

What programs comprise the Council of Juvenile Court Judges?

Court Case Management System (JCATS)

The Council maintains a contractual partnership with Canyon Solutions of Phoenix, Arizona. Canyon has developed a juvenile case management system known as JCATS (Juvenile Case Activity Tracking System). JCATS offers various platforms which are capable of serving the needs of the smallest to the largest of Georgia's counties. The Council offers a cloud-based version of JCATS, which is free of charge to any Georgia Juvenile Court. In addition, several larger Georgia counties have upgraded to their web based version of JCATS, for a fee.

Although the Council does not mandate any specific case management system, the combined JCATS counties represent more than 82% of annually reported juvenile court cases. This has allowed the Council to maintain a data repository currently containing statistical case data from all the JCATS counties with the eventual goal of adding most, if not all, Georgia counties regardless of their individual case management programs. For additional information about JCATS in Georgia, please contact Council staff member Benita Brown.

Judicial Citizen Review Panel Program

Judicial Citizens' Review Panel staff provides training, support and technical assistance to juvenile court judges and judicial citizen review panels.

During fiscal year 2017, JCRP staff assisted with approximately 205 citizen panels in 60 counties. In these 60 counties, an estimated 7,000 children were in foster care homes or in institutional placements. Case reviews are carried out by judicial citizen review panels minimally every six months. The goal of a judicial citizen review panel is to ensure, if at all possible, reunification of the child with the parents. If reunification is not an option, the panels work with the Department of Family and Children Services, the court, and other agencies to identify other permanency options. Approximately 1,230 citizen volunteers served on panels statewide during the past year. Panel members are appointed by their local juvenile court judge and trained by Council staff. There are currently nine Council field representatives who provide technical assistance to the local judicial citizen review panels. The total number of staff reviews in 2017 was approximately 5,200.

During the past few months, additional counties have inquired about the program and hope to establish judicial citizen review panels in their counties. If any county is interested in discussing the possibility of having panels, please contact Robert Bassett at the Council's office.

Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) began as a multi-year, multi-site demonstration project initiated by the Annie E. Casey foundation in 1993. It was designed to assist selected juvenile justice agencies in making systematic changes to juvenile detention practices. The initiative focused on issues of detention utilization and the development of strategies to reduce reliance on secure detention. It advocated the

use of structured screening tools and well-structure programs that could serve as alternatives to secure detention. It also offered ways of examining and addressing issues such as minority over-representation and conditions of confinement in detention. Currently, JDAI is operating and effective in more than 250 counties nationwide and is spread across 39 states and the District of Columbia.

Based on the experiences in the initial JDAI sites, the Annie E. Casey Foundation produced 'Pathways to Juvenile Detention Reform' which is comprised of eight core, interconnected strategies that are used to not only address the primary reasons why youth are unnecessarily or inappropriately detained, but more appropriately used to accomplish the goals, missions and objectives of JDAI:

1. Collaboration
2. Data Driven Decisions
3. Objective Admissions
4. Alternatives to Detention
5. Expedited case Processing
6. Special Detention Cases
7. Reducing Racial Disparity
8. Conditions of Confinement

It is necessary that all core strategies be intentionally and effectively applied in order to achieve maximum results in reduction of detention populations.

In 2014, the Criminal Justice Reform Council recommended to Governor Deal that the state of Georgia pursue state scale expansion of JDAI and on July 29, 2015, Governor Nathan Deal appointed juvenile justice stakeholders from around the state to the Georgia JDAI State Steering Committee. This committee voted on the first cohort of counties for possible JDAI expansion. Each county will undergo a 2-part JDAI assessment and implementation. As a valued stakeholder, we will be sending out information to familiarize you with the initiative and our upcoming assessment. You can also find this information at www.jdaihelpdesk.org. The most helpful tab with a vast amount of information is the "Library" tab.

The JDAI 2-Part Assessment and Site Implementation

JDAI implementation consists of a 2-part assessment process. Step 1 is the Readiness Assessment. This readiness assessment provides detailed information on the eight core strategies of JDAI. It assesses the enthusiasm of the group of stakeholders and answers any and every question they may have. The readiness assessment also shows why and how JDAI implementation works allowing stakeholders to view statistics and real numbers from the across the country. Because the Readiness Assessment is the initial meeting of the key stakeholders in the county, it also outlines the goals, strategies, and results of JDAI, there will be a System Assessment.

Several counties have already held their Readiness Assessments and System Assessments.

The System Assessment is where the Foundation provides representatives including the Georgia JDAI State Coordinator and a Technical Assistance Provider from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to come in and conduct individual interviews with each stakeholder of the county. Prior to this, we provide data in which the state coordinator will review and determine if there are disproportionalities. If so, these will be addressed in our reconvening following the system assessment and will be incorporated into our work plan when we kick off our JDAI initiative. The reconvening follows from the actual System Assessment report that will be drafted following all interviews. This report contains factual information compiled from all individual interviews, along with recommendations. When all stakeholders have reviewed the report, we have our final reconvening meeting then followed by the site implementation and kick-off.

If you have any further questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact the Georgia JDAI State Coordinator: Whitney Dickens, wdickens@cjcfjofga.org, 404-657-5027.

Children In Need of Services (CHINS)

On January 1, 2014, the State of Georgia adopted an updated juvenile code which includes a new case type called Child in Need of Services (CHINS) found in Article 5 of the code beginning at O.C.G.A. 15-11-380. The legislative purpose is:

1. To acknowledge that certain behaviors or conditions occurring within a family or school environment indicate that a child is experiencing serious difficulties and is in need of services and corrective action in order to protect such child from the irreversibility of certain choices and to protect the integrity of such child's family;
2. To make family members aware of their contributions to their family's problems and to encourage family members to accept the responsibility to participate in any program of care ordered by the court;
3. To provide a child with a program of treatment, care, guidance, counseling, structure, supervision, and rehabilitation that he or she needs to assist him or her in becoming a responsible and productive member of society; and
4. To ensure the cooperation and coordination of all agencies having responsibility to supply services to any member of a family referred to the court.

The purpose of CHINS is to deter neglect, child abuse, and delinquency by creating a comprehensive system of support that focuses not only on intervention, but also on prevention. CHINS provide support and services to at-risk youth and their families to help divert them from the path of child welfare and/or court intervention to a healthier and more productive path in life.