

A progress report of the achievements and challenges of Louisiana's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative.

# Louisiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiatives

2016

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# Louisiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

## 2016 Progress Report



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



This report was prepared by Opal West, JDAI State Coordinator, John S. Ryals, Jr., and Jefferson Parish JDAI Team Member. Copies of this report can be obtained by visiting [www.lcle.la.gov](http://www.lcle.la.gov) or by contacting Opal West by e-mail at [Opal.West@LCLE.LA.GOV](mailto:Opal.West@LCLE.LA.GOV).

# Louisiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative

Annual Report – 2016

## Introduction

At the close of the last century, few national experts would have considered Louisiana fertile ground for implementing detention reform. Just 20 years ago, Louisiana’s juvenile justice system garnered national attention for having the nation’s worst juvenile incarceration facilities. In response to this notoriety, juvenile justice stakeholders began the challenging process of implementing reform in Louisiana by holding community engagement meetings. Findings from these community-based meetings supported the need for across-the-board reform starting with over-crowded incarceration facilities and extending to the development of organizational structures dedicated to improving the lives of children, youth, and families at the local level.

In the years that followed, several Acts were developed and passed by the Louisiana legislature to codify Louisiana’s commitment to *all* youth and families – not just those involved in the juvenile justice system. Beginning with the **Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2003**, continuing with the **Children & Youth Planning Board Act of 2004, Act 863 of the 2010 Regular Legislative Session** that established statewide juvenile detention center standards, and culminating in the recently ratified “Raise the Age” legislation amending juvenile court jurisdiction to include 17 year old youth, Louisiana has recognized the need to utilize

effective practices and data-proven results to drive reformation of the entire juvenile justice system.

In recognition of the commitment Louisiana has demonstrated through its legislative and community collaborative efforts, Louisiana was selected by two distinguished private foundations to participate in juvenile justice reform initiatives – the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation’s **Models for Change initiative** and the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)**. Models for Change targeted several areas of improvement including: evidence-based practices, screening and assessment tools, information sharing, alternatives to formal processing, disproportionate minority contact, and probation system reform. JDAI focused on reforming the processes surrounding detaining youth. More specifically, JDAI focused on inappropriate use of detention, collaboration with policy makers and local stakeholders, use of objective detention screening tools, alternatives to detention, conditions of confinement, and disproportionate minority contact.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a philanthropic organization based in Baltimore, Maryland. Over the past two decades, the JDAI initiative has spread across 39 states and has resulted in significant improvements in conditions of confinement, reductions in costs associated with detaining youth, and improved outcomes for youth.

### JDAI Core Strategies:

*Collaboration*

*Use of Accurate Data*

*Objective Admissions*

*Criteria Instruments*

*Alternatives to Detention*

*Case Processing Reform*

*Reducing the Use of Secure Confinement for “Special” Cases*

*Reducing Racial Disparities*

*Improving Conditions of Confinement*

In order to both memorialize the process and to highlight significant accomplishments, this report will be produced annually in an effort to make stakeholders and community members aware of the initiative and increase understanding of challenges and accomplishments .

Lastly, the participation of partnering agencies across Louisiana has engendered a spirit of camaraderie and collaboration. State entities essential to the success of JDAI include:

- Louisiana Supreme Court
- Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice
- Louisiana Public Defender’s Board
- Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights
- Louisiana District Attorney’s Association
- Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement

## **BACKGROUND**

The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) began 25 years ago and is currently expanded to 39 states and over 300 counties/parishes. The initiative was developed on the premise that juvenile detention centers potentially cause more harm to the community and youth than good. Further, the JDAI initiative took a new look at the use of secure detention and believed detention populations can be reduced significantly without compromising public safety. Beginning in the mid-1990s, there was an overreliance on the use of juvenile detention nationally. Ostensibly, the expansion of juvenile detention beds was the result of public concern over juvenile “super-predators” - an anticipated crime wave perpetrated by a new generation of serious habitual juvenile offenders. Since its inception, data has proven the super-predator crime wave never materialized. In fact, statistics from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention have shown a steady decline in the rate of juvenile arrests from a peak in 1996 to 2014 having the lowest rate on record. Nevertheless, from the mid-1990s until 2006, reliance on detention has increased. However, since 2006, JDAI has expanded across the nation and the use of secure detention has decreased in those sites where implemented. JDAI has produced dramatic reductions in detention populations and overall improvement in many juvenile justice systems. Data has demonstrated that, for communities that adopt and utilize JDAI core strategies, community safety has not been impacted.

