



## State of New Jersey

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### MEMORANDUM

To: New Jersey Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement (CJJSI)  
County Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement Chairpersons

From: Joelle Kenney, Manager, JDAI & System Reform Unit

Date: March 28, 2022

Re: **A Year in Review: Juvenile Justice Reform in New Jersey in 2021**

Since 2008, the Juvenile Justice Commission has compiled an annual “Influence and Leverage” report that identifies activities undertaken through the JDAI process. This qualitative report complements the annual JDAI Data Report by describing the specific reforms implemented that have given rise to the results reflected in the data report. While JDAI in New Jersey began with a focus squarely on safely reducing the use of secure detention, reform efforts have expanded beyond detention to all facets of the youth justice system. Our collective success as a state model JDAI site has positioned New Jersey to take up juvenile justice system reform as a whole – continuing to focus on detention and expanding the work to other decision-making points – ensuring that the principles we have successfully applied to safely reducing the use of detention are applied to all facets of the youth justice system.

As such, this year’s report is structured differently to capture juvenile justice reform efforts that have been accomplished over the last year, and that build upon the New Jersey Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement’s foundation for achieving its vision to build a youth justice system that positively impacts the futures of young people, families, and communities throughout the State of New Jersey. Of note is that a core principle of JDAI is recognizing that no matter how well the current system is operating, there is always room for improvement. The purpose of this report is not only to highlight juvenile justice reform accomplishments across the state, but to identify areas where we can continue to grow.

This information will be discussed at the next meeting of the NJ CJJSI. County CJJSI Chairpersons should share and discuss this information at your next County CJJSI meeting. The role of the County CJJSI is to ensure this ongoing critical self-analysis of the juvenile justice system continues with excellent results and, when necessary, to push the work forward. If you have any questions about the report, please direct them to your Specialist, or to me, as appropriate.

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2021

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A YEAR IN REVIEW

JUVENILE JUSTICE  
REFORM IN NEW JERSEY

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**AN ANNUAL REPORT PREPARED FOR**  
THE NEW JERSEY COUNCIL ON  
JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

While the COVID-19 pandemic has taken an extraordinary toll on youth and families, amplifying stressful situations, and exacerbating a variety of factors around juvenile delinquency, we have demonstrated that we are not powerless in the face of these challenging circumstances: we can take action to strengthen supports for youth and families, building on lessons learned from the pandemic as well as decades of research on effective practices to continue to transform youth justice in New Jersey. We continue to build a youth justice system that provides multiple, effective diversion strategies for safely maintaining youth in the community and that provides the greatest promise for each youth that must be served by this system formally or informally.

The information acquired and subsequently outlined in this report was the result of collaboration between the staff of the Juvenile Justice Commission’s (JJC) JDAI & System Reform Unit and local and state system partners and stakeholders. It is hoped that the JDAI network and system reform partners across the state find the report’s contents useful as a tool for guiding ongoing juvenile justice system improvement efforts.

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# A CALL TO ACTION

Building on our Foundation, Achieving our Vision

The New Jersey Council on Juvenile Justice System Improvement (CJJSI) and local County Councils are charged with using JDAI's eight core strategies to examine youth justice in New Jersey systemically and promote opportunities that improve outcomes for youth from arrest through adjudication and disposition. Sustained, collaborative partnerships among juvenile justice stakeholders across the state has created groundbreaking reform that goes "beyond detention".

To ensure the CJJSI achieves its vision for ongoing youth justice reform – to strive to keep youth safely in their communities, provide promising opportunities and effective interventions for each youth, sustain and advance the gains made around detention reform, and promote practices that advance race equity and eliminate disparities – the CJJSI's work will center on:

- Race Equity;
- Detention Reform;
- Mechanisms to Divert Youth from the Formal System;
- Probation Enhancements;
- Reinforcing & Promoting the Juvenile Justice Commission's Plan for Transforming Agency Practice; and
- Broader System Decision Points.

We must remain vigilant in our journey to achieve race equity. Fairness, ensuring similar outcomes for similarly situated youth, identifying, and eliminating implicit bias, bringing community, youth, and families to the table to be authentic partners in this effort, is our most critical charge. Even as reforms have led to significant and

sustained reductions in the number of youth in secure detention and in the rest of the youth justice system, the fact remains that youth of color are still overrepresented at every decision point, including detention, where they constitute a vast majority of admissions.

