JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE

A Successful Approach to Comprehensive Reform

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is a private charitable organization dedicated to helping build better futures for disadvantaged children in the United States. It was established in 1948 by Jim Casey, one of the founders of UPS, and his siblings, who named the Foundation in honor of their mother. The primary mission of the Foundation is to foster public policies, human-service reforms, and community supports that more effectively meet the needs of today's vulnerable children and families. In pursuit of this goal, the Foundation makes grants that help states, cities, and neighborhoods fashion more innovative, cost-effective responses to these needs. For more information, visit the Foundation's website at www.aecf.org.

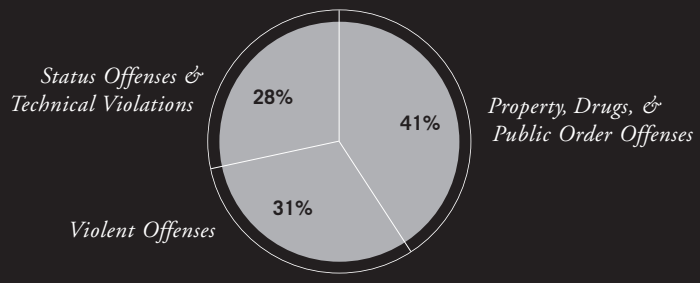
Imagine a model juvenile justice system: one that holds delinquent youth accountable while helping them redirect their lives, that protects communities, saves scarce tax dollars, and locks up only those youth who truly need to be confined. Sadly, in many jurisdictions, the gulf between this ideal and the reality of juvenile justice is far and wide.

Every year, hundreds of thousands of youth are inappropriately or unnecessarily detained in dangerous, overcrowded detention centers, which increases their risk of recidivism, severs fragile ties to families and schools, and costs taxpayers millions of dollars.

Despite sensationalized headlines about isolated incidents, most detained youth are charged with non-violent offenses or rule violations. Detention, which generally occurs *before* a delinquency finding, is intended for youth who pose a significant risk of reoffending or fleeing the court's jurisdiction. But the numbers show that most detained youth do not fall into either of those categories: more than two-thirds are charged with property or public order offenses and/or technical probation violations or status offenses (like running away or breaking curfew).

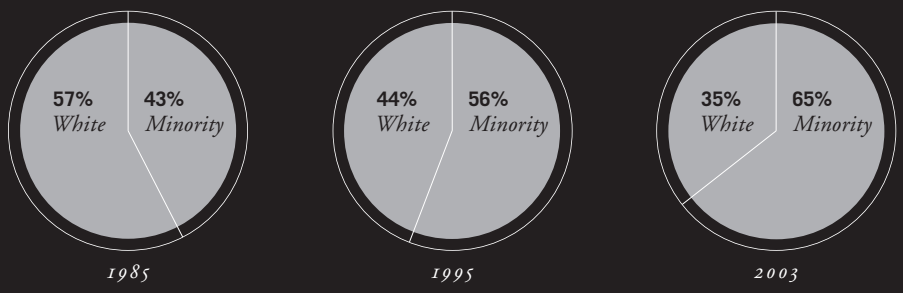
Many youth end up in detention because the system cannot accurately distinguish which youth pose serious risks. Other times, youth are detained because they have frustrated or angered system personnel who want to "teach them a lesson" or "get their attention," or because no parent is available to take them home. Sometimes youth remain detained because system inefficiencies have delayed their cases. Increasingly, kids are detained because

other systems — like schools or mental health — won't or can't provide the appropriate services. These are, at best, highly questionable reasons for putting a youth in a juvenile jail.



U.S. YOUTH IN SECURE DETENTION BY OFFENSE (2003)

Detention is not an equal opportunity program; it disproportionately impacts our most disadvantaged youth and communities. About two-thirds of those detained are youth of color, and virtually all of the increased use of detention in the past 20 years is due to greatly increased rates of detention for African-American and Latino youth.



YOUTH IN DETENTION BY RACE/ETHNICITY (1985–2003)

Needlessly detaining youth harms young people and our communities. Research shows that on average, youth who have been detained work fewer hours for less money for years to come. Most importantly, youth who have been detained are more likely to reoffend than youth who have never been locked up. Ironically, not only does detention cost taxpayers millions of dollars, it also adversely affects crime rates. That's the *bad* news.