Louisiana’s committed to reforming its juvenile justice system further by engaging in the Annie E. Casey JDAI effort. Statewide coordination was established through the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice (LCLE) and the effort began with the selection of five jurisdictions - Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, and Orleans parishes. Later, in 2015, Terrebonne Parish was added as a replication site.

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### *Louisiana JDAI Pilot Sites:*

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*Site Leader William Sommers*

*East Baton Rouge –Deron*

*Patin/Coordinator*

*Site Leader Gail Grover*

*Jefferson – Matthew*

*Villio/Coordinator*

*Site Leader Roy Juncker, Jr.*

*New Orleans – Damekia*

*Morgan/Coordinator*

*Overseeing Judge: Judge Tammy Stewart*

### *Replication Site:*

*Terrebonne- Jerry Bergeron*

*The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

[www.aecf.org](http://www.aecf.org)

<http://www.aecf.org/work/juvenile-justice/jdai>

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Initial JDAI work involved technical assistance and funding provided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which was used to enhance existing local programming. Each of the five jurisdictions received technical assistance, training, and consultation to develop tools and processes that reduce reliance on detention.

## The Eight Core Strategies of JDAI

The JDAI effort is rooted in core foundational principles that establish a framework for implementing effective detention reform. These core principles create a basis for sequential progress toward reducing detention usage and improving youth outcomes. In Louisiana, these core strategies have shaped reform work and given life to several noteworthy achievements.



### CORE STRATEGY 1: COLLABORATION

Promoting collaboration between all entities involved with the juvenile justice system is key to the success of any reform initiative and JDAI, in particular. Collaboration includes juvenile court officials, probation agencies, prosecutors, defense attorneys, schools, mental health providers, community organizations, and family and youth advocates. Across Louisiana, jurisdictions are required by law to have local Children & Youth Planning Boards (CYPBs). While many jurisdictions have struggled with the organization and application of these local collaborative entities, the five JDAI sites in Louisiana have developed and sustained local CYPBs.

Several JDAI parishes have been recognized as having very active CYPBs that include key members of child-welfare, juvenile justice, education, and community groups. The strength of these collaborative efforts comes from the recognition of a common goal – the welfare of children and youth in their jurisdictions. For each of the JDAI jurisdictions, Children & Youth Planning Boards are the center of JDAI involvement. It is through the collaborative efforts of these CYPBs that JDAI principles, philosophy, reform activities, and results emanate. In addition, CYPBs have become a central point of engagement for community resources and youth-serving agencies.

In June of 2011 the MARC (Multi-Agency Resource Center), in Calcasieu Parish, opened its doors. Drawing on the availability of community-based resources and services, the MARC provides an enhanced response to status and delinquency cases, while serving a diversionary role of keeping youth out of the system and in their communities whenever possible. The MARC is the product of the local Children and Youth Planning Board and the Calcasieu Parish Police Jury. The center was designed with two main purposes in mind: (1) to link youth and families to the pool of existing services in the community that can most directly address their needs; and (2) to facilitate timely case processing and access to those services. By design, case processing can be reduced from several weeks to a matter of hours. The facility's nontraditional work hours from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m., Monday through Saturday, further enhances this ability.

Youth and families who agree to services are walked through a series of validated screening tools to determine the needs of the youth and assist MARC staff in linking youth and families to appropriate services based on those needs. To start, youth are administered the Juvenile Inventory for Functioning (JIFF). The JIFF assesses how a youth functions in everyday life. If issues are found placing the youth at risk, a follow-up screening may be conducted using the Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument, Version 2 (MAYSI-2) or Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory (SASSI) tool. Once the screening

*Positive Outcomes at JDAI Sites Using Consensus Designed Objective Screening Instruments*

- *Successful performance by minors screened and released, based on validation studies of release populations*
- *More equitable, objective, and informed detention decision-making*
- *Lower detention rates and reduction of detention facility populations*
- *Improved development and implementation of alternative-to-detention programs*
- *Development of graduated responses for detention populations identified in RAI/DSI field tests, such as probation violators or minors referred on warrants*
- *Reduction of disproportionate minority confinement*

tools are completed, the MARC staff partner with the youth and family to come up with a plan best suited to meet their individual needs.

