

Effective Strategies For Outreach To Law Enforcement By JDAI Stakeholders



JDAI stakeholders must be strategic in how they reach out to law enforcement personnel and work with them over time.

Make the first contact count

THE RIGHT CONVENER

The initial outreach to law enforcement should come from the *presiding juvenile court judge or another leader of high standing* who has the respect of local law enforcement leaders and a clear commitment to optimizing the justice system for youth.

THE RIGHT MESSAGES

In the initial meeting, JDAI stakeholders should emphasize messages most likely to interest and persuade the local law enforcement leadership.

- The focus should be on demonstrating why partnering with JDAI (or deepening an existing partnership) is *good for youth, consistent with public safety, and beneficial for law enforcement.*
- Law enforcement leaders must understand that *youth are developmentally different than adults and require a different (and less punitive) form of justice*—and they must be made aware of the research showing that arresting and detaining youth is often wasteful and counterproductive.
- In addition, stakeholders should emphasize that *many law enforcement leaders across the country are deeply engaged in JDAI, supportive of its mission and committed to its success.*

Strategically broaden and deepen the JDAI-law enforcement partnership

INVOLVE THE LEA LEADER ON THE JDAI STEERING COMMITTEE

The top leader's continued involvement is important both to demonstrate his or her commitment to JDAI and to ensure that law enforcement is involved in pivotal discussions about key components of the local JDAI effort.

IDENTIFY A STRONG POINT PERSON AND OTHER POTENTIAL JDAI CHAMPIONS

- Law enforcement leaders uniformly recommended that JDAI stakeholders appoint a *commander in the patrol division*—**not** the juvenile division—as their JDAI point person.
- JDAI stakeholders should also seek to engage “lane-crossers”—*respected officers with a track record of working with other public agencies* and with community organizations—to become internal advocates for JDAI within their departments.

FIND OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLAIN JDAI TO PATROL OFFICERS

JDAI stakeholders should seek out opportunities to:

- organize formal in-service training sessions;
- deliver briefings during daily roll call sessions;
- distribute summary sheets with information on detention reform;
- invite officers to visit and tour alternative-to-detention programs.

PROVIDE RELEVANT INFORMATION IN CONCISE PRESENTATIONS

Because law enforcement supervisory and command staff face a time-pressured work environment, JDAI stakeholders should use the brief two-page, fact-filled, data-rich explanations available here to address key law enforcement concerns, including:

- The *research-informed rationale for JDAI* and the evidence that it is safe, effective, and good for public safety.
- Information regarding the *operational procedures, paperwork requirements, and other logistical details* that will be required of officers and command personnel as part of JDAI.

EMPHASIZE AND PROMOTE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES

Law enforcement personnel may resist JDAI based on an understandable but misplaced perception that detention offers the only

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appropriate way to address youth lawbreaking. To shift this perception, JDAI stakeholders should showcase alternatives to detention programs and show officers that *youth placed in alternatives are closely supervised and are often engaged in rigorous programming and/or connected to needed services.*

MAKE TIMELY AND STRATEGIC USE OF DATA

While most law enforcement has become increasingly data-driven in recent years, few law enforcement agencies today routinely examine and analyze juvenile arrest data to identify racial and ethnic disparities, or geographic concentration of arrests in particular neighborhoods.

- In several JDAI sites, new data analyses conducted or inspired by JDAI have sparked *encouraging changes in law enforcement practices* toward youth.
- However, JDAI stakeholders should *be strategic in conducting new data analyses and discussing data trends* on sensitive issues, especially regarding racial and ethnic disparities.

Source Note: All of the tactics and strategies summarized above are described in detail in the chapter of the practice guide entitled, "STAGE ONE: Making (or Restoring) the Initial Connection."