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# JDAI Year-End Report

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2021

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JDAI



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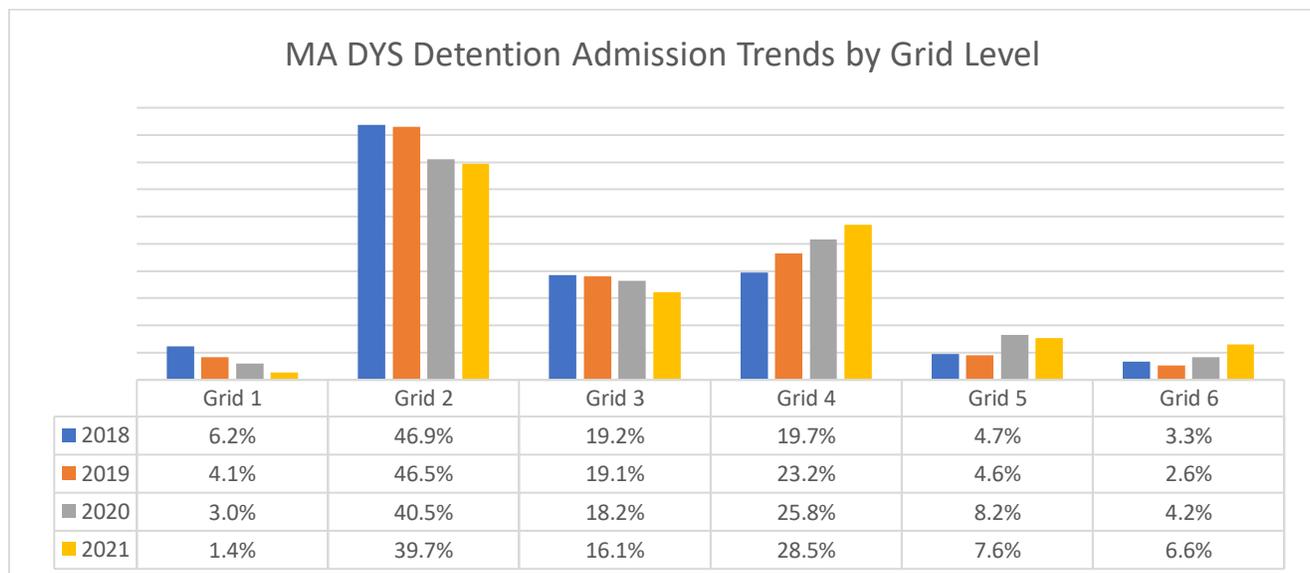
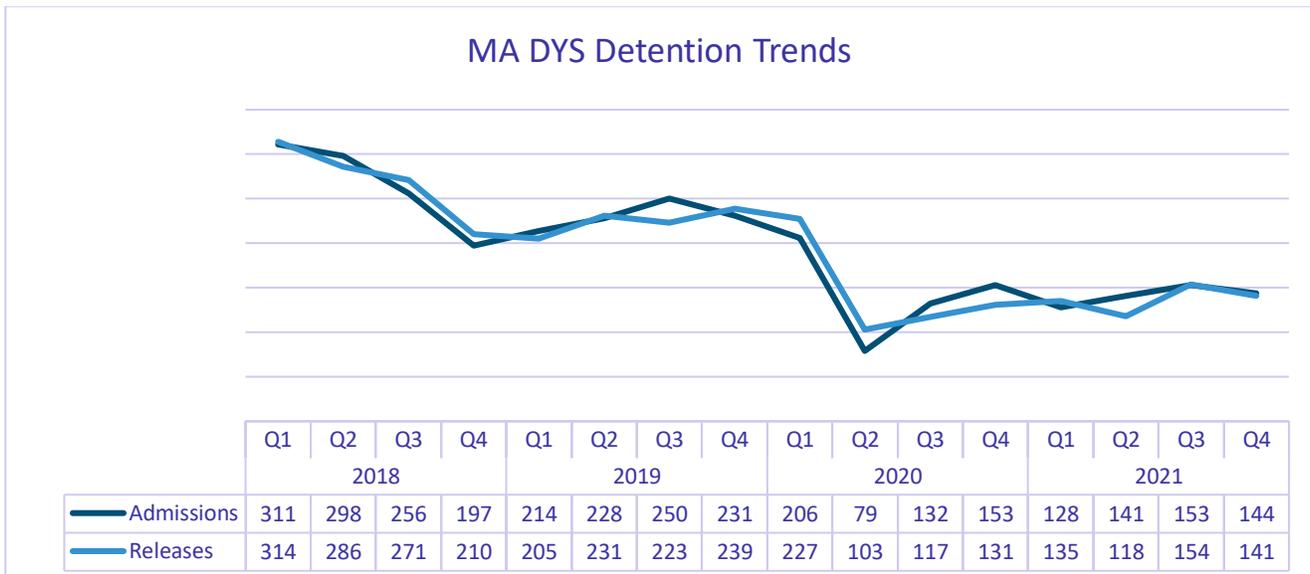
# Year-End Overview