**The disparities that exist cannot be ignored and are a significant problem that amplifies the need for comprehensive and urgent solutions. Now more than ever we must recognize that we accomplish more together, and our work must be centered on this fact if we are to do better.**

This report is structured to spotlight state and local achievements in 2021 in the six areas where the CJJSI work is currently centered. While these victories and strategies are to be shared and celebrated with all partners, they should also motivate us to go deeper and to further expand and grow our efforts to transform youth justice in New Jersey at both the state and local level.

As CJJSI and JDAI partners, we all come to the table because we know the importance of a separate system of justice for children. As such, please use this report as the resource it is intended to be as we continue this journey together to transform New Jersey's youth justice system.

## RACE EQUITY

Promoting race equity and eliminating racial disparities has been at the forefront of many initiatives in New Jersey over the last year, and the CJJSI is committed to leading juvenile justice reform with race equity at the heart of the work. The CJJSI has been committed to partnering with youth justice stakeholders all over the state, and for 17 years has had a goal of reducing disparities in detention and more broadly. As we move forward, our work must be intentionally centered on eliminating racial and ethnic disparities and moving towards creating an equitable juvenile justice system.

The local CJJSI is a forum for two-way communication between state and county partners, ensuring that around the state and across levels of government, we are all on the same page regarding our system reform efforts, and can learn from one another, particularly as it relates to advancing race equity and eliminating racial disparities in the youth justice system.

Somerset County / April 2021: Established a Race, Equity, & Inclusion Committee of the local Council.

The Somerset County multidisciplinary team shares the common ideal that a race equity and inclusion lens should be incorporated in every facet of the work. The Committee created the following framework to guide local efforts:

- **Shift power** by prioritizing leadership of and solutions from communities most impacted.
- **Take intentional action** with subject matter experts in REI.
- **Share knowledge** of what is working.
- **Be data driven** to change policy.
- **Adapt strategies** to consistently assess efforts and practices.

Press Release / Dec. 2021: Acting AG Bruck Announces Initiatives to Promote Racial Justice Using Broad Authority of Department.

Acting Attorney General Andrew J. Bruck announced an expansive package of initiatives to use the broad reach of the New Jersey Department of Law & Public Safety to promote racial justice throughout New Jersey. The package includes a number of significant policy changes, including rulemaking to root out discrimination among New Jersey's 720,000 licensed professionals and a directive to prioritize racial justice through civil investigations and enforcement actions.



**“While the Department cannot fix longstanding racial disparities and injustices on its own, we have a moral obligation to use the tremendous reach of the department to achieve the maximum impact in promoting racial justice.”**

Acting Attorney General Bruck, Dec. 2021

In response to Acting Attorney General Bruck's call to action, the Department's divisions and offices proposed a total of nearly 100 new initiatives designed to advance racial justice and equity for underserved communities. The Juvenile Justice Commission is revising its mission statement to include a focus on racial justice and ensuring equitable outcomes for youth and will analyze the implementation of select policies to ensure equitable outcomes are achieved. In addition, the JJC is establishing a community liaison role for a focused engagement with community stakeholders and to provide the community with voice in policy and programming decisions.



## DETENTION REFORM

The CJJSI is committed to the ongoing implementation of the JDAI 8 core strategies to reduce the unnecessary and inappropriate detention of youth, and particularly youth of color, in New Jersey. As noted above, great success has been achieved in this area. The CJJSI will continue to focus on practices surrounding the use of detention.

The CJJSI provides an opportunity to ensure that JDAI principles are not just part of the local juvenile justice culture, but instead are woven into the fabric of state-level work. The CJJSI is committed to eliminating racial and ethnic disparities in the use of detention, reducing case processing times, promoting the use of effective detention alternatives, minimizing reliance on detention for low-level offenses and violations, and reviewing existing policies and practices put in place at the beginning of the work to assess racial impact.

The local CJJSI must continue to routinely review local detention data to engage in an ongoing analysis of the detention system, with the goal of ensuring that successes achieved to date are sustained, and that additional opportunities for improvement are acted upon, through the lens of the 8 core strategies of JDAI.

Burlington County / Jan. 2021: Enhancing Services for Youth on the Detention Alternative Program.

Research has shown that youth on alternative programs with supports are far more successful than youth who are just supervised. Through local conversation and data analysis, supervision of youth placed on a detention alternative in Burlington

County is now facilitated by a community-based organization, Ascenda, which includes case management and mentoring services as well as family engagement wrap-around services.

Atlantic County / Mar. 2021: Strengthening Supports for Youth on the Home Electronic Detention System (HEDS) Program.

