



State of the Initiative

JDAI National Inter-site Conference
April 18, 2017

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Good morning. Welcome, everyone. I hope you enjoyed last night's celebration of JDAI's first 25 years. Who could have guessed that all of this could emerge from what started out as such a small experiment?

But today we switch gears. I want to talk to you about JDAI's next 25 years, and about some changes we're pursuing in JDAI right now.

Now as you can imagine, a conference like this takes a lot of time – and months of planning. It was one of many pieces of work on my plate and on my mind as we headed into the holidays in December.

This year, I wanted to truly put work on the shelf over the holidays and not think about juvenile justice at all.

So I did a lot of fun things with my kids. I started reading Bruce Springsteen's autobiography. I bought a new guitar, which I assume is what at least a third of people do while reading Springsteen's autobiography.

But then I started to read a different book — a gift from my brother — entitled *But What if We're Wrong – Thinking About the Present as if It Were the Past*.

Now, if this sounds to you like a book of great philosophy, don't worry. The author, Chuck Klosterman, is no Kierkegaard. He's a music and pop-culture critic who has spent pages and pages in his career comparing 1980s metal bands.

Anyway, the book, *But What if We're Wrong?*, takes the old prognosticator's challenge and turns it on its side. Instead of trying to predict what the future will bring, it explores how people of the future will look back on today.

Might future generations judge the greatest artist of our era, or the greatest writer, to be someone we've never heard of, or regard poorly – like Vincent van Gogh, who died penniless and alone.

For me, the most interesting part of the book explored which widely accepted “truths” of today — which pieces of conventional wisdom that we don't even think to second guess — will future generations look back on and laugh at? Or condemn?

To my chagrin, I didn't get past page two before my mind was on JDAI. What were JDAI's pioneers thinking 25 years ago? What will we all think 25 years from now when we look back on juvenile justice in 2017?

So think along with me: What were the truths of the juvenile justice world back in the early to mid-1990s when Casey launched JDAI?

At that time, people across the political spectrum believed that kids were getting more and more violent at younger and younger ages, and that crime was going up and would continue to go up. News magazines warned of a new generation of imagined juvenile super predators while TV networks projected frightening images of out-of-control black and brown boys on the nightly news.

Not quite everyone, but the solid majority in both political parties just *knew* that the only sensible response to these trends was to get tougher, to try more and more youth as adults, to open boot camps and subject youth to a heavy dose of tough love, except often without the love part.

Most people accepted that our schools were increasingly unsafe and required zero tolerance school discipline. And let's not even talk about how we treated LGBT kids in 1992 or in 2002 or 2012 for that matter.

But before we get too superior in judging our predecessors in the early 1990s, take another step back to think about the juvenile justice world that existed 25 years before them in the late 1960s.

Back then, juvenile courts didn't think twice about shipping kids off to "reform school" for mere status offenses. Twenty percent of all confined boys in those days and 70 percent of all confined girls — 70 percent! — had not been adjudicated for any crime.

Meanwhile, until things started to change with the Supreme Court's *Gault* decision in 1967, which celebrates its 50th anniversary next month, kids in juvenile court had virtually no due process rights — no advance notice of charges, no rules of evidence, no right to counsel, no right to confront witnesses and no right to appeal.

The *Gault* case, by the way, involved a 15-year old Arizona boy sentenced to six years in correctional custody for making a lewd phone call.

And that was normal 50 years ago. Just like passing zero tolerance and adult time for adult crime laws were normal 25 years ago. And the question that haunts me, and might haunt many of you, is which aspects of our system today, which of our current practices, will look equally ridiculous to our successors 25 years from now.

To be clear, this question haunts me not because I'm afraid how we'll be judged down the road. It's not about us. It's about the communities and kids we serve. And how critically important it is to get it right.

What I hope unites us as a network is a belief that every young person deserves a bright future, no matter what they've done. Or as one of our former youth advisory council members put it to me last year: staff working with kids need to believe that every young person can succeed. What I hope unites us — in direct contrast to the dehumanizing labeling and lumping in the 1990s — is the understanding that young people have their own unique stories, their own hopes and their own hurts. And the decisions we make — for better or worse — have an outsized impact on their futures.

