



JDAI

Juvenile Detention
Alternatives Initiative

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Community Based Alternatives to Detention (ATD) Pilot Summary

In March of 2009, the **Ramsey County Board of Commissioners** provided funding for two types of alternatives to detention

- 1) **Evening Learning Centers (ELC)**; and
- 2) **Community Coaches (CC)**

to be considered as primarily a post-dispositional alternative response. Alternatives to Detention (ATDs) are part of Ramsey County's effort to reduce the over reliance on detention and the disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in its juvenile justice system, while maintaining public safety, and promoting positive youth development. These efforts were implemented and fostered through the county's engagement of the **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI)** and recommended by the Detention Alternatives Committee.

ATD Sites Identified and Youth Studied

The pilot project began in late spring of 2009. Two sites were selected based on data showing zip code areas where most youth admitted to detention resided. The data collected demonstrated that a large percentage of youth that intersect with the juvenile justice system resided in zip codes 55104 and 55106, and comprised African American males predominantly. These zip codes and population were chosen as the target areas and focus group for this pilot.

- Model Cities Inc. was selected as the ELC site serving youth primarily residing in zip code 55104, also known as Frogtown/Selby Dale neighborhoods.
- Cultural Wellness Center and 180 Degrees Inc. (in partnership) were selected as the ELC site serving youth residing in the city's East Side zip code 55106
- Model Cities Inc. was also selected as lead agency for the Community Coach ATD.

These organizations were selected for their strong ties to the communities in which they operate, remarkable services to families and youth, and for incorporating culturally specific programming within their service delivery.

Evening Learning Centers:

- Operated Monday through Friday from 4pm to 8:30pm
- Provided structured group programming
- Required approximately 30 days or sessions

Community Coaches:

- Worked with youth individually
- Addressed specific needs of youth not possible through the ELC's
- Engaged youth from 4-6 weeks and had a minimum 3 contacts per week

Participants in the pilot project met the following criteria:

- Primarily males
- ages 13 -17 years
- typically on probation

- at risk of a probation violation that would result in detention or long-term placement
- Reside in target zip codes 55104 and 55106.

There were three expected outcomes for youth:

1. **No probation violations while participating in the ATD;**
2. **No new offenses while participating in the ATD;**
3. **No failure to appear for their next court date.**

Operational outcomes for youth include:

- Provide least restrictive setting
- Preserve and value the youth’s family network
- Engage youth in pro-social activities
- Provide homework support and enrichment
- Target criminogenic needs based on Youth Level Service Inventory and Case Management Inventory

Key Results

Ramsey County maintained results of youth participating in alternatives to ensure programs were effective and to determine areas upon which to improve elements of the ATD’s. The following sections briefly describe the results seen in our Evening Learning Centers and Community Coach ATD’s.

Participant Characteristics

A **total of 279** youth were served in the Community based ATD’s between **April, 2009 and March 31, 2011**. Participants averaged **16.5 years** of age, were predominantly male (96 percent), and predominantly African American (92 percent). The remaining populations were Hmong/SE Asian (3%), Hispanic (3%), and White (2%). The average length of attendance in the Evening Learning Center was 37.6 days programs. The average length of stay in the Community Coach ATD was 42.5 calendar days.

Evening Learning Centers – Community Based ATD

The ELC’s provided structured group based programming and activities Monday – Friday from 4pm – 8:30pm, and operated 52 weeks per year. The Evening Learning Centers delivered a combined total of 1,080 days of program days, including case management services for **164 youth and their families** during this pilot project. Presently the ELC is a 30 day program where the average length of stay is 37.6 days. **Success rate** for youth participating in ELC is **88%**.