The *good* news is that there is a better way, and it's already making a difference in juvenile justice systems across the country. Since 1992, the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) has worked to strengthen juvenile justice systems, make communities safer, help youth, and save tax dollars. JDAI promotes systemwide reform by focusing on a variety of ways to safely reduce reliance on detention, which many consider to be the gateway to the juvenile justice system's "deep end." "Children who are detained, rather than released to their parents or some other kind of program, are statistically much more likely to be incarcerated at the end of the process," said Mark Soler, president of the Center for Children's Law and Policy.

JDAI was designed to demonstrate that jurisdictions could safely reduce reliance on detention, and use those efforts to strengthen juvenile justice systems overall. JDAI has a proven record of success and is spreading across the country. With reform efforts under way in approximately 80 jurisdictions in 21 states and the District of Columbia, JDAI will be operational in those places responsible for almost 75 percent of the country's detained population by the end of 2007.

JDAI works because it engages multiple stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, elected officials, and community representatives, in the search for more efficient and effective programs, policies, and practices that can reduce inappropriate detention, improve public safety, and save money.

"Policy is now made and driven by data, not by fads, not by hunches," said Michael Mahoney, co-chair of the Cook County (Chicago) JDAI steering committee.

Called the "most significant juvenile justice reform effort in decades" by Earl Dunlap, executive director of the National Juvenile Detention Association, JDAI sites have substantially reduced detention and improved public safety by making smarter, more timely decisions; creating new alternatives to secure confinement; and implementing other data-driven policies and practices that establish system accountability for results. According to Hon. John Salazar, former presiding juvenile court judge of Santa Cruz County, "Once you see these other options, you'll never go back."

"THE DAILY DETENTION POPULATION IN OUR FACILITY HAS BEEN GREATLY REDUCED BUT WITHOUT A RESULTANT COMPROMISE IN COMMUNITY SAFETY. IN FACT, JUST THE OPPOSITE: WE HAVE THE LOWEST RATES OF REOFFENSE THAT WE'VE EVER HAD."

AMY HOLMES HEHN, MULTNOMAH COUNTY DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

JDAI's Core Strategies

JDAI is based on interconnected strategies and approaches to promote smarter, fairer, more efficient, and more effective systems. These include:

1

Collaboration
between major juvenile justice agencies, governmental entities, and community organizations.

2

Use of accurate data
to diagnose the system's problems and identify real solutions.

3

Objective admissions criteria and instruments
to replace subjective decisions that inappropriately place children in custody.

4

Alternatives to detention
to increase the options available for arrested youth.

5

Case processing reforms
to speed up the flow of cases so that youth don't languish in detention.

6

Reducing the use of secure confinement for "special" cases
like technical probation violations.

