



NEWS FROM:
Office of Public Defender
Matt Shirk, Fourth Circuit
www.MattShirkPublicDefender.com

Contact: Matt Bisbee
Public Information Officer
Tel: (904)630-7350
MPB@PD4.COJ.net

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Jacksonville Hosts Regional Conference of Group Examining Juvenile Justice

Jacksonville, FL: The Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is a nationwide movement dedicated to reducing the unnecessary detention of youthful offenders. Through partnerships with the Department of Juvenile Justice and The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Jacksonville has been chosen as one of the four JDAI pilot sites in Florida. Juvenile Director Rob Mason (pictured) who serves in the Office of Public Defender Matt Shirk co-chairs the local JDAI chapter which recently sponsored a two day training conference where individuals from the Jacksonville and Tampa Bay areas convened to learn about the fundamentals involved in working with young people in the juvenile justice system.



Private Jacksonville attorney Rhonda Peoples-Waters serves as the JDAI Coordinator in Duval County and helped organize the conference; Assistant State Attorney Julie Taylor also serves as co-chair. Conference attendees included an assembly of juvenile justice experts, including Rod Love, Deputy Director of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, who gave welcoming comments. Representatives from the court system, including Duval County Circuit Court Judge Henry Davis, individuals from municipal governments, schools, law enforcement, and the non-profit sectors in the Jacksonville and Tampa Bay regions were in attendance. The two-day conference took place July 22-23 at the Downtown Crowne Plaza where Jacksonville City Council President Jack Webb and 4th Judicial Circuit Public Defender Matt Shirk gave opening remarks.

The JDAI Fundamentals Workshop featured several presentations, engaged discussions on best practices that have positively impacted other cities with active chapters and defined the overall, long-term mission. There are five key goals of JDAI as it works to promote changes to policies, practices and programs:

- Reduce reliance on secure confinement for juveniles
- Improve public safety
- Reduce Racial disparities and bias
- Save taxpayers' dollars
- Stimulate overall juvenile justice reforms

After more than 15 years of innovation and replication, JDAI is one of the nation's most effective, influential, and widespread juvenile justice system reform initiatives. JDAI focuses on the juvenile detention component of the juvenile justice system because youth are often unnecessarily or inappropriately detained at great expense, with long-lasting negative consequences for both public safety and youth development. Since its inception in 1992, JDAI has repeatedly demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce reliance on secure detention. There are now approximately 100 JDAI sites in 24 states and the District of Columbia.