Since opening in 2011, the MARC has served over 6,500 youth, effectively diverting 81% of those youth from formal court processing. Of those youth diverted, 28% resulted from families seeking assistance on their own, or walk-in services suggested by local law enforcement, schools, and churches. This means that 1,461 youth were able to come to the MARC for assistance without arrest or legal referral. In 2014, the Vera Institute completed an Outcome Evaluation on the MARC. The evaluation determined that re-offending times, if any, were prolonged for youth who had contact with the MARC compared to those who did not. Additionally, this process found no evidence of adverse effects such as net-widening.

### CORE STRATEGY 2: USE OF VALID DATA

Beyond data collection and analysis, dissemination and utilization of data are most effective in the decision making and reform process. Several different data points are collected in all JDAI sites, which include demographic characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race), average daily population (ADP), admissions, average length of stay (ALOS), state commitments, and public safety (re-arrests). Data is collected throughout each year, and is reported both quarterly and annually. Quarterly data is used to identify specific areas for improvement, as well as to gauge success.

Numbers, graphs, trend lines, and spreadsheets are analytical tools used to highlight movement in data points and gauge success of JDAI implementation. The JDAI sites meet quarterly to display and discuss data, cross-cutting issues, and improvement strategies. There is also a focus on ways to improve the consistency of data collection.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED), also known as Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), has also been a key concentration in analyzing data and identifying cross cutting issues. Each site began disaggregating all data points by race/ethnicity and gender. In some cases,

tracking offenses by race/ethnicity and gender has become an expectation with the purpose of diving deeper into the issue of RED/DMC, which will be discussed in greater detail below in Core Strategy 8.



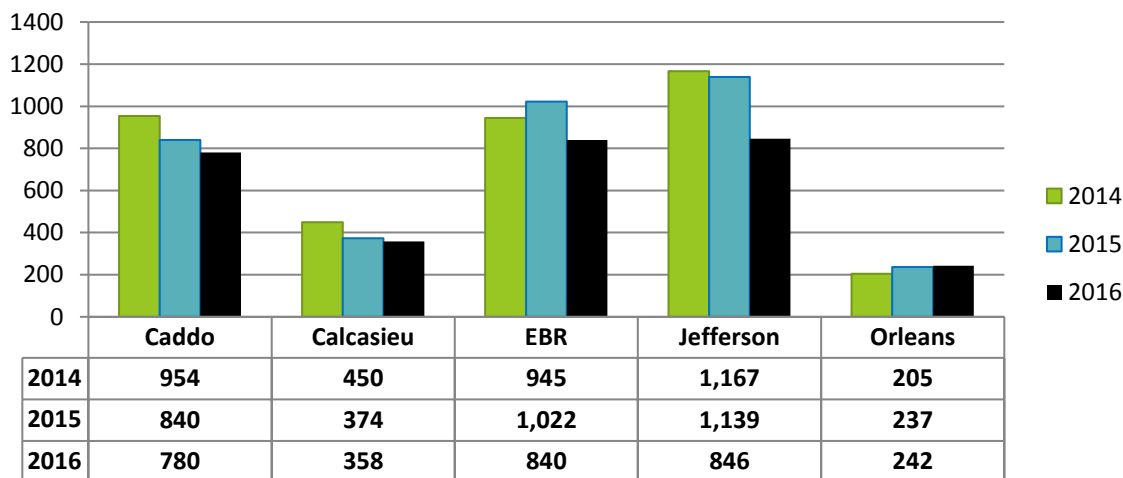
### **CORE STRATEGY 3: OBJECTIVE ADMISSIONS DECISIONS**

All too often, decisions to detain youth are made for reasons that are not clear. What is clear, however, is research shows youth who are detained fare much worse than those who are not. As a result, placing youth in detention facilities should be done only to ensure appearance in court and to ensure the youth does not re-offend before adjudication. In order to ensure the goals of detention are met, objective screening tools (referred to as Detention Screening Instruments or Risk Assessment Instruments) are developed and used to gauge whether a youth should be detained, released, or released on an Alternative to Detention. In Louisiana, criteria for admission into detention are often arbitrary, subjective, or nonexistent, which has led to the overuse of secure detention. To minimize subjective detention decisions, JDAI sites have developed detention screening instruments (DSI), which are then validated, to control which youth are entering the facility. Although DSIs or RAIs are developed by the local parishes, all contain questions that assess two primary concerns – does the youth pose a public safety risk and/or will the youth fail to appear for court. Ideally, these tools should be administered on all arrested youth, which can be a challenge if the practice is not supported by other stakeholders. Using an objective screening instrument is essential for effective detention reform.