In an effort to better serve youth, three (3) staff from the HEDS Program were trained in the Nurtured Heart Approach in March and May of 2021. From the training staff could better help youth achieve their individual goals as well as provide family support to further educate parents about the court process and direct them to available peer support with other families experiencing similar situations. Moreover, HEDS staff requested and were given approval to participate in Zoom court hearings for the first time to share information closely with the court, zealously advocate for youth, and brainstorm face-to-face with all players around strategies to best ensure youth reach disposition successfully.

Cumberland County / Nov. 2021: Identifying an Alternative Supervisor for Youth on the EM Program.

Detention admissions for alternative violations increased +56.7% between 2020 through the second period of 2021. To ensure that youth are not violated on an alternative for non-compliance due to “home-related” issues, detention alternative program staff began identifying an “alternative sponsor” in the event that a youth must be removed from the home while on electronic monitoring for any home issues that may arise. The youth may be placed with the alternative sponsor while awaiting disposition.

# MECHANISMS TO DIVERT YOUTH

A central part of youth justice reform is promoting and reinforcing diversion practices that hold youth accountable for their behavior without resorting to legal sanctions, deeper formal court involvement or oversight, and limit the likelihood of unnecessary detention. Several jurisdictions have demonstrated that there are alternatives to formal processing that shield young people from the harms of the juvenile justice system while encouraging responsibility and growth.

The practice of diverting youth away from formal court proceedings and towards rehabilitative services, using curbside warnings and station house adjustments, is a key principle of the Attorney General's 2020-12 directive, released at the end of 2020 and effective January 2021. These practices and approaches are all in line with the work of the CJJSI and serve as encouragement to stakeholders to evaluate the current inventory of diversion options and work to fill any gaps, as a means to ensure the directive is implemented and opportunities for effective diversion of youth from the formal justice system exist and are utilized.

Directive / Feb. 2021: AG Directive Governing Dismissals of Certain Pending Marijuana Charges Upon Gov. Signing NJ Bill Changing Legal Status of Marijuana.



In 2021, the Governor signed the New Jersey Cannabis Regulatory, Enforcement Assistance, Marketplace Modernization Act and the Marijuana

decriminalization laws. From that, the Attorney General directed all prosecutors operating under the authority of the laws of the State of New Jersey to dismiss pending marijuana-related charges in accordance with the guidance set forth in the directive.

With this reform, New Jersey's approach to youth possession and use shifted by moving away from the punitive status quo to a framework that values public health, harm reduction, and the well-being of young people. Moving away from punitive criminal consequences and fines for young people using cannabis in our state, this shift now connects youth to community-based supports, such as programs that provide mentorship, wraparound case management, and mental health intervention, among other services, rather than punitive penalties that have been a hallmark of aggressive enforcement of prohibition.

Article / Cumberland County / Oct. 2021: Year-Long Study Looks at Youth-Focused Community Policing Strategies.



The Cumberland County Prosecutor's Office launched a year-long program focused on improving how police tackle juvenile crime. The goal, apart from the obvious mission of reducing crime, is improving police-community relations. The effort is a collaborative project between local law enforcement agencies and the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, Rutgers and Clarus Research.

Administrative Office of the Courts / Jan. 2021: Implementation of the Juvenile Statewide Electronic Court Disposition Reporting System & Automation of the Risk Screening Tool (RST).

Effective January 4, 2021, the AOC effectively expanded its statewide Electronic Court Disposition Reporting (eCDR) to include juvenile cases. The new system allows the entire state to transition away from paper files and towards a system that is seamlessly integrated with court records. (cont'd)



(cont'd) The new system makes us more efficient in our work, and also allows us to more easily compile and analyze data about how youth are treated when engaged in the juvenile justice system. Along with this new transition was the full automation of the statewide risk screening tool, in an ongoing dedicated effort to promote uniformity in charging decisions across the State. On January 4, 2021, Hunterdon County became the 21<sup>st</sup> and final county to implement the RST for use to screen youth for detention.

Burlington County / Jan. 2021: Creating Diversion Opportunities Through a Stationhouse Adjustment Program.

Funds were awarded to the Family Support Organization (FSO) of Burlington County to support a countywide stationhouse adjustment program for police; the program also serves as a community-based diversionary option for the court. As part of this initiative the FSO developed a feedback survey for parents/families of youth engaging in the program to help inform any modifications to the program needed.

Ocean County / Jan. 2021: Creating Screening Policies in Line with the Attorney General's Directive on Juvenile Justice Reform.