You're going to see two short films at the conference — one today and one tomorrow — sharing the stories of Aurelia, whose photo is here, and De'Jon, whose photo and quote you just saw. My hope is that, more than anything else, when you watch their stories you connect with the fundamental JDAI message that *our* decisions matter and matter deeply.

So as I thought about 25 years ago and 50 years ago in the context of JDAI today, it reinforced my budding conviction that our initiative has reached a pivotal crossroad.

JDAI started as a sort of a crazy pipedream, a cry for sanity in the midst of what can

only be described as a national hysteria over youth crime. JDAI showed that you really could reduce confinement, and do so safely. JDAI proved this by applying smart rather than tough justice. Several innovations inspired by JDAI — things like objective risk screening, graduated response and evening reporting centers — went from attractive concepts to experimental reforms to best practices — and finally to common every day industry practices.

Those are awesome accomplishments. They should make all of us proud.

But they also raise the question: what's next for JDAI?

We can't just run in place, keep doing what we've been doing. That wouldn't be a wise investment for the Foundation and, more importantly, it would be out of step with the audacious, disruptive spirit of JDAI.

I guess the Casey Foundation could hang up our spikes, declare victory and move on to other issues. But as you heard from Patrick last night, Casey cares deeply about juvenile justice — it is at the core of who we are as a philanthropy — and we're not about to walk away.

The best option is to roll up our sleeves and find new ways to accelerate the pace of progress. In other words, step it up. We need to work today with the same urgency that the pioneers of JDAI did back in 1992.

We need to make the next 25 years of JDAI live up to the legacy achieved in the first 25.

That's why we've challenged JDAI sites to *do better* in implementing JDAI's eight core strategies. We challenged you to *innovate and go deeper* in your reforms and to take concrete steps to ensure that progress achieved through JDAI is *sustained* over time.

I stand here today to tell you that this isn't just rhetoric. We mean it. I mean it. Today I want to talk to you about some significant steps we at Casey are taking to put this new urgency into practice, And I want to talk to you about how the actions we — the JDAI network — take now can help move us and move the whole juvenile justice field toward the kind of future we would hope to see 25 years from now.

First, though, let's review the current state of JDAI. The State of the Initiative is the title of my speech, after all.

As you will see in the new annual results report, the overall health of the initiative remains strong. The number of participating counties nationwide has surpassed 300.

Average daily detention populations are down 43 percent. This means that our sites used 1.4 million fewer detention days in 2016 than in the baseline years before entering JDAI. Annual admissions to detention have fallen by 90,000. Commitments to state custody are down 57 percent. Public safety outcomes also remain robust.

This is all great news, of course. But it's also old news. Because many of these gains were achieved roughly from 2002 to 2012 when JDAI experienced a decade of phenomenal growth and progress.

Now I don't want to sound like Janet Jackson and ask "so what have you done for me lately?" I know that all of you bust your butts every day. And I know that many sites, new and old, are making great strides. But it's my job to look broadly at the entire initiative.

So here's what the data tell us about JDAI's results in the last five years. Growth in site replication has slowed. Progress in going to scale within states has been modest in most places. And most notably, detention populations trends have flattened somewhat.

I see this slowdown as a sign of JDAI reaching maturity, solidifying its transition from a renegade, against-the-grain reform idea to the standard for detention practice nationwide. But this transition does require us to take a hard look at what's happening in JDAI sites right now.

And we've begun to do that in this year's results report. In the report we talk about two key measures: IMPACT, defined as a 30% or greater drop in detention utilization since the baseline, and MOMENTUM, meaning a downward trend in detention use over the last five years.

- The good news is that overall detention populations continue to fall. Nearly three of every five sites have both made a large IMPACT since entering JDAI *and* still had MOMENTUM since 2012. This is exactly what we want to see across the board.
- Another one-fourth were partially successful. They had either a large IMPACT or MOMENTUM, but not both.