# State-Level Snapshot

In 2021 the work of JDAI was driven by the following goals:

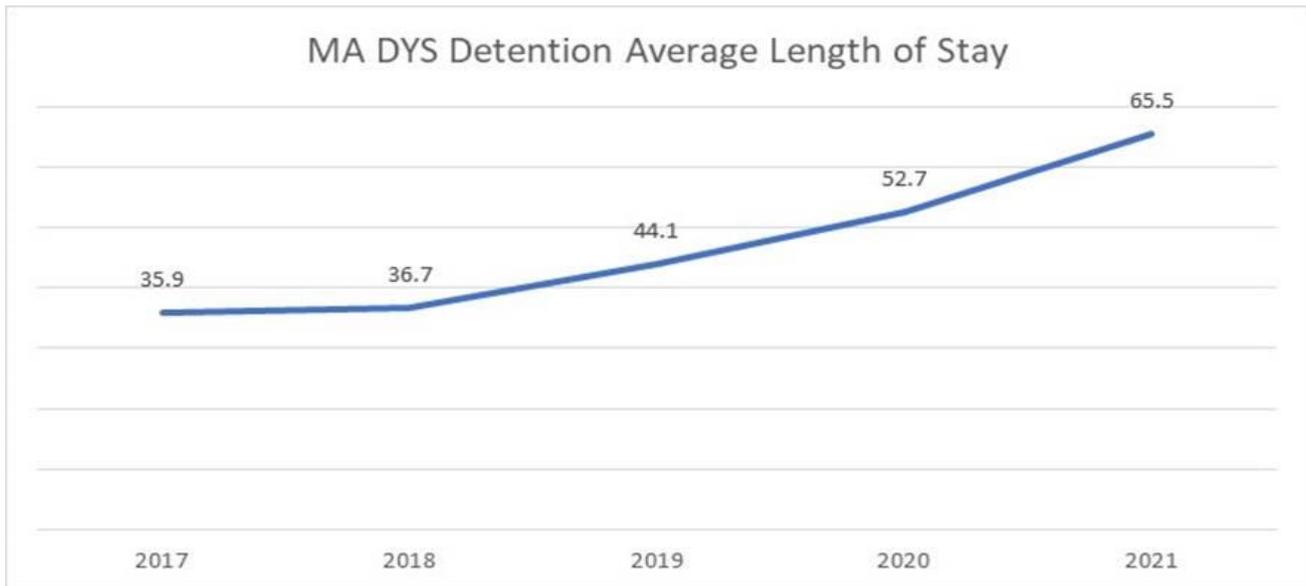
1. Ensuring equitable outcomes in youth serving systems, by deliberately targeting reform efforts to youth of color.
2. Improving cross system collaboration at every decision point within youth serving systems to meet the unique needs of each youth and family.
3. Guaranteeing equitable access and appropriate pro-social opportunities that promote positive youth development.
4. Assuring fidelity to the JDAI 8 Core Strategies.