Based on the spirit of the Attorney General Directive on Juvenile Justice System Reform, the Office of the Prosecutor screens all 1st, 2nd, and 3rd degree charges when police are requesting detention to ensure consistency in charging and the offense rises to the level of a request for detention before detention is requested. This policy change has resulted in a -100.0% decrease in the number of youth detained on 3rd degree offenses, (11 youth in 2019 to 0 in 2021).

Monmouth County / Oct. 2021: Creating New Standards for the Process to Screen and Docket Cases with the Family Court.

Based on data analysis of case screening delays, the AOC Court Manual standards, and in collaboration with the County Prosecutor's Office, the Family Division, to optimize case screening practices, established a new screening protocol and timely standards for both the screening and docketing of cases. Any new summons received by the court is screened, docketed, and scheduled for the first hearing within six (6) business days which significantly reduced the front-end delays.

Monmouth County / Nov. 2021: Considering Cases Involving Co-Delinquents and Eligibility for Informal Proceedings.

To address case processing delays related to juvenile cases with co-delinquents, the Family Division disbanded with the practice of screening lower-level cases court formal. For cases involving co-delinquents, the juvenile judge will serve as the Referee in cases where one youth is eligible for an informal proceeding.

Monmouth County / Nov. 2021: Establishing Criteria for the Restorative Community Conference Court Diversion Program.

The Family Division and County Prosecutor's Office established criteria for the Restorative Community Conference Court Diversions program. Cases eligible for Intake Service Conferences (ISC) where the victim is willing to participate, and all involved parties successfully partake in the pre-conferencing process are screened for a restorative diversion.

# PROBATION ENHANCEMENTS

Research on adolescent brain development and behavior has called for a fundamental rethinking of juvenile probation practice. Transforming juvenile probation into a focused intervention that promotes personal growth and positive behavior change has become a central goal for New Jersey Juvenile Probation. Over the last year across the state, Probation has continued to shift from time-based probation supervision to goal-based and strength-based probation supervision.

Adopting a model of enhanced outcome-based supervision, requiring a paradigm shift from punishment, enforcement, and monitoring to the use of evidence-based practices, moving toward being more family inclusive, and linking youth with culturally appropriate community resources are all critical probation service enhancements.

State Probation Services / 2021: Policies for How Probation Services Interacts with Schools/School Settings.

The Probation Division changed the way they interact with schools for youth on probation so as not to pull them deeper into the system or unfairly stigmatize them. The new school engagement policy provides direction to staff on when they should contact and visit a youth's school, with the goal to limit contact except under specific circumstances.

State Probation Services / 2021: Enhancing the Plan for Success Process for Long-term Youth Support.

In an effort to enhance a youth's "Plan for Success", Probation works with youth to identify his/her circle of care to be a part of the team that provides the youth with long-term support.

State Probation Services / 2021: Updating the Violation of Probation Policy & Requests for Warrants.

The juvenile violation of probation (VOP) policy and related documents were updated to reflect enhanced outcome-based supervision practices including the use of the structured response grid. The warrant policy was revised to promote requests for a warrant to court (day warrant) in lieu of a bench warrant to detention in certain circumstances, including but not limited to: the youth does not pose a significant safety risk to the community, detaining the youth may be harmful to their positive behavioral change, for all youth who do not pose a risk to the community and whereabouts are known, and/or for youth whose underlying charge is 4th degree or less.

Bergen County & Ocean County/ 2021: Probation Enrichment Practices that Promote Personal Growth for Probationers.

Several jurisdictions continue to motivate youth through incentives and opportunities that promote personal growth and positive behavior change.

In April 2021, the Bergen County Youth Services Commission and the Probation Youth and Family Engagement Program incorporated a gardening activity with youth on probation. Probation officers and the youth they supervise came together outdoors as a means of engagement during the COVID-19 pandemic. The activity consisted of the youth choosing to pot one of three different types of plants. The goal of the activity is to enhance rapport and engagement with the youth, which creates positive connections between youth, probation officers, and providers. the youth. (cont'd)

(cont'd) In 2021, Ocean County Juvenile probation hosted two virtual Family Feud Game nights for youth participating in their Enrichment Program along with their families, of which four (4) families participated each session. Two families compete at a time with the winner moving on to the final round and Probation Family Feud Championship. Each family participating receives a \$25.00 gift card incentive, reduced reporting, early probation discharge consideration, community service credit, and a certificate. A championship medal is awarded to the winning Probation Family Feud Champion.

