

Building Consensus On The Detention Screening Process



Top law enforcement leaders are almost always included in discussions to craft or revise the detention screening instrument. Too often, however, patrol officers and other law enforcement personnel receive little information about the screening process or detention reform generally. To address this need, JDAI stakeholders should:

Provide orientation and training for law enforcement personnel

Officers at all levels require training to understand the detention screening instrument and the processes for making and implementing the detention decision.

“ It’s important that everyone [in the law enforcement agency] knows that detention is bad, not good, for youth. It’s important for them to know that [JDAI] isn’t just rhetoric. It’s actually improving the numbers, bringing better outcomes [for youth and public safety]. ”

— KURT WOLF, CAPTAIN OF PATROL
LAFAYETTE INDIANA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Solicit and respond to input from patrol officers

Solicit and respond to input from patrol officers on detention screening implementation issues. Law enforcement officers will be more likely to accept and support the detention screening process if stakeholders listen to their views and make changes when appropriate.

“ I got some pushback from some officers initially. But I told them to try it, and then come back to me and tell me how it went... Once they see that it works, they buy in. ”

— TIM CHATTEN, JUVENILE PROSECUTOR
CAMDEN COUNTY, NEW JERSEY

Give officers predictable and timely detention determinations and guidance

Officers will be far more supportive of the objective detention admissions process if the screening process is consistent and case processing expeditious.

“ Instead of us sitting here and babysitting someone for two or three hours trying to get hold of a parent or guardian, it gets our officers back on the road. ”

— DON DIXON, CHIEF OF POLICE
LAKE CHARLES, LOUISIANA

Describing the impact of a new Multi-Agency Resource Center that opened in 2011 to process the cases of youth arrested on status offenses and low-level misdemeanors.