Community Coach Program – Community Based ATD

The Community Coach ATD provided services for **115 youth and their families**. There were **104 males** and **11 females** served. On average, youth and families received **24 hours of direct service** time with a Community Coach. The success rate for youth participating in the Community Coach **ATD is 86%**. Feedback from parents, youth, and Probation Officers has been extremely positive. Community Coaches were originally targeted to serve male youth residing in zips codes 55104 & 55106. However, because the Community Coaches are the most flexible ATD in terms of geography, in January 2010 the ATD began accepting youth throughout Ramsey County. In October 2010 Model Cities hired 2 female Community Coaches and began accepting referrals for females. The ATD has been operating at full capacity serving 10 youth per month.

Program Service Referrals & Delivery:

Community Based ATD’s’s received nearly 300 referrals from over 40 probation officers. These alternatives to detention:

- Located paid work experience or internships for 10 youth;
- Helped 6 youth gain part time employment;
- Exposed 44 youth to business & entrepreneurship opportunities;

- Enabled 8 youth to receive a **Customer Service Certification** from St. Paul College;
- Ensured 40 youth joined the Boys and Girls Club;
- Provided health awareness;
- Equipped nearly 200 youth with life skills and personal development training; and
- 244 of 279 youth (**87%**) **were successful** and had **no further involvement** with the **juvenile justice system** while enrolled in the pilot project;

Monthly Meetings:

The Community Based ATD collaborative was built on a partnership between Ramsey County Community Corrections and three very experienced, committed youth-serving agencies. Through coordination, meetings and trainings, staff benefited from the experience, expertise and perspectives of their colleagues by sharing programming tips, exchanging 'best practices' information, learning about new issues impacting youth, and making recommendations for program growth and modification. The monthly meetings included Ramsey County Community Liaison, Probation Officers, Supervisors, JDAI/DMC Supervisor, and ATD Program Staff from community based organizations. As a team of individuals they worked to enrich and improve the lives and futures of program participants. . These meetings were extremely beneficial. As a result, the partners have agreed to continue these meetings after the pilot project is completed.

The Community Based ATD pilot has proven to be an especially promising initiative.

Below is one example of how this pilot project assisted one youth and his family.

Client Profile” Morris (Not his real name) Community Coach ATD Success Story

At 16 years old, Morris quickly found himself at Ramsey County’s Boy’s Totem Town after being arrested and charged with aggravated armed robbery.

He was granted a conditional release while his case was pending at which time he became involved with the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) Community Coach program. Morris was matched with a Community Coach to work with him on an individual basis. The Community Coach was assigned to help him achieve his goals of returning to school, finding a job, and becoming involved in pro-social activities.

Mr. Esaw, a Community Coach, felt Morris had been searching for a positive male role model. Esaw was able to visit Morris at school, connect with his teachers and counselors, in an effort to hold Morris accountable and take ownership over his education. Esaw admits that it was challenging in the beginning but that Morris’s attendance began to improve. The two worked on improving Morris’s social skills, such as how to conduct oneself in a mature and responsible manner, deal with problems, and how to respectfully interact with authority figures. Mr. Esaw helped Morris enroll in summer school courses. He also connected him to opportunities such as job training, college preparation workshops, sexuality education, and business dinner etiquette courses.

After 30 days, Morris returned to court, with Esaw by his side, to meet his fate regarding the aggravated robbery case. Morris pled guilty to a lesser charge and was court ordered to remain on intensive juvenile probation, complete community service hours, and to continue working with Mr. Esaw in the JDAI program. Mr. Esaw reported that he began to see significant changes in Morris once he became involved with the Summer Squad, a Youth Enrichment Services summer program. Morris became a role model for the younger kids and employed the skills he had been working on with Mr. Esaw. Morris attended the group on a regular basis throughout the summer and looked forward to working with the younger kids in order to help them succeed. Although Morris is no longer on his caseload, Mr. Esaw says it is not uncommon for him to get a call from Morris just to keep him updated on the current events in his life. Morris is now in his senior year of high school, expects to graduate with a diploma, and enroll in barber school next fall. He is currently off of juvenile probation.