



# Making The Case For Training

Why is it important to train law enforcement officers on adolescent brain development and detention reform? By removing detention as the “go-to” option for law enforcement, Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) inevitably changes the nature of the relationship between youth and law enforcement.

## Creating opportunities for more constructive interactions with youth

Though this shift, JDAI creates an opportunity for a more constructive and relationship-based dynamic between law enforcement officers and youth.

## Progress relies on training

But such progress is unlikely if—lacking training—officers remain:

- uninformed about adolescent development,
- unfamiliar with community services available to support youth with serious mental health or social service needs,
- unaware of the impact of trauma on adolescents and the harmful effects of justice system involvement, and
- untrained in techniques for de-escalating tense situations with youth.

## A more promising strategy

Training offers the most promising strategy available to promote long-term improvement in policing approaches toward youth.

“ Training for law enforcement on differences between youth and adults and appropriate strategies to respond to those differences is crucial to enable better understanding and more constructive interactions between police and youth... In some jurisdictions, officers still receive little or no training beyond juvenile code provisions and other legal considerations regarding the handling of youth. ”

— INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHIEFS OF POLICE

“ My officers receive so much firearms training, and yet they rarely fire a shot. Meanwhile they have multiple contacts each day with juveniles. ”

—CHIEF WILLIAM WEITZEL  
RIVERSIDE ( IL ) POLICE DEPARTMENT