

Chapter 9: Examples of Prevention and Diversion Programs in Illinois

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There are numerous programs in Illinois designed to prevent recidivism among juveniles and to divert them from the official juvenile justice system. Some of these programs are described below.

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI): <http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31894>

(Administered by: [Bureau of Youth Services and Delinquency Prevention](#))

“Illinois' programming in the area of detention alternatives has placed the state among the nation's leaders. Illinois' Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) supports local collaborations in their efforts to reduce the use of secure (locked) detention for delinquent youth who do not pose a serious risk to the community. Based on a model founded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, these collaborations typically include judges, state's attorneys, public defenders, probation departments, law enforcement, human service organizations, education agencies, and juvenile detention center staff. Local approaches commonly include the use of detention screening tools; expedited court case processing; day reporting centers; intensive case management; life skills training; community service; and employment preparation.”

Disproportionate Minority Contact

(Administered by: [Bureau of Youth Services and Delinquency Prevention](#))

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“African American youth and, to a lesser degree, Hispanic youth are over-represented in the Illinois juvenile justice System - that is, the proportion of these ethnic minorities who are arrested and/or confined in detention centers or jails exceeds their proportion in the general population. This situation is known as "disproportionate minority contact" with the juvenile justice system, or "DMC." Federal juvenile justice funding comes with a requirement that states demonstrate efforts to reduce the rate of DMC. Illinois has gained national recognition for its innovation in addressing this persistent and exceedingly complex issue, focusing its efforts in four pilot communities - St. Clair and Peoria counties, and the South Suburban and Lawndale community areas of Chicago. Working with the Burns Institute of San Francisco, Illinois has taken a data-driven approach to developing community-driven strategies for reducing DMC.” (see Chapter 9)

Juvenile Justice Program

(Administered by: [Bureau of Youth Services and Delinquency Prevention](#))

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31986>

“The Juvenile Justice Program of the Department of Human Services is a categorical grant program funded pursuant to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (42 USC 5601 et. Seq.) through the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission is a 25-member body established by Illinois statute whose members are appointed by the Governor to plan for and supervise the administration of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act funds. The Department of Human Services serves as the state-level department responsible for administering the activities of the federal funds in partnership with the Commission.

The federal JJDP Act specifies four requirements for those receiving federal funds under the Act:

1. the deinstitutionalization of status offenders ("DSO; status offenses are acts that are law violations only for individuals of juvenile status, including, for example, running away, truancy, liquor law violations);
2. the separation of adults and juveniles in secure institutions (sight and sound separation);
3. elimination of the practice of detaining or confining juveniles in adult jails for more than six hours; and
4. reduction of the disproportionate number of juvenile members of minority groups who come into contact with the juvenile justice system ("DMC," or disproportionate minority contact).

The activities supported with these funds work to address the need, in the state surrounding their core request.”

Redeploy Illinois

(Administered by: [Bureau of Youth Services and Delinquency Prevention](#))

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?item=31991>

“Redeploy Illinois is designed to provide services to youth between the ages of 13 and 18 who are at high risk of being committed to the Department of Corrections. A fiscal incentive is provided to counties to provide services to youth within their home communities by building a continuum of care for youth who are in the juvenile justice system. Counties link youth to a wise array of needed services and supports within the home community, as indicated through an individualized needs assessment. Services are provided in the least restrictive manner possible, and can include case management, court advocacy, education assistance, individual/family/group counseling and crisis intervention.

Every year, hundreds of Illinois teenagers enter the juvenile justice system by engaging in risk-taking and/or illegal behavior. The effect on the lives of these youth is frequently devastating and the cost to the State is enormous. With the creation of Redeploy Illinois in 2004, the Illinois General Assembly set Illinois on a new course of action in meeting the needs of delinquent youth.