- However, a remaining sliver of the JDAI network – one of every six sites – has neither achieved a substantial IMPACT nor has MOMENTUM going forward.
- Interestingly and importantly, the problem in these non-thriving sites has little to do with the front door to detention. It has to do with the back door
- The problem stems from a worrisome trend in lengths of stay, and not only in sites that have struggled. The average duration of detention has increased for our network. In some sites length of stay has increased by 40 percent or more.

So, if you were wondering why Casey is writing a new practice guide on the sexy subject of case processing — coming soon to a website near you — well, this is why. The truth is that length of stay has not been a major focus in many sites recently.

In the upcoming practice guide, you'll see that many examples date back 10 or even 20 years. In those early days of JDAI, detention centers were often bursting at the seams, bunking three and four young people in cells designed to house one or two. So early JDAI stakeholders did everything they could to move young people out of detention quickly.

These days, most detention facilities have empty beds, so the need to move kids out can feel less urgent. That's understandable, but it's not consistent with JDAI's values.

It is also at the core of what I mean by “getting better”. We have the playbook, but we need to run the plays. So, if your site has not focused on case processing, attend this afternoon's workshop. And be sure to read the practice guide when it's released in a few months.

The other result I want to share with you points to the greatest problem the field faces today, and the biggest challenge we face over the next 25 years. A challenge that, try as we might, we have not met in our first 25 years:

Youth of color continue to make up a disproportionate share of our system and the detention population. In spite of a 45 percent decline in the detention rate for youth of color in JDAI sites, the disparities aren't shrinking.

As you know, we've been struggling with this challenge for a long time, in a lot of ways. Not only in juvenile justice but in virtually every child-serving field.

Recently, the Casey Foundation published a new framework for addressing these issues, called the “Race, Equity and Inclusion Action Guide.” You’ll notice there’s a workshop on it this morning.

I want to highlight two significant elements. The first is a focus on exploring root causes — not just the numbers, but the reasons behind them. The second highlight is captured in the title of the new publication: the word “inclusion.”

Not only is including diverse voices in decision-making “the right thing to do.” But increasingly, reformers realize that the voices of people and communities affected by our systems, especially people and communities of color, are critical to defeating systemic racial and ethnic injustice.

The racial equity challenge is integrally linked to another JDAI core strategy: collaboration. Across JDAI, connections with non-system players aren’t nearly as strong as they could be. We still don’t involve and support families like we could and should, or give young people a voice in shaping our policies and practices. And we don’t partner with community organizations as often as we could to connect young people with positive adults and with constructive activities in their home neighborhoods.

I am encouraged to see sites like Cook County and states like Illinois and Virginia creating youth advisory boards and student governments to make sure youth voices are heard in the process.

And I’m pleased by the growing number of JDAI places like New Jersey, the City of St. Louis and Pierce County, Washington that are reaching out to parents and other family members and partnering with families to make crucial decisions in their children’s lives.

Likewise, I am encouraged when I hear about Santa Cruz partnering with community organizations like Barrios Unidos to offer positive youth development activities. And Multnomah County providing similar connections for youth of color through its Community Healing Initiative.

Several conference workshops will highlight strategies to make juvenile justice reform more inclusive, which I see as a great sign of progress in our initiative. But we still have a long way to go. I know we do at the Casey Foundation.

Disaffected groups often admonish “nothing about us without us.” We should heed this rallying cry and make inclusion an everyday fact of life.

We focus on another type of collaboration in the second new practice guide we are releasing this week. It is the need to work more closely with law enforcement.

These last few years have been a wrenching time for the law enforcement community, a period of unprecedented and often unflattering public scrutiny. And rightfully so. Yet, in many jurisdictions, law enforcement leaders are taking promising steps. They are looking for new opportunities to work more effectively with youth. Several of the leaders who have been vocal advocates for a new approach to young people are in the room today.

William Dean, the Deputy Chief of Police in Virginia Beach, now trains all of his officers on adolescent development and effective tactics for working with youth. And Kurt Wolf, the Captain of Patrol in Lafayette, Indiana. He worked with JDAI partners to identify racial disparities for disorderly conduct and resisting arrest. Then he took steps to dramatically reduce arrests for these offenses, especially among African American youth.