The following chart demonstrates how detention admissions can be affected by the use of an Objective Screening Instrument:

**Louisiana’s most significant reduction in detention admissions in JDAI sites were from 2015 to 2016, a total of 14.6% reduction; from 3,612 youth to 3,066**

#### **Detention Admissions by Site**



Note: The above chart does not include complete data from Orleans Parish for year 2016

### **CORE STRATEGY 4: ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION**

Simply encouraging reduction of detention admissions without providing alternative solutions would prove to be a challenging position to support. However, a key aspect of reducing detention use is the

development of Alternatives to Detention (ATDs). ATDs are designed to provide a balance of monitoring and supervision for youth who are at moderate risk to re-offend or to not appear for court. These alternative programs, such as Electronic Monitoring (EMP), Global Positioning System (GPS), Trackers, Community Coaches, Mentors, Day or Evening Reporting Centers, and referrals to community programs, are typically reserved for youth who may not score high enough on the DSI to be detained in detention, but not low enough for outright release to the community.

Evidence demonstrates that such ATD programs are cost effective, create no additional risk to communities, and provide youth with better opportunities to succeed. The average cost to house a youth in detention is approximately between \$220 and \$245 a day. Referencing the above chart, with 546 youth not entering detention between the years 2015 and 2016, JDAI sites saved \$120,120.00<sup>1</sup>. It is more cost effective to place youth on an ATD<sup>2</sup> since the average cost is approximately \$7.00 a day.

With the impact of Raise-the-Age legislation forthcoming for Louisiana’s juvenile justice system, the development, application, and monitoring of effective alternatives-to-detention is paramount.

### **CORE STRATEGY 5: EXPEDITED CASE PROCESSING**

There is justifiable concern that lengthy juvenile court case processing can contribute to increased risk of re-offending. In order to reduce the effects of juvenile justice processing delays on youth, JDAI endeavors to expedite case processing so youth spend more time receiving services and less time involved in court processes.

When applied to detention facilities, case processing is measured by length of stay (LOS) in facilities, failures to appear (FTA) for court, recidivism, and reductions in racial and ethnic disparities.

### **CORE STRATEGY 6: “SPECIAL DETENTION” CASES**

“Special detention” cases describe cases which continue to account for large numbers of admissions, despite efforts to decrease detention admissions. Typically, these are youth detained on warrants, violations of probation (VOPs) or technical violations, and youth in detention who are awaiting placement. Reducing inappropriate detention admissions requires identifying the sources, policies, and rationales for such detention admissions and addressing these issues.

Louisiana JDAI sites have worked diligently to follow national best practices to reduce admissions caused by warrants, VOPs, and youth awaiting placement in non-secure and secure facilities.

A commonly used tool is a graduated response grid to ensure detention is the last resort option for youth who violate the terms and conditions of their probation. Also, jurisdictions have reviewed their policies and procedures regarding warrants and have modified



Photo Credit: Steve Liss

<sup>1</sup> Approximate cost savings is for a LOS of 1 day. ALOS varies.

<sup>2</sup> ATD is specifically EMP or GPS



procedures to clear warrants for youths and family members who are not a risk to the community. Commitments to the state (Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice) have been reduced considerably in the JDAI sites since 2006.



Note: JDAI sites include Caddo, Calcasieu, East Baton Rouge, Jefferson, and Orleans. Counts are unduplicated.

In the JDAI pilot sites, youth commitments to the state have been reduced by 165 youth or 37%.

