



A CAMPAIGN OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE & DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COALITION

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FACT SHEET: COMMUNITY-BASED AND HOME-BASED ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION

What are community-based and home-based alternatives to incarceration?

Community-based and home-based alternatives provide youth with needed supervision and services outside of locked facilities. These programs are designed to protect public safety while avoiding the harmful outcomes for youth often associated with detention and incarceration.

As defined in the JJDPa, **community-based programs and services** are small group homes or other suitable places located near the juvenile's home or family that provide needed services. **Home-based alternative services** are programs that serve youth in their own homes instead of incarceration or other out-of-home placements.

What are some common types of community-based alternatives?

Most States allow youth to be detained before a hearing if they may commit new offenses or if they may not appear in court. **Pre-hearing alternatives to detention** ensure that youth comply with conditions of release, do not commit new crimes, and appear in court.

- **Evening reporting centers** operate immediately after school until 9 or 10 PM and allow youth to complete homework, learn life skills, participate in community service, receive meals and have recreation time. Staff members monitor school attendance and performance, stay in contact with parents, and provide transportation to and from the center.¹
- **Home detention** programs require youth to live at home under curfews. Agency staff visit youth in their homes, schools and other settings - sometimes several times a day - to ensure they are complying with release requirements, including school attendance and behavior, curfew, drug abstinence and other expectations. Some home detention programs incorporate electronic monitoring.²
- **Short-term shelter care** is for youth who are not a danger to the community but cannot return home because it is unsafe or adequate supervision will not be provided.³ Typically, these cases are best handled through the child welfare system rather than the juvenile justice system, but shelters can provide temporary care in these situations.

After a youth is adjudicated delinquent, courts determine the services youth need for rehabilitation. **Community-based alternatives to secure placement** allow youth to stay close to home and allow their families to be more involved in their rehabilitation. For example:

- **Multisystemic Therapy (MST)** is for serious youth offenders. In MST, a therapist visits the youth's home and other places where the youth is involved in the community, and is available to the family 24/7. MST works with families to address underlying causes of delinquency, such as improving families' communication, increasing the youth's positive peers and recreational activities, and improving school or vocational performance. Therapists also help youth and their families develop a support network to achieve and maintain such changes.⁴ MST has been shown to decrease recidivism up to 70% as well as achieving other positive outcomes.⁵
- **Functional Family Therapy (FFT)** is a short-term, family-based intervention of up to 30 hours of therapy focused on family communication, parenting skills, and conflict management skills.⁶ FFT has been shown to reduce recidivism between 25% and 60%.⁷

What provisions currently exist in the JJDPa regarding community-based alternatives and how should these provisions be strengthened?

The JJDPa currently allows states to use their federal juvenile justice grant program funds on community-based and home-based programs.

In order to reduce unnecessary use of incarceration, the federal government should provide States with more information on effective community-based programs. States should construct plans to make community-based and home-based alternatives available to the right youth.

- OJJDP should be required to collect data, share information and provide technical assistance on adoption of evidence-based and promising community-based and home-based programs.
- States should be required to include in the plans they submit to OJJDP specific information about how they will use community-based and home-based services to address the needs of at-risk youth and youth who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Why are these changes needed?

The unnecessary use of secure detention separates youth from the communities and families most invested in their success. Detention profoundly and negatively impacts young people's mental and physical well-being, their education and their employment.⁸

Case studies:

- In a recent study, the **South Carolina** Department of Youth Services youth provided MST services had a 20% lower rate of recidivism than youth who received traditional services from the Department.⁹
- In **Santa Cruz, CA**, juvenile justice officials worked with community service providers to create culturally competent detention alternatives including an evening reporting center. The County significantly reduced its overrepresentation of Latino youth in secure detention.¹⁰

¹ DeMuro, *Consider the Alternatives*, pp. 19-21.

² DeMuro, *Consider the Alternatives*, pp. 15-19.

³ DeMuro, *Consider the Alternatives*, pp. 21-23.

⁴ See <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/modelprograms/MST.html>; and http://www.mstservices.com/executive_summary.php.

⁵ See <http://mstservices.com/text/research.html>.

⁶ See http://www.strengtheningfamilies.org/html/programs_1999/01_FFT.html.

⁷ See <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints/modelprograms/FFT.html>.

⁸ Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg, *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities*, Justice Policy Institute, November 2006, p.2.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ See http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Docs/Documents/JDAI%20Model%20Sites/Santa%20Cruz%20County/18.0_Addressing%20Disproportionate%20Representation.pdf.