Additionally in Ocean County, to expand and enhance supports for youth on probation, Probation's Enrichment Program (PEP) added incentives for youth and families including a \$100 gift card to Shoprite for a Thanksgiving dinner, art supplies for youth to create vision boards, and weekly enrichment courses based on input from youth and families.

Passaic County / Jan. 2021: Passaic County Enhanced Educational Program Creates Educational Opportunities for Probationers.

In collaboration with the Passaic County Superintendent of Schools, Passaic County implemented the Passaic County Enhanced Educational Program (PEEP). The program provides youth on probation with exposure to different education and career tracks. The program runs a Fall and Spring cohort, and youth can earn certifications via the culinary or logistics track enabling them to pursue employment in those fields. The PEEP program graduated four (4) youth in its Spring cohort.



**When staff are equipped with effective practices that build on the strengths of young people, they begin to see what's possible: a system that can safely address the needs of young people in their communities.**

# REINFORCING JJC REFORM

With New Jersey's history of successful youth justice reform achieved through JDAI, including implementing JDAI in all 21 counties, and with overall juvenile justice system improvement as a collective goal and commitment, the JJC decided to take the next step forward toward transforming practice within the agency, which represents the "deepest end" of the youth justice system.

The JJC believes that most youth can and should be served at home, and that when placement in a youth justice facility is necessary as a matter of community safety, those facilities must promote relationships, healing, rehabilitation, and opportunity for youth. Working with young people is a true calling - one that often relies on experience and instincts to meet the individual needs of youth, while implementing systems that ensure consistency, fairness, and transparency in our approach.

As the JJC continues to implement the JJC Reform Plan for Transforming Agency Practice, it has focused on enhancing data-driven decision-making that is grounded in the principles of adolescent development, and that seeks to provide youth with the opportunities and supports necessary to allow them to grow and thrive.



Press Release / Jan. 2021: AG Announces Proposed Rules to Align Juvenile Parole Responsibilities with the JJC.



AG Grewal announced proposed changes that, when adopted, would transfer juvenile parole responsibilities to the authority of the JJC, allowing parole decisions to be made by those most closely involved in a youth's rehabilitation.

Press Release / Mar. 2021: AG Announces JJC's Expansion of Ground-Breaking "Inside Circle" Program to Include Recently-Paroled Youth.



AG Grewal announced that the JJC is expanding its partnership with Inside Circle, a non-profit organization that uses therapeutic "healing circles" to address childhood trauma and break the cycle of violence and recidivism among incarcerated adults and youth. The program's success within JJC facilities has spurred the development of a new component to include recently paroled youth through a "Young Adult Empowerment" initiative.

Press Release / Mar. 2021: AG Announces New "Community-Based Services Consortium" to Provide Prosocial Programs to JJC Youth.



AG Grewal announced another transformative step in New Jersey's juvenile justice system through the creation of a Community-Based Services Consortium that brings a wide array of prosocial programs to youth in secure care settings and residential community homes operated by the JJC. The skills, habits, and knowledge that young people develop through these activities will foster self-esteem and resilience while also strengthening ties to their communities.

**To develop and implement purposeful programming and supports that provide the opportunities and stability necessary for youth to grow and thrive.**

Goal 1 of the JJC's Reform Plan

Reform Activity 1.2: Develop a consortium of community-based providers to bring a wide array of prosocial activities and growth opportunities to youth in facilities that can be continued upon return home.

One of the broader inspirations that JDAI has engendered in the JJC, is the Community-Based Services Consortium. The Consortium is designed to bring a wide-array of creative, developmentally-informed, pro-social activities and services to the small number of youth who remain custody. The Consortium was developed through a competitive funding opportunity that sought providers positioned to engage youth in a variety of activities that support their personal growth and development with a focus on providers located in the communities where youth will reside when they return home.

As a result of the public health crisis, emphasis was also placed on providers who can offer services virtually, and who can then transition to in-person service delivery when appropriate. The categories identified included: art/design, sports, media, culture, self-care and wellness, drama and theater, music, and other/misc.

In terms of geographic areas, the focus was on providers in municipalities where the majority of JJC youth are from. There are currently 14 providers available to work with youth at all JJC facilities on a fee-for-service basis. This initiative is also rooted in advancing race equity and inclusion as many of the successfully recruited providers are owned or operated by people of color and employ staff with lived experience.

A Closer Look at the Consortium: Film Production Group – James R. Halsey Foundation of the Arts, Trenton.