In 2012, the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s JDAI Initiative expanded focus on the post adjudication/depositional “deep end” of the juvenile justice system. Jefferson has engaged in this work to analyze their system by focusing on five major objectives:

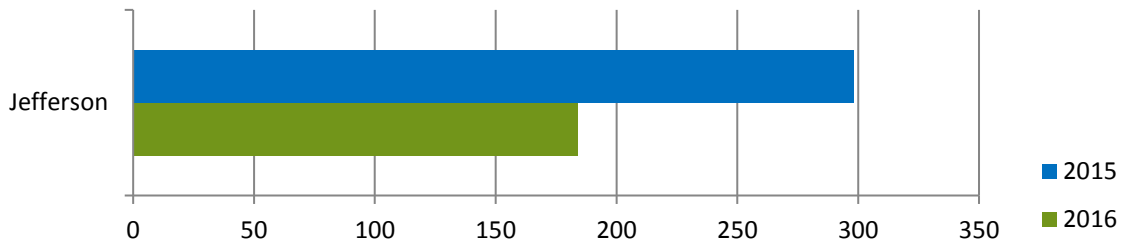
- 1) Narrowing the Pipeline
- 2) Dispositional Decision Making
- 3) Probation
- 4) Defense Advocacy
- 5) Data Driven Decision Making

Deep End work concentrates on dispositional trends, the reduction of commitments, and identifying more opportunities for safely reducing commitments to the state. Jefferson has spent significant time and effort in studying their detention population, probation population, and commitments to the state to develop new strategies to reduce these numbers without compromising public safety. Consistent with other JDAI Deep End sites, Jefferson found many youth who were committed to the state actually posed no public safety risks.

Jefferson Parish has worked closely with the school board to reduce school-based arrests. Through this work the school board developed and implemented new policies to address negative behavior in school and reduce their reliance on law enforcement. The District Attorney’s Office works very closely with the Department of Juvenile Services to understand the juvenile population in the system, and through collaboration Jefferson Parish has increased diversion opportunities for youth. This site has examined data closely to identify opportunities for improvement, and is implementing strategies to reduce racial disparities for special detention cases.

**Jefferson site saw a reduction in violations of probation of 38.3% in one year, from 2015 to 2016**

**Reductions in Violations of Probation**



	Jefferson
<b>2015</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>2016</b>	<b>184</b>

**CORE STRATEGY 7: CONDITIONS OF CONFINEMENT**

“Conditions of confinement” refers to the physical environment and operations of detention facilities through a JDAI lens. Across Louisiana, there are 13 juvenile detention facilities. Each facility varies in the quality of its physical plant, overall programming, medical care, and educational opportunities. Through its work with detention reform, JDAI has developed a comprehensive list of facility standards that focus on conditions of confinement. These standards were developed by experts in the fields of adolescent development, juvenile justice, and child welfare. In the Regular Session of the 2010 Louisiana legislature, House Bill 1477 was passed as a continuing effort to improve the juvenile justice system. This bill required that all Louisiana juvenile detention centers be licensed by July 1, 2013, and that licensing should be contingent on facilities meeting a determined set of standards. This bill and the activities that followed demonstrated Louisiana’s commitment to assuring that juvenile detention facilities comport with national best practices. In July 2013, through a difficult and challenging process, 13 of the 14 juvenile detention facilities became licensed to detain youth.

**CORE STRATEGY 8: REDUCING RACIAL & ETHNIC DISPARITIES**



Racial and ethnic disparities (RED) have been the focus of national attention since the addition of disproportionate minority contact (DMC) to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) in 1988 as a fourth core requirement. More recently, RED/DMC has become a priority for many juvenile justice reform initiatives. Organizations like the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the W. Haywood Burns Institute and the Center for Children’s Law and Policy have led the effort to identify causes of

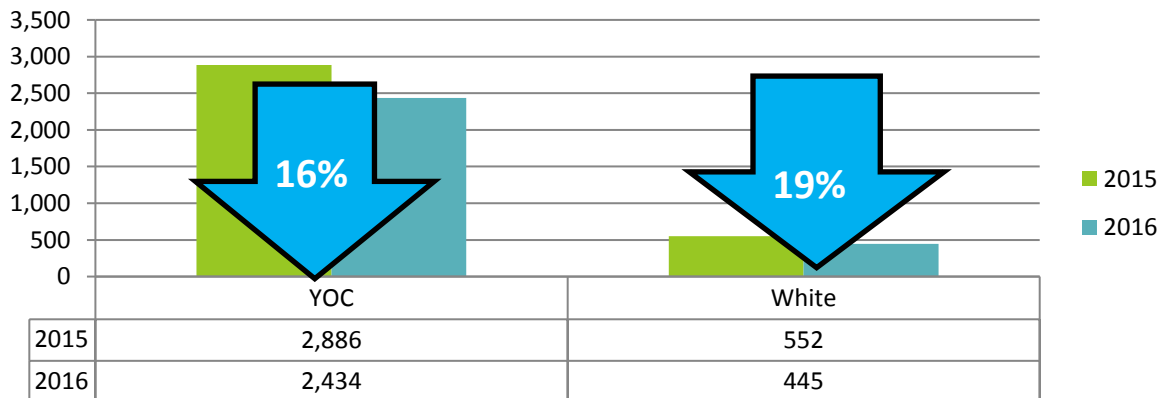
racial and ethnic inequalities within the juvenile justice system.

