



Media notice

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Franklin County Juvenile Court Continues Community Collaboration Efforts to Improve Juvenile Justice Outcomes

Columbus, OH, February 18, 2021 — In 2015, there were 6,586 juvenile delinquency and unruly cases filed in the Franklin County Juvenile Court. The overwhelming majority (roughly 78%) of the juveniles charged with unruly, truant and delinquent behavior in Franklin County are African American, a minority which represents just 24% of this County. By 2020, this caseload had dropped to 3,412 filings. This dramatic reduction in cases is directly attributable to the steadfast effort of the County’s Juvenile Justice Community Planning Initiative (JJCPI) and its Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), the Court’s collaborative, data-driven approach to address juvenile delinquency, juvenile justice system reform and racial disparities within the juvenile court system.

In 2009, Franklin County led Ohio’s push to join the nationwide JDAI and Deep End Initiative efforts spearheaded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to better develop a comprehensive juvenile justice system reform plan focused on understanding how best to deal



with juvenile crime beyond detention. This effort has resulted in several evidence-based initiatives, including the development of the Court's Reception Center in 2013. Through the Center, Franklin County Juvenile Court can immediately link low and moderate risk youth with programs, services and supervision. The Center allows families to obtain prompt services, rather than waiting several weeks to appear before a magistrate to begin the community accountability process.

More recently, Franklin County Juvenile Court has expanded its diversion services to include a project that allows for 24-hour intervention via police referrals directly to the Court's Juvenile Community Enrichment Services (JCES) Department. Further, the Court has developed a Misdemeanor Services Unit to afford youth charged with misdemeanors immediate, specialized services, case management and/or community supervision. This allows these youth to remain in the community while their behaviors are addressed in a comprehensive manner. JCES represents the Court's redesigned felony-level probation services department which has been engineered to focus on community engagement and the positive development of court-involved youth. Lastly, the Court would note that it employs a detention screening instrument (DSI) for every youth facing detention. The DSI is a questionnaire designed by the JJCPI to assess risk to the community pending hearing. Certain charges, such as first- or second-degree felony charges, active warrants, violations of EMD, gun possession, escape from custody or felony assault on a police officer, result in youth being *automatically held* pursuant to the DSI.



These initiatives operate in collaboration with our JJCPI community partners, which include: *Columbus Division of Police, Franklin County Prosecutor's Office, Franklin County Public Defender's Office, Columbus City Schools, ADAMH, Franklin County Children's Services and Franklin County Job and Family Services.* Their purpose is to implement interventions aimed at addressing juveniles in the early stages of problematic behavior, engaging youth in pro-social activities and building skills to reduce delinquent and unruly behaviors.

Our communities should be weary of recent demands calling for the deleterious and unnecessary detention of predominately African American youths and others residing in lower income areas of the county. These propaganda efforts smack of the widely debunked "Super Predator" myths of the 1990s. And every juvenile crime statistic available suggests that the juvenile justice reforms implemented since that time have been more effective than the "tough love" approach suggested by less learned stakeholders.

https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/snapshots/DataSnapshot_UCR2019.pdf

Instead, this Court will continue to engage its community partners to address delinquent behavior in the youth of our community while producing fair, equitable and just results for the communities we serve.