

**ICJIA**

ILLINOIS CRIMINAL JUSTICE INFORMATION AUTHORITY



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# **SAC Juvenile Justice Evaluation Partnership Project**

## **Pre-Trial Juvenile Detention Practices in Illinois**



## Illinois' Statistical Analysis Center:

- is housed in the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority (ICJIA).
- ICJIA is an agency located in Chicago, instituted by legislative act, and includes a unit of approximately 15 full-time research staff members.



## Illinois' State Advisory Group:

- is the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (IJJC).
- is affiliated with the Illinois Department of Human Services.



## Prior ICJIA / IJJC Partnerships:

- A report examining disproportionate minority representation in Cook County, IL.
- An implementation evaluation examining large-scale Illinois juvenile justice system changes that primarily took effect in 1999.



# JRSA Project Topic Areas:

1. **Providing information to SAG on state detention practices / detention alternatives, and how practices / alternatives compare to other states.**
2. **Collecting data / developing a data system to learn who is detained and why.**
3. **Developing and pilot testing an assessment tool or guidelines intended to help detention decision-makers.**
4. **Conducting a needs assessment and implementation / evaluation plan addressing use of detention and programs for more effective use.**
5. **Evaluating a new detention initiative.**



## ICJIA's Best Idea:

- Focusing on pre-trial detention.
- Using JRSA funds to complete aspects of Topic Area 1, as a prelude to completing aspects of Topic Area 3 and 4.



## Why Focus on Pre-Trial Detention?

- There has been a push in Illinois to use objective scoreable pre-trial screening instruments in order to:
  - minimize use of detention to only most serious cases.
  - eliminate detention of status offenders.
  - encourage use of alternatives to detention.



## Why Choose Topic Area 1?

- We wanted to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of scoreable instruments (Topic Areas 3 and 4).

BUT

- There was a great deal we did not know about pre-trial detention screening practices and processes (necessitating Topic Area 1 as a prelude).



# We Wanted to Know:

- **What counties are using scorable instruments.**
- **What instruments they are using.**
- **Why they chose to use the instrument.**
- **Whether instruments are used rigidly (the absolute determining factor) or loosely (discretion is still used).**
- **Inter-county variation.**
- **Use of alternatives.**
- **Whether scorable instruments reduce detention of status offenders.**



# Two-Phase Project.

- **Phase 1: gathering general front-end information on pre-trial detention practices and processes (Topic Area 1)**

**THEN**

- **Phase 2: Using Phase 1 information to guide evaluative activity (Topic Area 3 and 4).**



# Phase 1 Plan.

- Conduct detailed semi-structured interviews with head probation officers (or their designees) and heads of juvenile detention centers (or their designees).



# Potential Results.

- A large majority of counties use scoreable instruments (typically, the instrument promulgated by an agency lobbying for use of scoreable instruments).
- A reasonable number of counties chose to use the scoreable instrument primarily in response to external pressure to do so.



## Potential Results.

- A number of counties reported that the use of the instrument curtailed detention of status offenders.
- A number of counties reported that the use of scoreable instruments has not increased the use of alternatives.
- A number of counties reported that the instrument makes it easier to “defend” detention decisions to law enforcement and, potentially, the state’s attorneys office.



# Potential Results.

- **It can be tricky to apply the scoreable instrument to domestic battery cases.**
- **Despite the objectivity of the instrument, local philosophy plays a large role. This role manifests itself in “borderline” cases, where discretion is more justifiable.**
- **Rural, small counties tend to use more discretion in “borderline” cases.**