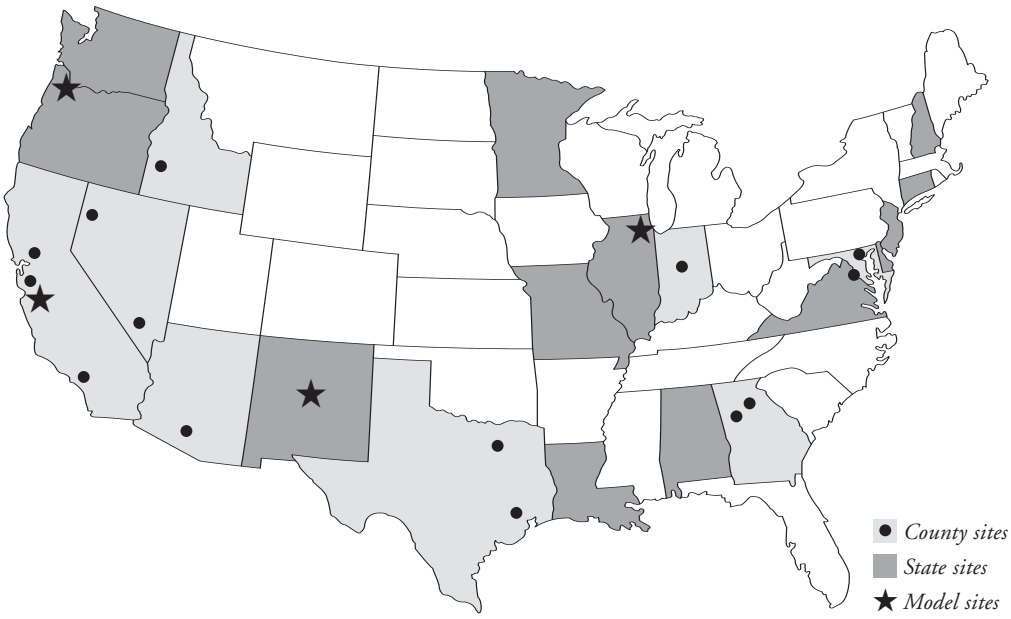
7

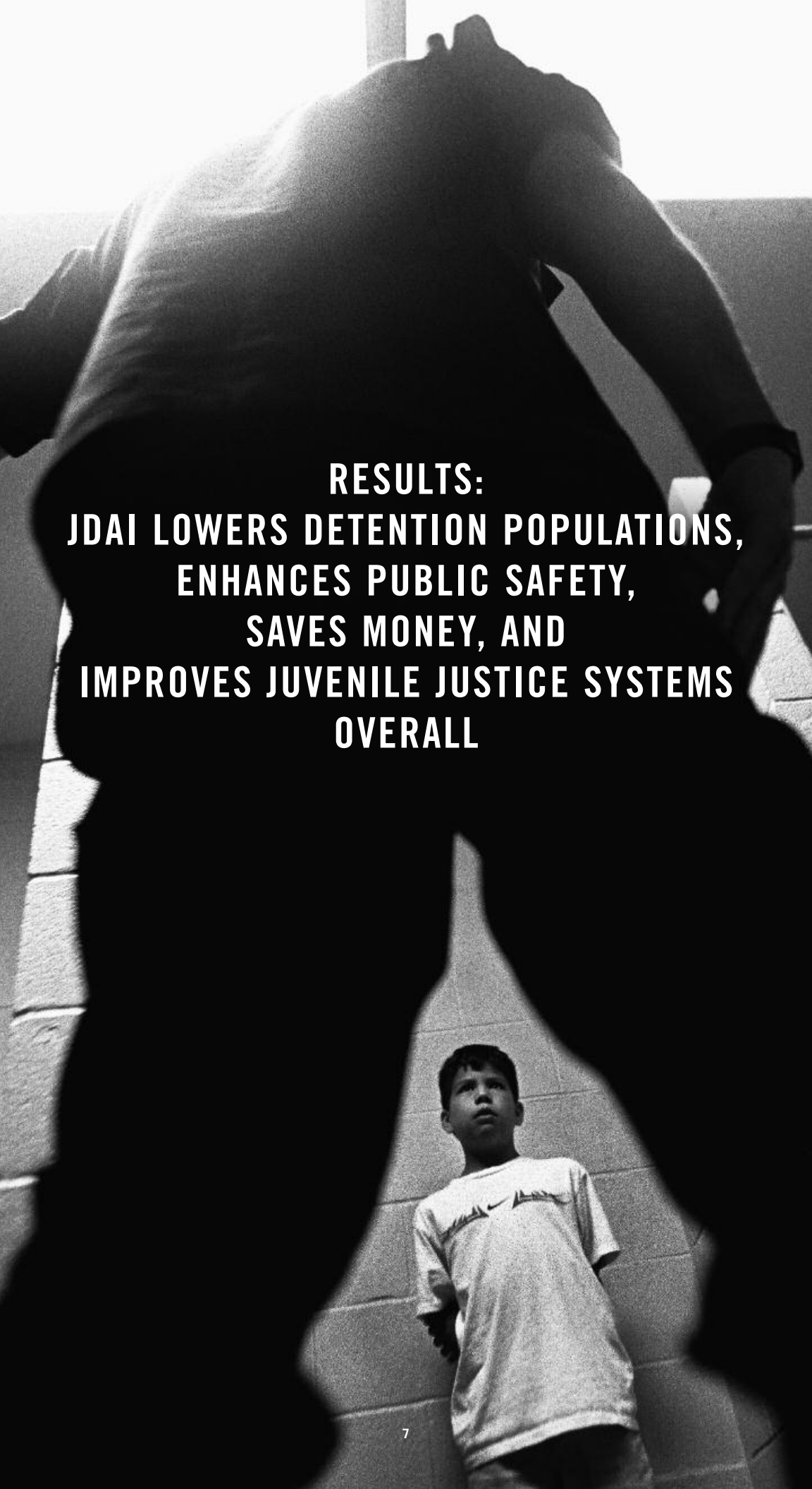
Deliberate commitment to reducing racial disparities
by eliminating biases and ensuring a level playing field.

