



Report to the Legislature

**Racial Disproportionality
in the Juvenile Justice System**

**Chapter 415, Laws of 1993
RCW 13.06.050(3)**

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Executive Summary

The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration is charged with the annual responsibility of reporting to the Legislature (Chapter 415, Laws of 1993) progress made toward reducing disproportionate minority confinement in the juvenile justice system.

The focus of this year's report is upon efforts in Washington State to reduce disproportionality through the implementation of evidence-based alternative detention programs and other promising practices outlined in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) funded and administered by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Introduction

The Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration is charged with the annual responsibility of reporting to the Legislature (Chapter 415, Laws of 1993) progress made toward reducing disproportionate minority confinement in the juvenile justice system.

RCW 13.06.050(3) defines elements required from this report to include identification of efforts to reduce disproportionality, evaluating any progress made toward achieving that goal, and recognizing cost-effective programs that reduce disproportionality.

This year's report focuses on the efforts in Washington State to reduce disproportionality through the implementation of evidence-based alternative detention programs and other promising practices outlined in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) funded and administered by the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Progress Made to Reduce Disproportionality

The 2003 Report on Reducing Racial Disproportionality in Juvenile Justice focused on identifying promising practices for reducing disproportionate minority confinement such as the Multnomah Model funded in part by the Annie E. Casey Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI). JDAI is a multi-million dollar grant initiative intended to reduce over-crowding in juvenile detention systems, improve conditions of confinement, and reduce the disproportionate representation of youth of color in that system.

In April 2003 the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (GJACC), JRA, and the Sentencing Guidelines Commission co-sponsored the conference "*Promising Practices for Reducing Disproportionate Minority Confinement of Juveniles.*" Following the conference, GJJAC sought funding opportunities to encourage the reduction of disproportionate minority confinement in detention facilities. They were able to obtain funding through JDAI that offered grants to Pierce and King counties to develop programs to reduce disproportionate minority confinement. Both counties have had successful results.

Noteworthy to the success in both counties has been a long-standing commitment towards addressing disproportional minority confinement. Both counties, for instance, took part in the 2000 Bridges, Anderson-Bond, Bond, Demond study ***Racial Disproportionality in County Juvenile Facilities: 10 Years Experience.*** In 2003-04, by using the grant funding and technical assistance from JDAI, King and Pierce counties have applied a three-tiered model for reducing disproportionality and overcrowding.

1. Both counties have implemented a risk-based detention screening tool to ensure only youth who meet certain criteria are admitted to detention. This process saves admission of youth simply "to keep them off the streets." In King County, this tool is an adjunct to a telephone screening process implemented with law enforcement in 1998-99 to help placement decision-making at the time of arrest. Early testing of the King County risk assessment indicates a more accurate placement determination for youth prior to court appearance. This is

evidenced by an increase in the number of youth placed in alternative detention programs without a concomitant decrease in the number of youth failing to appear in court.

2. Youth who qualify for detention alternative programs (i.e., youth with less severe crimes, stable support systems, and minimal criminal history) are increasingly participating in JRA-funded programs such as Aggression Replacement Training (ART), Multi-Systemic Therapy and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). These programs have been evaluated and found to reduce recidivism in multiple states across the country. JRA's collaborative use of evidence-based programs with Washington counties ensures fewer youth are committed from the courts and fewer youth recidivate or are re-arrested once released from JRA.
3. Both counties have implemented a warrant reduction program. Dan Erker, Pierce County Juvenile Court Administrator describes it as "like the call you get from the dentist." The court ensures each youth and his/her family is sent a notice and receives a phone call reminding them about an upcoming court date. Since starting the program last year, warrants for failure to appear in Pierce County have been reduced nearly 70 percent. King County operates a similar program with studies of its results currently in progress.

The programs being used by Pierce and King counties are part of what is nationally recognized as promising practices with JDAI providing the structure and technical assistance needed to implement these policies. In the first year that Pierce and King counties have been a part of the Annie E. Casey JDAI program, the overall confinement of youth and youth of color has been reduced by over 50 percent. To what extent the reductions are causally related to the JDAI programs will be the focus of study and evaluation during the upcoming year(s).

Pierce and King counties serve the largest percentage of minority youth in the state of Washington. Their collective success in reducing the number of youth locked in secure detentions is significant as it means more youth of color are being treated successfully in less-restrictive programs. Evidence-based services such as FFT and ART target the causal dynamics of juvenile delinquency including family and other community environmental contributors.

JRA leadership in the use of evidence-based programs coupled with our responsibility to oversee funding has strengthened the relationships and consistency of programming between juvenile justice practitioners in Washington State. This leads to Washington tax dollars being spent on programs which work for our youth and their families.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) December 2003 report, ***Recommended Quality Control Standards: Washington State Research-Based Juvenile Offender Programs***, concludes that the use of quality control standards to ensure ongoing adherence to evidence-based models are essential for reducing recidivism and improving cost/benefit returns to Washington citizens. JRA, in partnership with the Washington Association of Juvenile Court Administrators, adopted the recommendations of WSIPP and have implemented a strong quality assurance process into the juvenile court consolidated contract. The Community Juvenile Accountability Act funds program experts who travel to each site, train, and oversee fidelity of evidence-based interventions occurring in each of the counties. We are confident these actions, programs, and collaborations will influence the juvenile justice community in ways that improve program outcomes and reduce disproportionality.