris County's statistics between 2006 (prior to JDAI) through 2010 provide proof of our success:

- 25% fewer youth were admitted to the Juvenile Detention Center.
- 28% fewer petitions were filed by the District Attorney's Office.
- 48% fewer youth were placed in expensive residential facilities.
- 70% fewer youth were committed to the Texas Youth Commission.
- 36% fewer youth were transferred to adult court (certification).

Youth crime is down with dramatic savings to taxpayers:

- 53% drop in auto theft.
- 58% drop in felony drug.
- 51% drop in unauthorized use of a motor vehicle.
- 22% drop in burglary.
- 28% drop in juveniles referred to juvenile probation.

JDAI is making a difference in not only keeping our community safer, but also reducing youth involved in the juvenile justice system.



## Harris County Leadership Academy News

The Harris County Juvenile Probation department provides community-based enrichment programs and models best-practices designed to deter repeat offending. The Harris County Leadership Academy (HLA) has and continues to develop partnerships throughout the community to aid in the successful, supportive, and well-structured transition back into the community for youth. Several of these community-based organizations have provided extraordinary services to the youth. Highlights of these program include:

**Bridges to Life (BTL)** – Mission is to bring healing to victims of crime, reduce recidivism among offender graduates of the program, and help make our community a safer place. Based on the principals of Restorative Justice, the BTL program works with HLA youth to help them better understand empathy, rehabilitation, reconciliation, and community safety. Public speakers tell “their story” to youth at HLA.

**United Way National Volunteer Day** – Volunteers from Exxon Mobil, as part of National Volunteer Day, constructed covered structures, painted three wall murals, donated and erected a basketball court and soccer field, and performed area beautification landscaping at the Leadership Academy.

**Tools 4 Teens® Program (T4T)** – Providing an innovative character building and teens-skills development training through the use of various artistic expression methods. In June ten youth from the Leadership Academy graduated from the T4T program. According to Kely Litvak, Founder, “the students thrived in learning the many life lessons presented by instilling – self-respect, self-confidence, and the knowledge that they can achieve their greatest potential when they live with integrity, honesty, hard work, faith, and love for self and others.”

**Texas AgriLife Extension Horticulture Program** – This collaborative program provides “hands-on” learning experiences to HLA youth. Youth and master gardeners build and tend a vegetable garden. Their first crop of corn, tomatoes, peppers, and other vegetables was shared with a community food pantry. Youth who complete the program receive a Horticulture Certificate to help in their pursuit of eventual employment in the nursery or landscaping industry.

**Project Helping Empower Everyone's Lives (HEEL)** – In the fall, Corridor Rescue Inc. will begin a residential animal-assisted violence intervention program at HLA. Using rescue dogs, residents will be taught personal responsibility, compassion, proper pet care, and obedience skills to reduce the propensity for violence by altering the youth's perception of aggression. At the end of the program, pets will be ready for adoption.



United Way National Volunteer Day at Harris County Leadership Academy



HLA Youth Growing Vegetables



Exxon Mobil Volunteers Giving Visual Hope to Youth

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

## YAC Chicago Site Visit



JDAI Youth Advisory Council (YAC) Co-Chairs, Sylvia Latapie and Carlos Cruz, and Juvenile Probation's Public Information Officer/ Legal Services Administrator, Kendall Mayfield, made a site visit to Cook County to observe their Juvenile Advisory Council. The Cook County Council was the model for Harris County's program and we continue to learn from their success.

Cook County has a scholarship program for youth representatives to attend college. They have several college graduates, one of whom is currently a Juvenile Probation Officer with the department, thanks to the scholarship program.

Harris County is exploring ways to begin a scholarship program for our Representatives. They are doing a remarkable job making a difference in the lives of youthful offenders, by sharing their stories.



*Carlos Cruz, Kendall Mayfield, & Sylvia Latapie with Cook County YAC team.*

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<http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org>



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

### Jeremy Craft & Drew Darnell Shine as YAC Representatives



Jeremy Craft and Drew Darnell are the *Stars* of the Youth Advisory Council (YAC). Drew, who begins his 2nd year at St. Mary's Law School in August, and Jeremy Craft, a Junior majoring in Engineering at Prairie View A&M, are both Dean's List scholars. Drew and Jeremy have provided over 100 hours of service to Juvenile Probation youth. They are making presentations at the Juvenile Consequences Program, Juvenile Law 101, and throughout the Juvenile Probation Department, assisting with the Field Services Admonishment Program every Saturday, and serving on JDAI task forces. When Drew and Jeremy speak...the kids listen!!

Harris County JDAI's Youth Advisory Council (YAC) continues to provide a unique client-based perspective to the Department. Through JDAI, the representatives receive a stipend for their services and ongoing training on public speaking and professional development. Youth are selected after being nominated by their Juvenile Probation Officer and an intensive interview process.

*Jeremy Craft and Drew Darnell –  
 YAC Youth Representatives*

*"I feel like I am making a difference helping kids avoid my mistakes."*

*Drew Darnell – YAC Representative*

*"I'm honored to give back to kids who deserve a second chance."*

*Jeremy Craft – YAC Representative*