Kevin Bethel, formerly the deputy commissioner of the 5th largest police department in the U.S., ordered his officers to stop arresting Philadelphia school children for a slew of minor offenses and increase diversion. As a result, Philadelphia school arrests dropped 64 percent in two years.

These are great examples and, of course, not the only ones. Yet, these examples remain too scarce. Not just in JDAI jurisdictions, but nationwide there remains a deep and counterproductive divide separating law enforcement, not just with the community, but other juvenile justice system actors as well. That's not me talking, that's the law enforcement community itself.

In a recent survey, most law enforcement leaders nationwide said they support the ideals of juvenile justice reform. But only about a quarter believe that their local juvenile justice systems enhance public safety or promote rehabilitation. Only a small minority said they are actively involved in their local system. These are troubling statistics.

Within our network, we know from experience that JDAI works much better when law enforcement is actively involved. But in many sites law enforcement leaders are not. That needs to change.

Law enforcement is a necessary partner in creating receptions centers and other

strategies to divert youth away from the justice system, and to connect needy youth to services. Most importantly, law enforcement is the key player at the stage of the system where racial and ethnic disparities are by far the greatest. If we are ever going to make wholesale improvements in racial equity, law enforcement just has to be actively at the table.

Today, however, many of our law enforcement colleagues are flying blind when it comes to juvenile justice. One chief recently noted that “My officers receive so much firearms training, and yet they rarely fire a shot.” Meanwhile, “they have multiple contacts each day with juveniles.” And yet surveys show that law enforcement personnel typically get next to no training about juvenile justice or adolescent development.

We can help change that. And we need to.

So please check out the summary of our new practice guide, which is online now, and come to this morning’s workshop. And keep your eyes open for the full practice guide, which is coming soon.



Now let me ask you a few questions.

I know that these headlines and the stories behind them are familiar to you. So let me ask you: how many of you have had a conversation about one of these stories with a friend or colleague? How many of you posted or commented on one of these stories on Facebook? Or crafted something brilliant or snarky (or both) about them on Twitter? Or Instagram? Or some other social media platform that I’m just not cool enough to know about?

I have been thinking about these questions since 2015, when I started pulling together my first state of the initiative speech soon after Freddie Gray’s death in Baltimore. It was a time of tremendous anxiety in Casey’s home community and in our juvenile justice field. And yet, while most of us were interacting with our families, friends, neighbors and office mates about what was happening, as a JDAI community, we weren’t talking about it at all. Here we were, the premier network of juvenile justice reformers in the nation, but we had no forum to discuss, grapple or listen.

Still today, we haven’t talked about the consent decrees facing police departments in Baltimore, and Cleveland and Chicago, which are all JDAI sites. We haven’t talked

about how looming changes to U.S. immigration policies and the new leadership at the U.S. Justice Department might affect our work in JDAI.

As the parent of two little boys, I liken the situation to toddlers in a day care center who engage in parallel play rather than interacting and learning together. (Yes, I did just liken all of you to toddlers). Or to quickly switch metaphors and forget the last one ever happened, JDAI has operated like an extended family, where other sites are distant cousins whom we see once in a while for a family reunion.

Since the beginning, the interaction among JDAI sites has been limited to conferences like this one, or site visits which happen only occasionally and involve only a limited swath of the JDAI community. JDAI's web presence has also been decidedly 1.0, designed for a one way flow of information, most of it packaged in long reports, plus a haphazard collection of documents on the JDAI Helpdesk.

Lately, we and our colleagues from the Pretrial Justice Institute have spent a lot of time exploring how we might use new communications technology to bring the JDAI network to you every day. The result is our new platform, JDAIconnect, which will allow you to...

- Reach out for advice not only to your Technical Assistance Team Leader but to the entire JDAI network when you've got a question or problem or want peer support or inspiration.
- Find reports, articles, presentations, and other documents on any detention reform or youth justice issue, thanks to a major reimagining of the JDAI Helpdesk.
- Access all four of JDAI's core trainings on-demand, broken into discrete modules to better fit your schedules and learning styles.