8

Improving conditions of confinement
through routine inspections.

JDAI Sites 2007





RESULTS: JDAI LOWERS DETENTION POPULATIONS, ENHANCES PUBLIC SAFETY, SAVES MONEY, AND IMPROVES JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS OVERALL

PUBLIC SAFETY IMPROVED

AVERAGE REDUCTION IN THE JUVENILE CRIME INDICATOR
IN THE FOUR JDAI MODEL SITES

By multiple measures, JDAI improved public safety in its model sites. As juvenile detention populations fell in Bernalillo County (NM), Cook County (IL), Multnomah County (OR), and Santa Cruz County (CA), juvenile arrests fell between 37 percent and 54 percent — similar to or larger than those decreases experienced in the rest of the country.

FEWER YOUTH DETAINED

55%

AVERAGE REDUCTION OF THE AVERAGE DAILY DETAINED POPULATION IN THE FOUR JDAI MODEL SITES

JDAI's model sites in Bernalillo, Cook, Multnomah, and Santa Cruz counties all reduced their detained populations substantially. The average daily populations in Multnomah and Santa Cruz counties have been reduced by 65 percent.

TAX DOLLARS SAVED

AMOUNT OF MONEY MULTNOMAH COUNTY REDEPLOYED
OVER A TEN-YEAR PERIOD

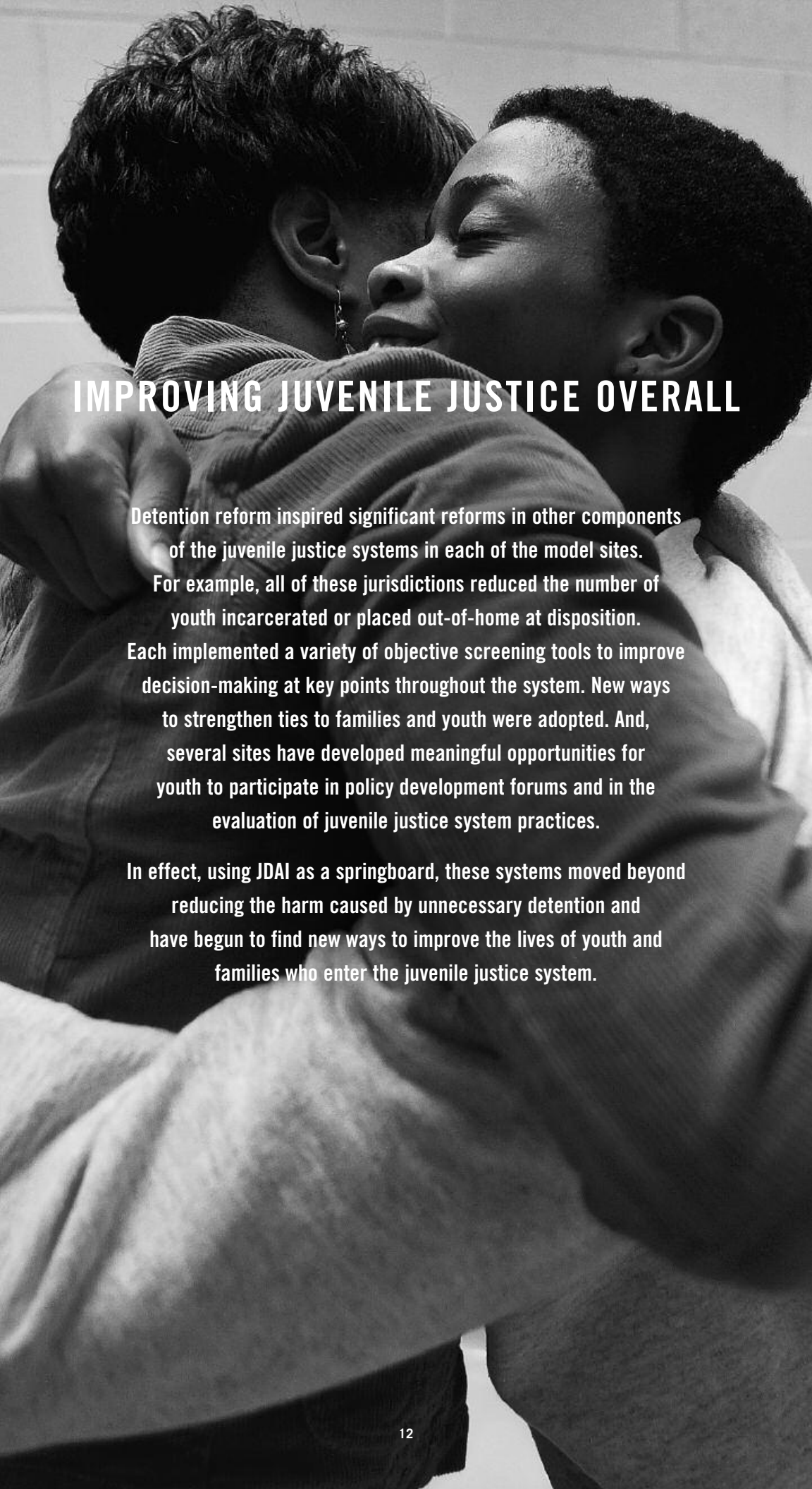
By reducing the use of detention, which is much more expensive than alternative approaches, JDAI saves tax dollars. Pierce County (WA) and Bernalillo County were able to close parts of their detention facilities and reinvest the money into services for youth and families. Cook County will save approximately $240,000,000 over 20 years by avoiding the construction of a detention center, and Multnomah County redeployed more than $17 million over a ten-year period.

DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONFINEMENT REDUCED

58%

REDUCTION IN THE NUMBER OF LATINO YOUTH HELD IN SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S JUVENILE HALL OVER A TEN-YEAR PERIOD

Through various reform policies and practices, like using objective screening instruments and establishing community-based programs, JDAI sites have made measurable progress reducing disproportionality in the use of secure detention. Multnomah County was the first documented jurisdiction to successfully eliminate racial disparities in the odds of detention following arrest. As a result of strategies developed through careful data analyses, Santa Cruz County reduced its average daily Latino population in juvenile hall from 33 to 14 youth over a ten-year period.



IMPROVING JUVENILE JUSTICE OVERALL

Detention reform inspired significant reforms in other components of the juvenile justice systems in each of the model sites. For example, all of these jurisdictions reduced the number of youth incarcerated or placed out-of-home at disposition. Each implemented a variety of objective screening tools to improve decision-making at key points throughout the system. New ways to strengthen ties to families and youth were adopted. And, several sites have developed meaningful opportunities for youth to participate in policy development forums and in the evaluation of juvenile justice system practices.

In effect, using JDAI as a springboard, these systems moved beyond reducing the harm caused by unnecessary detention and have begun to find new ways to improve the lives of youth and families who enter the juvenile justice system.

To learn more about JDAI or to become a replication site, visit JDAI's homepage on the Casey Foundation's website:

www.aecf.org

For access to JDAI's technical assistance help desk, visit:

www.jdaihelpdesk.org

Chart Sources: *U.S. Youth in Secure Detention by Offense (2003),* p. 2, Sickmund, Melissa, Sladky, T.J., and Kang, Wei. (2005) "Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook." www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/cjrp. *Youth in Detention by Race/Ethnicity 1985-2003,* p. 2, Source for 2003 data: Sickmund, Melissa, Sladky, T.J., and Kang, Wei. (2005) "Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement Databook." www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org/ojstatbb/cjrp. Source for 1985 and 1995 data: Census of Public and Private Juvenile Detention, Correctional and Shelter Facilities, 1985–1999. Model site data: pp. 8, 9, 10, 11, reported by individual model sites, summarized in the "Foundation Investment Summary 2007."

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