The James R. Halsey Foundation (JRH) of the Arts is a nonprofit organization located in Trenton that fosters the creative process in young people while guiding them through the art of filmmaking and providing life-skills training that promotes success in business and the arts. A stimulating course curriculum is designed for those who have an interest in pursuing the arts, as well as those who are experiencing live arts for the first time. The program provides a creative outlet for youth that is accompanied by a community of support and encouragement. JRH has delivered this theatre and film production course to young people at several JJC locations where the participants are using their creativity and imagination to explore character development, acting, and performance techniques. They are also expanding their ability to express their thoughts and feelings in short stories, monologues, and screenplays.

Reform Activity 1.4: Develop a program to hire released youth as part-time, temporary (e.g., 12-24 months) JJC youth worker trainees.

The youth worker apprentice program provides up to twelve special service positions (944 hours per year). The JJC has assigned a full-time staff position to be the Coordinator of the apprentice program, and each apprentice has a mentor. The onboarding process of the youth worker trainees will focus on training and learning procedures. This program also emphasizes race equity, as it ensures the apprentice opportunity is afforded to youth of color and implementing the program will increase workforce diversity at the JJC and will increase the number of JJC staff with lived experience that mirrors the experience of youth in the care of the JJC.

Reform Activity 1.8: Create transitional housing options for youth; consider both short-term (respite/shelter) options and longer-term (independent living) options.

Data analysis revealed that for youth on parole in July of 2019, 3.0% had experienced homelessness and 20.0% had experienced housing instability prior to coming to JJC. From a race equity perspective, youth of color were disproportionately represented in that 100.0% of the youth who experienced homelessness and 82.0% of youth who had experienced housing instability were youth of color. Knowing that youth need stable housing to grow and thrive, the JJC proposed a budget initiative that was approved by the Governor to fill this gap. The JJC's Independent Living Home is a voluntary program designed to provide a safe space to assist youth on parole with their transition back into the community. The goal is to offer youth a healthy and safe living environment to ease the transition period from incarceration to release. Throughout the youth's stay basic needs such as furnishings, toiletries, and household products are provided by the JJC. The JJC's first independent living home was ready for occupancy on October 1st, 2021.

In addition, understanding that different youth have different housing needs, the JJC has also released a request for proposals (RFP) for Transitional Housing. The purpose of the RFP is to establish a contract with up to three providers throughout the state to provide three guaranteed slots statewide reserved solely for use by the JJC. The transitional housing program is intended to provide an opportunity to those youth for whom housing stability is a concern, whose circumstances would normally make access to housing programs difficult, and who may require a greater level of round-the-clock support.

The priority locations are housing programs situated within 30 miles surrounding Paterson (Passaic County), Jersey City (Hudson County), Newark (Essex County), Atlantic City (Atlantic County), City of Camden (Camden County), Trenton (Mercer). The Covenant House in Atlantic City is one provider that has been selected and provides onsite, 24-hour staffing and a wide range of services including cooking healthy meals, budgeting, leadership training, career counseling, mental health counseling, legal aid, physical health care, as well as educational and vocational advancement. Moving forward, the JJC will continue to secure additional providers in different regions of the state.

**To ensure that young people develop the capacity and opportunity to build and sustain strong and healthy relationships with peers, staff, family and community.**

Goal 2 of the JJC's Reform Plan

Reform Activity 2.2: Examine feasibility of modifying residential program use to prioritize placement according to geography to allow youth to be closer to home.

The JJC has residential community homes dispersed throughout the state and historically, the JJC never took geography into account when making placement decisions for youth admitted to a residential community home. The JJC implemented a new policy to prioritize placement according to geography to allow youth to be closer to home. Data has since revealed that youth are now residing in programs closer to home, and that the disparate impact on youth of color previously experienced has been eliminated. The JJC believes this is just one step among many that it can take to help provide kids with a better opportunity to build and sustain stronger and healthier relationships with their families and communities.

## BROADER SYSTEM DECISION POINTS

The CJJSI's vision has always been for it to lead broader system reform efforts at all points in the youth justice system, from diversion, to detention, to adjudication and disposition, to waiver practice, probation practice, and out of home placement reforms. This body must therefore continue to consider all of these decision-making and programming points and determine whether new opportunities for collaborating around improvement exists. Within this line of work includes family and community engagement, forging partnerships with youth to incorporate their voice into the work, and collaboration among education and justice system stakeholders.

Article / Aug. 2021: Acting Governor Oliver Signs Legislation Establishing Restorative & Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program.



Legislation signed into law established a pilot program within the JJC to reduce initial and repeat youth involvement with the system; \$8.4 million to assist the implementation of the program in four pilot cities: Camden, Newark, Paterson, & Trenton.