These are big changes, and I think they are exciting because we know how much you gain from the opportunity to learn from each other, brainstorm together at conferences like this one and go on model site visits. And we know these kinds of inter-site connections result in real progress for young people. We see it when sites replicate innovative models they see in Portland or Chicago or Albuquerque or Santa Cruz. And when states take big steps taking JDAI to scale after visiting New Jersey.

But due to the huge costs involved, these opportunities have always been scarce, unavailable to most staff and community stakeholders in your jurisdictions.

JDAI connect will change that. It will multiply your opportunities for interaction and mutual problem solving by five times over, ten times over. Instead of having four or five sites to learn from, you'll now have 300. It's up to you how active to be on JDAIconnect, but the sky is the limit.

Also, JDAIconnect will allow Casey and our technical assistance partners — the Burns Institute and the Center for Children's Law and Policy — to shift how we allocate technical assistance. With online access to the entire JDAI network and a new and improved resource library, we no longer think it makes sense to routinely offer sites multiple, but not many, days of support from your TATLs each year, assistance that's a mile wide but an inch deep. We have faith in your site leadership teams. Compared with the early days of JDAI, the steps are clearer now, and the universe of experienced practitioners in detention reform is infinitely larger.

Going forward, we want to target technical assistance to sites where the potential payoff is greatest — sites looking to make the next big leap. We want to help those sites get over the hump. And through JDAIconnect, we want to give you a front row seat to learn from and question these efforts and replicate those which prove successful.

Finally, I'm excited about JDAIconnect because I think it will boost your efforts to expand upon detention reform and more systematically pursue improvements across the continuum of your systems.

The Casey Foundation has always intended, or at least hoped, that by developing a new approach for one critical phase of the juvenile justice process — detention — we could one day broaden the work to take on challenges across all phases of the system.

We know that many sites are well along in that process. Some have signed on as "Deep End" sites, using JDAI-like strategies to reduce post-dispositional placements. Two sites — Lucas County, Ohio and Pierce County, Washington — are working as laboratories to test new approaches to juvenile probation.

From the dozens of non-detention reform workshop topics you suggested for this conference, we know that many more of you are pursuing strategies well beyond the confines of detention reform.

As you can probably tell, I have high hopes for JDAIconnect to create a new level of synergy and energy in our network. You're going to learn much more about it in the next

two days, including right after I get off the stage.

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So now, before wrapping up, I want to return to the question I started with: Which of the common practices of today will our successors 25 or 50 years from now be happy to see only in their rearview mirrors?

Perhaps if we had more time — or maybe over lunch or dinner — we could all place our bets. But since I have the stage for a few more minutes, I ask that you indulge me while I speculate for all of us. Many years ago, Jim Casey, the founder of UPS and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, uttered a quote that I think bears repeating:

“Our horizon,” he said, “is as distant as our mind’s eye wishes it to be.”

With that long view in mind, here are a few questions that I think and hope our future selves and successors ponder about juvenile justice in 2017.

- How, 118 years after establishing the first juvenile court, were we still trying young people in criminal courts?
- How, if our goals are to protect public safety *and* promote youth well-being, did we equate “what works” almost entirely with short-term recidivism rates?
- Why did we find it acceptable for police to arrest hundreds of thousands of youth each year for minor and developmentally normal adolescent behaviors that don’t threaten public safety?
- How did we allow juvenile probation – the workhorse of the juvenile justice system– to revolve around long lists of standard conditions, a series of “thou shalt nots” – coupled with the threat of confinement when kids don’t comply?
- How, in a land so focused on family values, did our court systems make fateful decisions over children’s lives without their parents’ involvement or support?
- Finally, the question I hope most of all that our successors will be asking in 25 or 50 years is when and how did our system finally reverse the terrible racial and ethnic disparities that still so much defined juvenile justice in 2017?