## DETENTION ADMISSION TRENDS

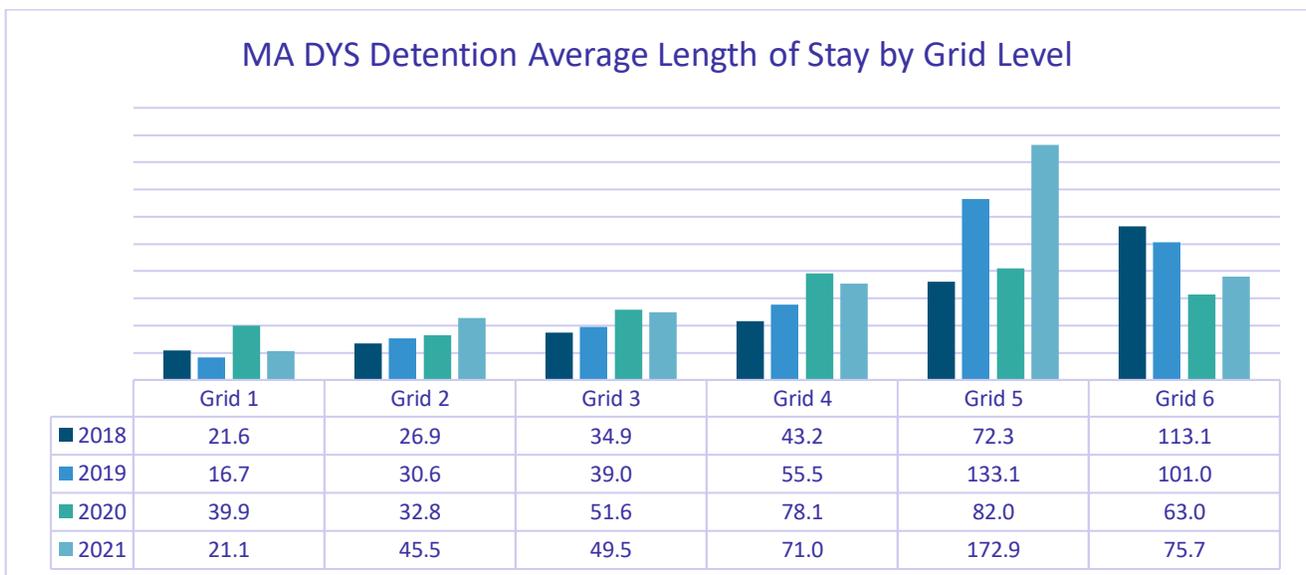


In 2021, 39.7% of detention admissions were Grid 2, or low level, charges (*DYS assigns each youth a Grid Level reflecting the seriousness of the offense alleged to have been committed. Grid Levels range from one (least severe) to six (most severe)*).

## LENGTH OF STAY TRENDS



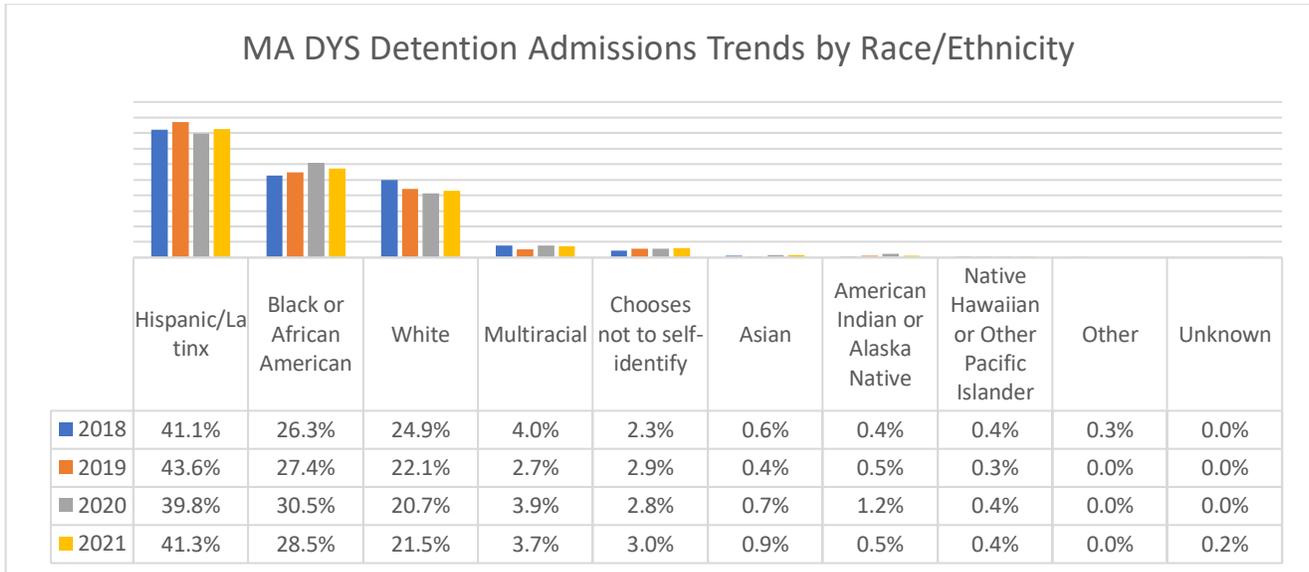
In 2021, the average length of stay (ALOS) for a youth in DYS detention was 65.5 days. The ALOS has significantly increased from previous years. JDAI will be looking at this data point to further investigate what is contributing to the increase in ALOS.



