

County of San Diego: 2020 CSAC Challenge Awards Executive Summary

TITLE OF THIS ENTRY *(seven words maximum)*

PROMOTING YOUTH SUCCESS WITH ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION

OVERVIEW: *(Provide a brief, 25 word summary of your program or project.)*

San Diego County collaborated to implement Alternatives to Detention, an innovative program that strengthens youth and families to reduce juvenile justice system involvement.

CHALLENGE: *(Describe the challenge your county faced and the process used to address it. Explain the unique or critical factors that led to this project.)*

San Diego Probation has long recognized that juvenile detention has adverse effects on the long-term outcomes of youth and that diversion from formal court processing typically improves youth outcomes. However, while the number of youth in detention had declined over time in San Diego, the juvenile detention population remained higher than recommended, and additional interventions were required to reduce the population. Resources also were needed to address the gaps in connecting at-risk youth with appropriate services in the community based on their criminogenic needs instead of utilizing detention services.

SOLUTION: *(Describe the innovative steps taken by the county to solve the problem or overcome the challenge.)*

San Diego County Probation is transforming its juvenile justice model to prioritize services in the community over detention, leading to an increasing role for Alternatives to Detention (ATD). The goal of ATD is to reduce involvement of youth in the juvenile justice system by providing them with community-based interventions. ATD provides a continuum of community-based and family-supported detention alternatives for youth who are arrested or referred to Probation, but who do not require secure detention. Core ATD program components include: 1) case planning based on results of a validated risk/need assessment tool; 2) intensive case management; 3) evidence-based services and/or linkages to community-based supports; and 4) if needed, non-secure temporary shelter or “cool beds” in licensed foster care homes for youth who are unable to return home safely. The County of San Diego’s Probation Department, the District Attorney and Public Defender’s offices, and Health and Human Services Agency work in partnership with a network of community-based organizations, the Juvenile Court, and schools to provide ATD services to youth and families.

INNOVATION: *(Describe how this program is unique among California Counties. Show how your solution demonstrates creativity, uniqueness and an innovative spirit.)*

The ATD program demonstrates an innovative approach that is part of the continuum of services comprising the San Diego County Comprehensive Strategy for Youth, Family, and the Community. These programs are designed to

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support youth and keep them from entering or escalating within the juvenile justice system. The Comprehensive Strategy is a collaborative and integrated systems-approach to reducing delinquency based on a philosophy of shared responsibility and coordinated action among government and community partners. It calls for evidence-based practices that emphasize family strengthening and positive youth development. The ATD program delivers trauma-informed services while reflecting the attributes of the communities served including their ethnic, gender, cultural, linguistic, and economic compositions.

RESULTS: *(Describe the results of the program/project. Discuss how the program or project has positively impacted the community, improved delivery of services to the public, or improved administration of a program internally.)*

The ATD program demonstrates results by providing youth with needed services; reducing youth contact with the juvenile justice system; reducing recidivism; reducing youth's time in custody; and reducing costs associated with detaining youth in custody. Based on results from the program evaluation performed by the San Diego Association of Governments, youth participated in the ATD program an average of four months, receiving a broad range of services such as intensive case management, individual, family, and/or group therapy to address issues such as trauma, life skills, anger, or criminogenic needs. Ninety-one percent of youth successfully completed the program without being detained in Juvenile Hall during program participation. Youth enrolled in ATD were significantly less likely than a comparison group to be arrested or detained into Juvenile Hall during and twelve months after completion of the program. ATD enrollees spent significantly fewer days detained than the comparison group, resulting in a significant cost savings of over \$10,000,000 for the ATD youth compared to those who did not receive ATD services (https://www.sandag.org/uploads/publicationid/publicationid_4621_26514.pdf).

REPLICABILITY: *(Describe how your program can potentially be replicated by other California Counties. Can your program be promoted as a best practice that can be utilized by others?)*

The ATD program can be replicated by other California counties as a best practice model, because the program design is based on the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

PROJECT/PROGRAM CONTACT: *(Name, title, mailing address, phone and e-mail address of the person who can be contacted about this program.)*

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OPTIONAL SUBMISSION: *(If your project involved the development of a video, graphic design or PowerPoint, please enclose a link.)*

Information about the program is available in various news articles and videos by the San Diego County News Center and other news agencies:

<https://www.countynewscenter.com/study-finds-probation-program-lowers-recidivism/#:~:text=By%20Yvette%20Urrea%20Moe%2C%20County%20of%20San%20Diego,released%20by%20the%20San%20Diego%20Association%20of%20Governments.>

<https://www.countynewscenter.com/alternatives-detention-gives-youth-sense-direction/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J4mXes6laPk>

Remember 2 pages, Double Spaced.