In Louisiana, the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Advisory Board and Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement have dedicated federal funds to perform a statewide DMC assessment. This four-phase project was performed over several years and revealed significant minority over-representation at several points in the juvenile justice process, as well as disparate treatment for youth of color (YOC) compared to their white counterparts. In response to the results of this assessment, funds were specifically dedicated to projects designed to reduce the penetration of YOC into the juvenile justice system and to develop statewide data systems that utilize common definitions for collecting racial and ethnic data.

Further, jurisdictions participating in the JDAI initiative have focused on identifying and reducing DMC/RED with significant results. The East Baton Rouge site is implementing Annie E. Casey’s Race Equity & Inclusion Training and Policy Review within their DMC committee which will include focus on youth and parents in the system, and/or previous involved families, in order to impact RED.

**Since 2014, Louisiana sites have reduced YOC admissions by 25% or by 814 youth**

**Detention Reductions by Race**



NOTE: Data does not include Orleans 4th quarter data.

However, several challenges persist in reducing DMC/RED. First, reductions in the numbers of minority youth in the juvenile justice system are secondary to overall reductions in arrests. Second, there is a lack of identifiable strategies nationally that have had a *primary* impact on reducing the involvement of youth of color in the juvenile justice system. Lastly, data collection and dissemination continues to be stymied by many roadblocks, such as reluctance to collect racial and ethnic data, a lack of personnel and data collection resources, and a lack of uniform data collection procedures to make data consistently available across the state.

**Recent Achievements**

The Louisiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative sites have produced significant achievements in 2016. Their focus is to continue improving the juvenile justice system and youth outcomes by holding fidelity to the model of JDAI through the eight core strategies. Several of these jurisdictions are

simultaneously developing, enhancing, and sustaining several additional reform activities. For example, Caddo Parish is in the process of implementing a Family Preservation Court, Jefferson Parish is implementing a newly-developed case management system and Calcasieu Parish is in the process of revising their detention visitation policies to include anyone important to a youth’s life and outcomes such as community members or mentors. East Baton Rouge Parish implemented their Family Preservation Court on May 15, 2017, which focuses on parents in CINC (Children in Need of Care) cases, but may include cross-over youth.

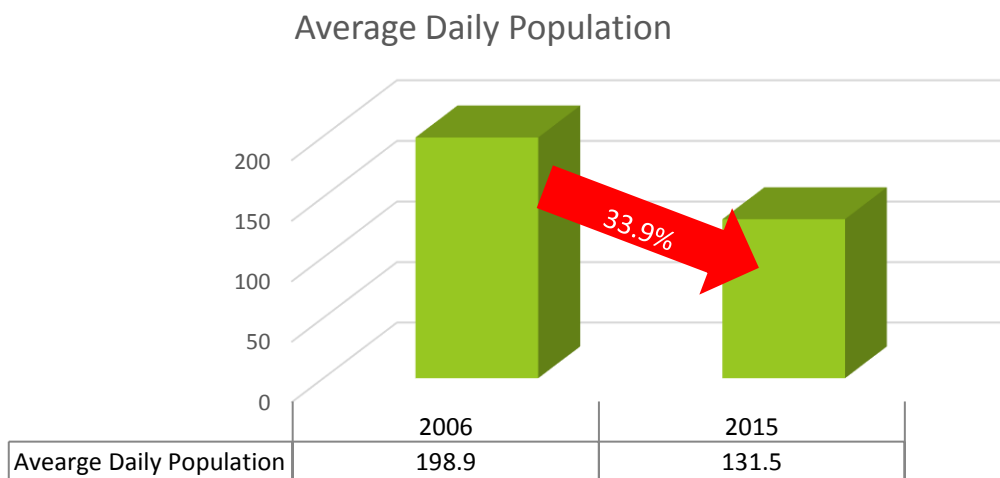
With regard to JDAI achievements, there were several noteworthy achievements in 2016, which are discussed in greater detail below.