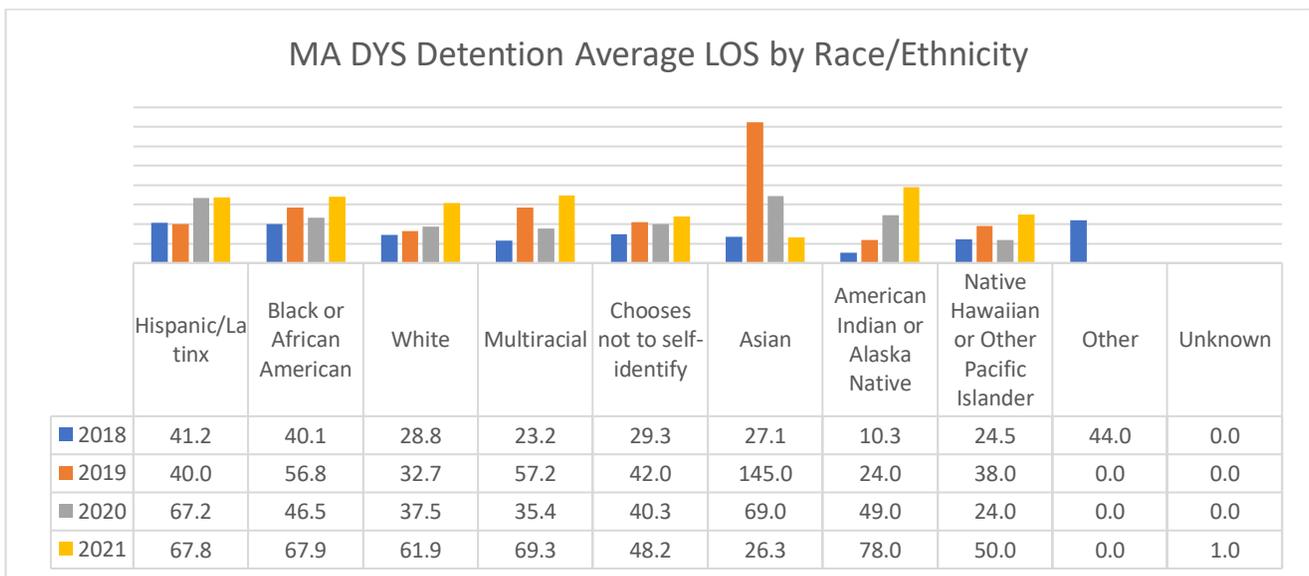
In 2021, youth with a grid level 5 charge had the highest average length of stay in detention at 172.9 days. Youth with low grid levels (Grid 1 and 2) were also held in 2021 for longer amounts of time than in the previous year. JDAI will be looking at this data point to further investigate what is contributing to the increase in ALOS.

## Race Equity and Inclusion

In 2021, the overarching focus of JDAI’s work was around re-imagining a Massachusetts Juvenile Justice system that is anti-racist, restorative, and developmentally appropriate.



Comparison of the number of youth entering detention to youth in the general population of the Commonwealth ages 12-17 (the ages of youth typically entering detention) starkly demonstrates the overrepresentation of youth of color in detention. In 2021, 41.3% of youth who were detained identified as Hispanic/Latinx, while they represent only 12.7% of the general population of Massachusetts. 28.5% of youth detained identify as Black, but make up only 12.7% of the general population. Contrast this with White youth who made up 21.5% of the detained youth in 2021, but represent 78.6% of youth in Massachusetts. (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2020 estimate data, <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezapop/>).

