

Alternatives Project—Using JDAI Strategies

Spokane Juvenile Court Detention Alternative Program Spokane Juvenile Court Executive Summary

The Detention Alternative Project (DAP), a project of the Spokane Juvenile Court, is funded by a Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJJAC) Title II Formula Grant, with county funding and reallocated Court resources. DAP provides the court with additional alternatives to detention and youth an opportunity to gain skills. Low, moderate and high risk youth who have violated their probation, but who have not committed a new offense; and Status Offenders, including, Truants and At Risk Youth, who are in contempt of court orders, are targeted for services. Instead of detention, these youth remain in the community and are held accountable for their behavior by attending either an Evening or Weekend Program. DAP is designed to teach skills and provide support. The goals of the Project are to deinstitutionalize status offenders, to decrease disproportionate minority confinement, to improve self-sufficiency of youth, eliminate double-bunking in detention, and maintain community safety and youth accountability. DAP was broadened during the second and third grant years to take into account all the alternatives to detention. DAP expands the detention alternatives available to the court, which include, Community Service, Electronic Monitoring and Structured Alternative Confinement (school and electronic monitoring).

The Evening Program provides Probation Violators with Mentoring, Skills Training, Recreation, Goal Setting, Community Service, skills training based upon Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Motivational Interviewing, the Family Component, Chemical Education, Girl's Group, Minority Mentoring and Dinner for youth. For Status Offenders who are in Contempt of Court, the Weekend Program includes, Skills Training, Motivational Interviewing, Minority Mentoring, Family Component, Work Crew and meals. The project relies upon the community providing services as well as the court.

DAP uses best practices and "evidence based strategies" such as Motivational Interviewing and Mentoring. The project is based upon the research findings that indicate "get tough" approaches, such as detention, are less successful than alternative strategies in deterring criminal behavior.

Summary of Previous Years' Evaluations:

- During first grant year, the project saved 533 detention days (Evening Program only), served 153 Probation Violators, 135 Status Offenders. Of youth provided services, 24% were minority youth.
- During the second grant year, the project reduced detention bed days by 3407 (all Detention Alternative Programs), served 751 Probation Violators and 606 Status Offenders. Among those served, there were 21.7% minority youth.
- Almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Probation Violation referrals were successfully completed during the two project years.
- The completion rate for Status Offender referrals during the first year was 59%, while during the second year this improved to 87% for ARYs, and 77% for Truancy.
- The Recidivism Study suggested that there may be a reduction in court Referrals, Convictions, and Felony Convictions in the year following DAP services compared with the previous year for Probation Violation youth.
- There may be a reduction in the Contempt of Court Changes during the follow-up year when compared to the year before for Truants.

- Youth and parents rated their satisfaction with program highly, think the project was helpful, should be continued, and that it was preferable to detention.
- Respondents report higher rates of school attendance, satisfaction with family relationships, and report that the youth was better off since DAP.
- Comments indicate that the programming of DAP was valuable in helping the youth learn s/he has a choice in making decisions.
- Parents/youth think information provided by the Family Component is useful.

Project Implementation and Operations:

- The project continued to be well organized and provided all components designated in the grant application, including Minority Mentoring, Girls Group and the Family Component.
- Community agencies and students from local colleges are involved with the project.
- JDAI Community and Juvenile Justice Committees support the project.

Evaluation Methodology The evaluation design includes measuring recidivism and youth and parent satisfaction, in addition to measuring numbers of youth served, days of avoided detention, and percentage changes. Telephone follow-up with youth/parents provides information on the current status of the youth and their perceptions of DAP. The recidivism study compares the year before DAP to the year after DAP, on the youth's court actions, including, Probation Violations/Contempt of Court Charges, court Referrals, Convictions and Felony Convictions.

Key Findings – Year 3:

- The project reduced detention bed days by 2312 days.
- The project served 735 Probation Violation youth.
- The project served 373 Status Offenders.
- 21% of the youth served were members of minority groups.
- 84% of the ARY's, 71% of the Truancy, and 71% of the Probation Violation referrals were successfully completed.
- There is a statistically significant reduction in court Referrals, Convictions and Felony Convictions in the year following DAP, when compared with the year before, for Probation Violators.
- There is a statistically significant reduction in Contempt of Court Charges in the year following DAP, compared to the year before, for Truants.
- Youth and parents rated their satisfaction with program highly, think the project was helpful, should be continued, and that it is preferable to detention.
- Respondents report higher rates of school attendance, satisfaction with family relationships, and report that the youth is better off since DAP.
- Parents/youth think information in the Family Component will be useful.
- Comments indicate that the programming of DAP is valuable in helping the youth learn s/he has a choice in making decisions.
- The Court has successfully sustained the project through county funding and reallocation of Court resources.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

This GJJAC grant partially funded the Spokane Juvenile Court's Detention Alternative Programs, focusing upon the new Evening and Weekend DAP programming for Status Offenders and Probation Violators. These two programs increase the detention alternative options for the court. This court project continued to be well-organized, implemented all components, and the staff addressed tasks in a timely manner. DAP coordinated with community agencies to provide needed program services. Community agencies are involved with the project, and DAP is supported by JDAI community and Juvenile Justice Committees. During the third year, the project met or surpassed all objectives with the exception of the reduction of detention days. Program satisfaction of youth who attended DAP, and their parents are high. Almost all respondents agree

that the project should be continued, and that DAP is preferable to detention. The Skills Classes and Recreation received high rating from respondents, as well. Comments from youth and parents indicate that the programming of DAP is valuable in helping the youth learn s/he has a choice in making decisions. Many youth report they are better off now and that their family relationships are better. Four measures in the Recidivism Study, Contempt of Court Charges for Truants, and Referrals, Convictions and Felony Convictions for Probation Violation group, showed statistically significant decreases from the year before to the year after DAP. Because of methodological issues, these statistical findings must be cautiously interpreted. These findings must be considered along with other outcome measures. The success stories of youth in the program give us information that numbers cannot. They illustrate the difficulties that many of these youth face—family difficulties, school issues, and substance use. These stories also show the creativity and determination of the probation officers to help the youth find new behavior patterns. It may be necessary for a youth to be referred several times and to complete a number of days before there is any apparent behavioral change. - As Program Staff said change is in small steps. Even youth who do not complete the program may benefit greatly by the days that they were present. This program offers youth an opportunity for learning unlike detention. It teaches youth they have a choice. It shows the youth that there are people who care about them and want to help them deal with their life situations. The Spokane Juvenile Court will be continuing the Evening Program and Weekend Program using county funding. The two programs expand the efforts of the court with other options to reduce the use of detention.