But those are just my questions — the ones that came to mind when I started writing

this speech. As I worked on it, and thought more, those questions weighed less on me because I was reminded that so many of you are already planting the seeds of a better system for our successors.

- I see that potential in Massachusetts, where a whole spectrum of youth-serving agencies are embracing positive youth development. Pushing each other to ensure that the youth they work with receive the same kinds of supports and opportunity that all young people need to succeed.
- I see it in Lucas County, Ohio, which has begun to keep virtually all youth arrested on misdemeanor charges away from probation supervision, and has dramatically cut the number of placements stemming from technical violations from 30 to just four in four years.
- I see it in Indiana, where — with JDAI as the catalyst — law enforcement officers in a dozen JDAI counties are now being trained on *Policing the Teenage Brain*, and where the state’s police training academy now includes rigorous units on adolescent development and effective techniques for interacting with youth and de-escalating conflict.
- I see it in Virginia, which is closing its old prison-like training schools and slashing its confined population by expanding alternatives to incarceration and cutting lengths of stay. Meanwhile, Virginia is engaging youth and families and has adopted a new developmentally appropriate approach for youth who remain in secure confinement.

I’m excited about these innovations and by many notable efforts in other JDAI jurisdictions, and I wish I could name many more because I think each holds the possibility of becoming a new normal in juvenile justice. I’m especially excited because now, with the help of the new JDAIconnect platform, you’ll have an opportunity to track these efforts in real time, to ask questions and brainstorm with your peers in other sites like never before.



As I close, I think we would all agree that it’s awfully difficult to predict how future generations will look back on the present, which beliefs will take root, and which will be thrown onto the ash heap of history. Fate is fickle.

But I think that sometimes — not often, admittedly, but sometimes — fate can be

dictated by a determined collection of principled actors, by a movement that combines a compelling vision with strategic action and tireless effort to affect progress.

I don't think it's a stretch to think of JDAI's first 25 years as one example.

The ideas embodied in JDAI were radical back then. But not anymore. History has spoken, and it has spoken pretty loudly.

Of course, JDAI was not the only factor. But it'd be hard to exclude JDAI — it'd be hard to exclude all of you — as pivotal influencers in the sharp shift in conventional wisdom about juvenile justice over these 25 years. What began as that crazy pipedream somehow redefined what juvenile justice is and should be.

Today, though, even with all of the progress achieved in these first 25 years, there's plenty more work to do. We all know it. We all see that, in big ways and small, our systems often fail to treat young people equitably, constructively or wisely.

A few weeks ago, we had the first meeting with our new youth advisory council. You can see them on the screen, and they are all here at the conference. Some of our Casey team went out to dinner with them that evening. We went to an Italian restaurant near the Foundation and University of Maryland Medical Center. The restaurant is on the fancy side. There were a lot of us, and we were kind of loud boisterous.

From my seat, I see a middle age man having dinner with a companion at a table nearby. He's looking at our table and then commenting to his date over and over again for a couple of minutes. And then he approaches us. Uh oh, I say to myself. I know what's coming.

But I didn't.

He immediately asks the young people if they are celebrating their matches. Matches? I didn't know what he meant. Turns out it was the same day medical schools announce residency programs for students. This man, who it turns out is a doctor, assumed our council members — all young people who've come out the other side of the juvenile justice system — were med school students. And that we are celebrating them being matched to hospital residency programs!

While he got the profession wrong, knowing nothing of our young people's past, he only saw the lives ahead of them and their unlimited potential.

That's what we want everyone to see when they look at young people in the juvenile justice system. Maybe, more than anything, that's the aspiration I hope we all have we have for 25 years from now.

The young people immersed in the juvenile justice system face the longest odds and the biggest barriers to success of any cohort in our society.

All of us in this room have the opportunity — and I would say the responsibility if we are to live up to the legacy created in JDAI's first 25 years — to change those odds.

So now it's our turn — your turn — whether you've been in JDAI for 20 minutes or 20 years. I look forward to rolling up my sleeves with you and creating a legacy for the next 25 years that proves worthy of the first. Thank you.