Press Release / Dec. 2021: Acting AG Bruck, JJC Announce Rules Establishing Restorative and Transformative Justice for Youths and Communities Pilot Program.



Acting AG Bruck and the JJC announced rules and opened the grant process for a pilot program establishing RJ Hubs and community-based wraparound services for at-risk youth in four target cities, paving the way for a new approach to juvenile justice in New Jersey.

Press Release / July 2021: AG Grewal Highlights Successful Program to Support County Juvenile Detention Centers During Public Health Emergency.



AG Gurbir S. Grewal highlighted an effort by the JJC in conjunction with the Governor's Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention ("JJDP") Committee, that awarded more than \$85,000 to two community-based organizations to provide resources to county-operated juvenile detention centers during the public health emergency through the Detention Center Support Initiative.

**Middlesex County Community College was awarded \$54,990 in funding to provide virtual college classes for up to 10 youth in the Middlesex County Juvenile Detention Center and up to 8 youth at the Camden County Juvenile Detention Center. Students will receive college credit for course completion. The program also provides peer mentorship and access to other school resources.**

**Jewish Family Services was awarded \$31,200 in funding to provide anger management and mental health services to address the emotional needs of youth that were created by, or made worse by, the public health emergency, including parenting classes and consistent virtual recreation activities for up to 70 youth in the Atlantic County Juvenile Detention Center.**

JJYD Program / 2021: New Developments in the Rutgers Juvenile Justice & Youth Development Program.

The Rutgers University Program in Juvenile Justice and Youth Development has been established to recruit, train, and retain a workforce that is prepared to address the demands of juvenile justice and work with young people impacted by the justice system. Through a collaborative effort that incorporates highly respected departments, units, and leaders from across Rutgers University, undergraduate and professional education programs that follow an innovative, interdisciplinary model have been created.

The Certificate Program offers professional education opportunities drawing from the fields of psychology, social work, criminal justice, law, and education. After years of development, Rutgers University offered three (3) courses in 2021: Foundations of Youth Development (October 6th & 13th), Foundations of Juvenile Justice (November 10th & 17th), and Cultural Competence (December 9th & 15th).

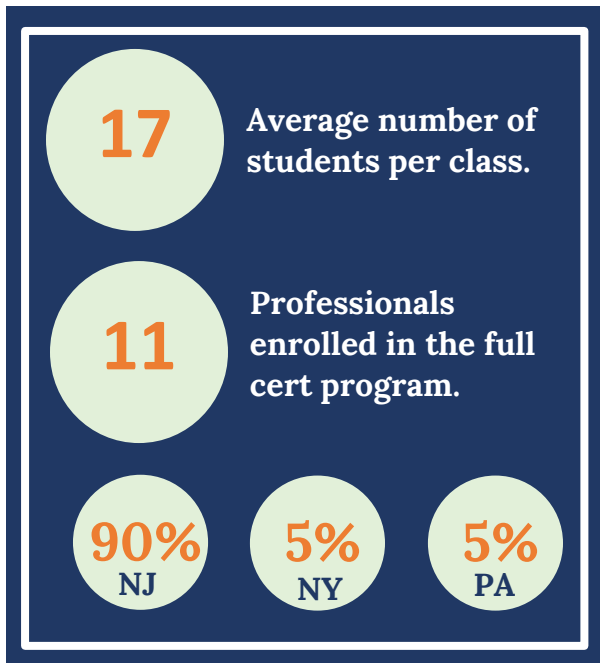
**REQUIRED COURSES (4)**  
Attend four six-hour required courses to receive a thorough understanding of the essential elements of juvenile justice and youth development.

**ELECTIVE COURSES (5)**  
Attend your choice of five six-hour elective courses to explore the topics and issues most relevant to your professional interests.

**CAPSTONE PROJECT (1)**  
Complete this six-hour online course to tie together all the competencies you've gained throughout the certificate program.

The JJYD program also offers undergraduate students looking to prepare for a career working with young people who have been impacted by the juvenile justice system, through interdisciplinary minors in Juvenile Justice and Youth Development at the Rutgers-Newark and Rutgers-Camden campuses. Many youth moved their way through the program in 2021 and by early 2022, several youth had graduated from the program on both campuses.

As of September 2021, 27 students have been enrolled in the minor program at Rutgers-Newark, and as of January 2022, 16 students have graduated the program. As of September 2021, 12 students have been enrolled in the minor program at Rutgers-Camden, and 1 student has graduated the program.