Redeploy Illinois, now in the third year of its pilot phase, gives counties the financial support to provide comprehensive services to delinquent youth in their home communities who might otherwise be sent to jail. Research has found that non-violent youth are less likely to become further involved in criminal behavior if they remain in their home communities and appropriate services are available that address underlying needs such as mental illness, substance abuse, learning disabilities, unstable living arrangements and dysfunctional parenting. It has also been demonstrated that it is less expensive than a sentence to corrections. Unfortunately, many counties in Illinois lack the resources to effectively serve delinquent youth locally. A lack of local programs and services plays a significant role in the court's decision to commit a youth to a correctional facility. The funds provided to the Redeploy pilot sites fills the gaps in their continuum of services, allowing them to cost-effectively serve youth in their home communities and reduce the system's reliance on corrections.

This progressive effort to build on the work done in other states such as Ohio and Pennsylvania, which successfully reduced juvenile incarceration rates through similarly structured programs, is paying

off. Data from its first year of operation indicate that the program resulted in savings to the State of over \$2.4 million, and reduced commitments to corrections by an average of 33%. Youth are being successfully treated in their own communities and kept from the devastation of incarceration, saving the State money, reducing the number of crime victims and creating safer communities across Illinois.

Redeploy Illinois has been hailed as a model for the nation in efforts to reduce inefficient and ineffective juvenile justice systems. In a study released in March by the Justice Policy Institute, Redeploy Illinois was cited as an example of the kind of program other states should embrace as a way to reduce prison costs and prevent young offenders from falling into futures dominated by criminal behavior and incarceration.”

All practitioners interested in the welfare of juveniles with problems should cooperate and be familiar with the wide range of programs available in most communities. It is important to remember that the goal of each of these agencies is the same—provide for the best interests of youth. Practitioners must learn to share their expertise with those outside their agency. It is not a sign of failure or weakness to recognize and admit that a particular problem could be dealt with more beneficially by personnel from an agency other than one’s own. Concerned practitioners should provide direct services when it is possible and should not hesitate to make referrals when it is necessary or desirable.

The best way to combat delinquency and child abuse is to prevent them from occurring in the first place. There are several ways to accomplish this goal, including changing juvenile behavior, the rules governing that behavior, or societal conditions leading to that behavior. While the latter probably holds the most promise for success, it is also the least likely to occur.

By establishing good working relationships among schools, families, and juvenile justice practitioners, early detection of serious juvenile problems may be facilitated and proper referrals may be made. Educational and vocational projects, community treatment programs, and the use of volunteers and nonprofessionals show some effectiveness. Recreation, individual and group counseling, social casework, and the use of detached workers may also be effective.

Many juvenile offenses are of a nonserious nature and that the statutes creating these offenses might be changed. We need to assess the necessity or desirability of many statutes and move to change those that serve no useful purpose and those which do more harm than good.

Practitioners are in an excellent position to detect and report types of behavior which, in their experience, frequently lead to the commission of serious delinquent acts. Use of their experiences in combination with well-designed research projects will hopefully lead to modified, more satisfactory theories of causation resulting in greater success.

Preventing delinquency and abuse is more desirable than attempting to rehabilitate delinquents or salvage battered and neglected youth, from an economic viewpoint, from the viewpoint of the juveniles involved, and from society’s viewpoint. Commitment by both government and the private sector will facilitate more effective prevention and lead to the abandonment of ineffective programs.

There are a number of agencies operating programs that complement or supplement juvenile justice programs. Coordinating and organizing these programs to eliminate duplication and increase efficiency has proved difficult. Still, the best way to ensure the welfare of juveniles with problems is to share knowledge through interagency cooperation and referral, and budgetary restraints are currently dictating that this be accomplished.

Review Questions

1. What is the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative in Illinois?
2. Is there any evidence that minorities are disproportionately encountered in juvenile courts in Illinois? If so, what is that evidence?
3. What is the goal of Redeploy Illinois?
4. Does it appear that the State of Illinois places much emphasis on diversion from juvenile court? Why or why not?
5. What role does the Illinois Department of Human Services play in the administration of diversion programs in the state?