**REDUCTION IN RELIANCE ON DETENTION**

Detention utilization is measured by two data elements – detention admissions and average daily population. Both of these elements represent the system’s reliance on detention as a means of inducing changes in youth behavior. However, research has shown that detention stays have detrimental impacts on adolescents, increase the risk of re-offending; as a result, detention should be used only as a last resort. More specifically, detention should only be used when youth are at-risk for failing to appear for court or when they are determined to be a risk to the community.

Since engaging in the JDAI initiative in 2006, Louisiana has seen a 63% overall decrease (1,808 from 4,874 youth) in annual admissions among the JDAI sites (pilot sites only). Although this is partially due to reductions in overall arrests statewide, it still represents reduced reliance on detention. More recently, JDAI sites have continued reducing detention admissions as demonstrated by a 14.6% reduction in detention admissions from 2015-2016.

In addition to reductions in detention admissions, average daily populations (ADP) also show steady declines in the number of youth who are in detention facilities at a given time. The ADP is the average count of youth in the detention center whether short term or long term. The overall reduction for Average Daily Population statewide was 33.9% (67.4 youth) from 2006 to 2016 (see graph below).



## DEVELOPMENT OF STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP COLLABORATIVE

After more than ten years of JDAI participation, Louisiana lacked a collaborative dedicated to the implementation of JDAI across the state. Although the original JDAI sites demonstrated investments in moving their local initiatives forward, there had been a lack of state-level organization and leadership dedicated to expanding JDAI to all juvenile jurisdictions. In May 2016, **House Concurrent Resolution (HCR) 102** was passed to create “the Louisiana Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative Statewide Leadership Collaborative to oversee the process of implementing the core principles and strategies of JDAI statewide.” This legislation created a collaborative structure consisting of key policy-level stakeholders to enhance the use of JDAI core principles across all Louisiana juvenile jurisdictions. It is the goal of this collaborative to extend the use of JDAI practices across Louisiana and to support policies, legislation, and implementation of detention reform. Further, the JDAI Statewide Leadership Collaborative will enhance the state’s ability to reduce reliance on detention and address RED/DMC issues.

## JDAI STATE COORDINATOR

In addition to the development of the JDAI Statewide Leadership Collaborative, a full-time position to coordinate JDAI efforts across the state was created. The duties of this position include providing overall leadership for the JDAI Initiative, and providing technical assistance to existing sites and potential new sites. The Coordinator leads collaboration between all sites, helps identify cross-cutting issues that should be addressed by each site through data, and helps implement strategies that mitigate these issues. The State Coordinator is also essential to facilitate collaboration among different state agencies to address juvenile justice reform from different aspects of the system.

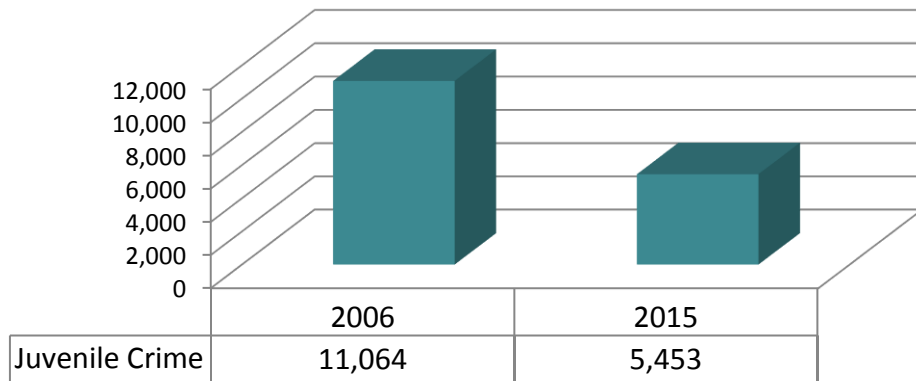
## COMPLETION OF DETENTION SELF-ASSESSMENTS

The implementation of statewide standards for juvenile detention centers created minimum operating conditions for facilities in order to improve the conditions in which youth are detained across Louisiana. In order to go above and beyond the minimum standards, jurisdictions are encouraged to perform self-assessments periodically. Two jurisdictions have focused on self-assessments using the stricter JDAI detention center standards. In the fourth quarter of 2016, Jefferson Parish embarked on an assessment of the conditions of confinement using JDAI standards. The process has been documented in a report entitled, “Jefferson Parish Facility Assessment – 2017”, located at the JDAI Helpdesk (<http://jdaihelpdesk.org/miscellaneous/Forms/DispForm.aspx?ID=2659>). Following suit, Orleans Parish is organizing a facility assessment of the Youth Study Center, which is scheduled to occur in mid-2017.

## IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC SAFETY

Still rooted in former misconceptions about juvenile justice and getting tough on crime from the mid-1990s, some juvenile justice stakeholders initially react to detention reform by citing declines in public safety. Some decision-makers continue believing that detention facilities protect the community and they utilize detention beds accordingly. However, data gathered from across the nation and Louisiana has shown significant reductions in arrests while fewer youth are being detained. Data collected in the JDAI sites in the state, reflect juvenile crime (defined by arrests) has been reduced, as evident in the chart below.

## Juvenile Crime



The decrease has been a 50.7% reduction in juvenile arrests from 2006 to 2015, or, put another way, 5,611 fewer youth have not touched the juvenile justice system since these sites have engaged in the initiative. Some factors we expect contributed to this include the use of Crisis Intervention Training for Youth (CIT-Y), reductions in school-related arrests, improvements to law enforcement policies and procedures, and most importantly forging collaborative relationships in their jurisdictions.

### ENHANCED PROGRAMMING

In addition to these achievements, JDAI sites have been actively engaged in identifying and addressing the needs of special populations. These special populations, as previously mentioned, are those relatively small subsets of youth that constitute a disproportionate amount of detention beds such as youth there for probation violations, awaiting placement, or needs identified by the community.

Beginning in Caddo Parish, their community became concerned about an increasing number of youth who were being trafficked. To combat the high prevalence of juveniles who presented warning signs of being victimized, Caddo Parish Juvenile Services developed a partnership with the District Attorney’s Office and FREE: The Coalition to End Human Trafficking in NW Louisiana to implement human trafficking probation. This innovative program is dedicated to assist teens trafficked for sex and connect them with community services that treat their underlying traumas.

Calcasieu Parish recognized that the detention center needed additional programming to enhance youth empathy and positive responsibility. In 2008, the result was the development of the *New Leash on Life Project* that places rescued dogs at the juvenile detention center. These animals are trained by youth at the facility over the course of four weeks. Since 2008, 110 kids have participated in the program and 85 dogs have been rehomed. The impact of the program is two-fold: youth benefit by learning to train and care for neglected animals and the dogs are rehabilitated and returned back to the community to caring owners.

In East Baton Rouge, the detention center staff, decided to teach the youth a skill they could use upon release. In collaboration with the LSU AgCenter’s *Greaxing School Gardens Project* and Southern University, the program teaches detained youth about gardening through a 30-day program. The voluntary program teaches youth the basics of gardening and provides them with skills to enhance their



interest in gardening. Upon leaving the facility, each participating youth is given a hanging basket, seeds, and potting soil to continue their learning experience.

Jefferson Parish recognized the importance of mindfulness and aerobics on adolescent development, and implemented a yoga program within the detention center. Using volunteer yogis from the New Orleans metropolitan community, yoga is provided to interested youth using various forms of the activity. Detention center administrators and staff report a significant reduction in youth incidents since implementing the Yoga Program.

## Conclusion

There have been significant fundamental changes to the structure and processes that support the juvenile justice system since the JDAI initiative started over a decade ago. Still, we face significant challenges as we move forward and continue to reduce the over-reliance on detention as a method of improving community safety. Instead, focusing on improving youth and family outcomes by inculcating the core principles of JDAI, adolescent development, trauma-informed systems, and multi-system collaboration, to name a few are suggested.

With the implementation of Raise the Age in 2017, it is imperative that Louisiana explore innovative programs and new policies to properly prepare the system for the inclusion of 17 year old youth. JDAI, focusing on the eight core strategies and holding fidelity to the model, is one of the reform initiatives to be both considered and implemented. Another is to begin to explore the expansion of diversion programs and civil citation programs to mitigate arrests and in influx into the juvenile justice system.