Gloucester County / April 2021: Creating Opportunities & Support for Teen Boys During the Pandemic.

For court-involved youth, collaboration between the Youth Services Commission and the County CJJSI led to the creation of the “Clubhouse”, a virtual support for teen boys ages 15-18 to address stress management, self-care, coping with virtual learning, peer pressure, developing self-identity, and confidence building.



Passaic County / 2021: Bringing Together Community & System Stakeholders Through Community Conversation.

The Passaic County Community Engagement JDAI Subcommittee held several community conversations that aimed to bring together the community and law enforcement along with service providers in the area, to guide partnership and effect transformative change. Community Conversation topics included Juneteenth: A Conversation with a Local Historian (June), Connections Matter: An Overview (July), Recognizing Trauma in Our Children (September), and Faces of Fallen Fathers (October).

Hudson County / Mar. 2021: Creating Transparency Through the JDAI Community Outreach Subcommittee.

The Hudson County Outreach Subcommittee presented a series of Webinars on community outreach and cross collaboration. The webinars highlighted the successful collaboration through the lens of the courts and how to overcome resistance and barriers to create successful outcomes for youth.



Monmouth County / July-Oct. 2021: Putting Into Practice Restorative Justice Models for Change.

Restorative justice programs for youth bring together those most affected by the offense—the justice-involved youth, the victim, and community members—in a non-adversarial process to encourage accountability and to meet the needs of the victims and the community in repairing the damage that resulted from the delinquent incident. Monmouth County continues to be a leader in embracing restorative justice-focused initiatives.

The Assistant Family Division Manager and Family Engagement Navigator were trained for a total of 16 hours in facilitating Restorative Community Conferences by the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP).

Additionally, having previously participated in a “train the trainer” program offered by IIRP, the Mental Health Association of Monmouth County (MHAMC) and Konscious Youth Development & Services (KYDS) also provided 200 cumulative hours of training to the Middletown School District administration and social services staff in Restorative Community Conferences, Peace Circles and Mindfulness.

**2** days **8** hours/day **25** people

MHAMC & KYDS also partnered to discuss their capacity to conduct Restorative Practice Trainings with the County’s Superintendent’s Roundtable in October, addressing thirty-five people. The goal was to spark interest among additional school districts in receiving the training and implementing restorative practices.

# REFORM ON THE HORIZON

Shared at the outset of this report and structured throughout both this document and the vision document adopted by the CJJSI are the six core areas where the CJJSI and County CJJSIs will center youth justice reform efforts:

- Race Equity;
- Detention Reform;
- Mechanisms to Divert Youth from the Formal System;
- Probation Enhancements;
- Reinforcing & Promoting the Juvenile Justice Commission's Plan for Transforming Agency Practice; and
- Broader System Decision Points.

As a state JDAI site, New Jersey and its local JDAI sites have focused incredible energy on addressing the dangerous and chronic overcrowding that once characterized our state's youth detention centers, with great success. As JDAI pioneers and leaders we have attended to the front door of detention with determination, and we must bring the same fortitude to our efforts to improve outcomes for youth at all points on the youth justice continuum. Moving forward, our single greatest challenge as JDAI partners is to advance racial and ethnic equity. We must place an intentional focus on race equity at all decision-making and service provision points of the youth justice continuum and create a system that ensures equitable and successful outcomes for all youth.

In this spirit, the JJC in partnership with local CJJSIs will conduct "mini system assessments" to help local CJJSIs develop workplans that include the more extensive decision points, with a focus on identifying and addressing racial and ethnic disparities, and whenever possible, creating equity.

The local CJJSIs will collaboratively participate in the mini system assessment process to both document success, and to take the temperature of the system as it is now, to provide a roadmap for the work going forward and to prioritize decision and programming points in the system that provide opportunities for improvement.

Because sites vary so much, each site, depending upon its challenges, capacities, and ambition, will ultimately chart a site-specific pathway to the next stages of youth justice reform. However, each site's pathway will continue to be guided by data, and by the core strategies, values, and principles adopted by us all as New Jersey's JDAI stakeholders. And the trainings, policy and practice changes, and models for partnership outlined in this document should serve as useful tools for achieving change in any jurisdiction.



**JDAIconnect is a virtual destination for juvenile justice reformers to talk, find resources and learn. JDAIconnect is available to everyone – practitioners, policymakers, community-based organizations, advocates, youth, families, researchers, and any others – who are interested in youth justice. Membership is open to all, whether or not you participate in JDAI. This online community is free of charge.**