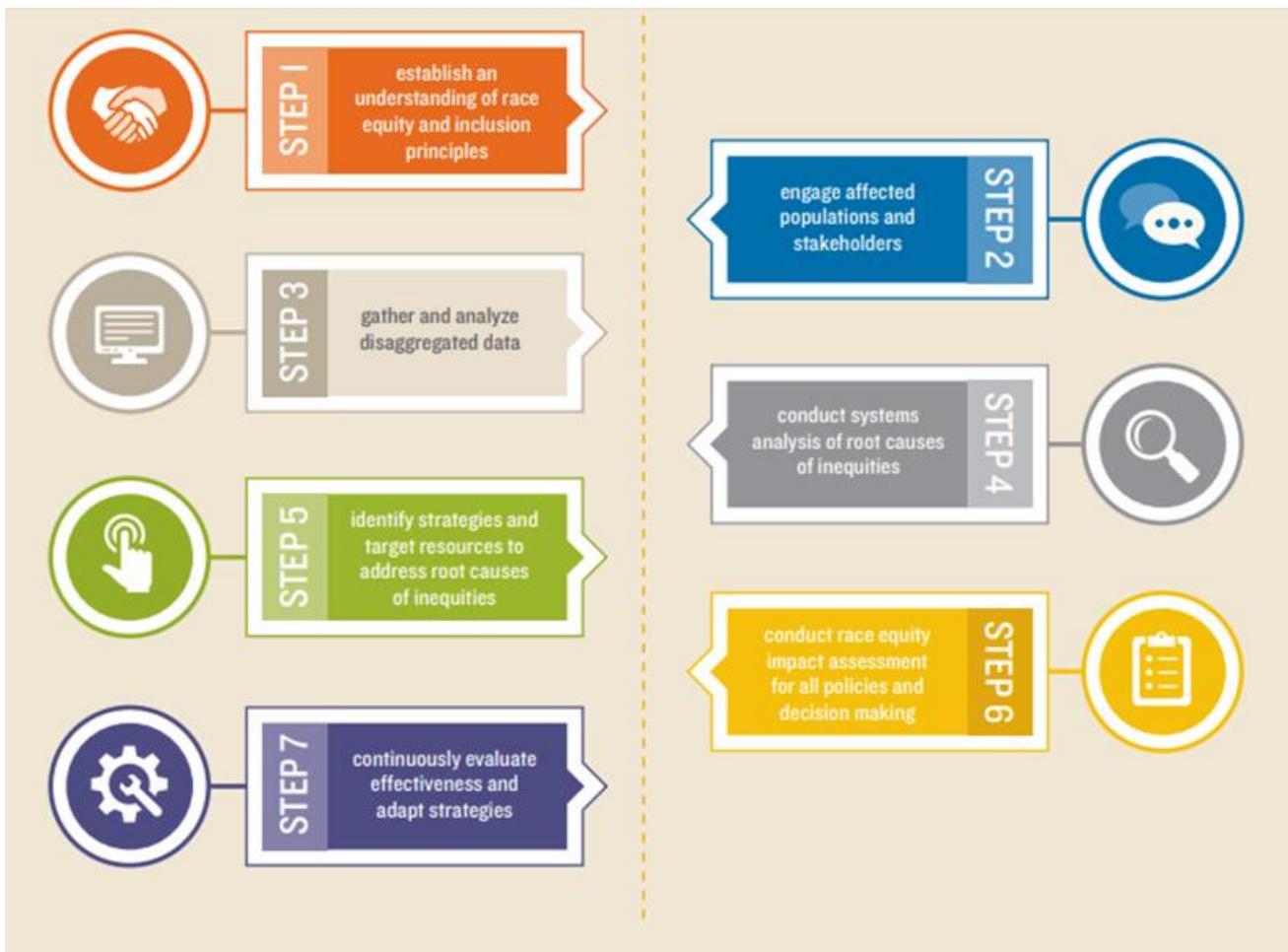


In 2021, Hispanic/Latinx youth and Black youth had average lengths of stay in detention at over 67 days, while the average length of detention for White youth was almost a week shorter.

## RACE EQUITY AND INCLUSION SUBCOMMITTEE

This fall the Massachusetts Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) launched the Race Equity and Inclusion statewide subcommittee. The committee is being co-chaired by Pamerson Ifill, Probation’s Deputy Commissioner for Pre-trial Service and Marisol Garcia, Senior Director of Health Law Advocates, and includes representatives from the Administrative Office of the Trial Court, Committee for Public Counsel Services, Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, EOPPS, Parent Professional Advocacy League, and MA’s Chiefs of Police Association. The role of the subcommittee is to collaboratively work to identify strategies that will move youth serving agencies in Massachusetts from race equity and inclusion theory to practice, with the goal of equipping agencies with the tools needed to advance equitable policies and initiatives for all youth in the Commonwealth. The committee’s work will be guided by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s seven steps to embracing equity (see below).

### 7 Key Steps for Advancing Race Equity and Inclusion



Annie E. Casey Foundation, “Race Equity and Inclusion Action Guide: 7 Steps to Advance and Embed Race Equity and Inclusion within Your Organization,” 2015, <https://www.aecf.org/resources/race-equity-and-inclusion-action-guide>.

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## SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE SUMMIT AND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

In October of 2021, JDAI, in partnership with Action! By Design, a community design studio, held a Summit on Eliminating the School to Prison Pipeline (“The Summit”). The School to Prison Pipeline is the most significant pathway leading youth, particularly youth of color, into the Juvenile Detention System and away from successful outcomes. To further the work of JDAI to reduce the unnecessary and harmful use of secure detention for low-risk juveniles and ensure that the right youth is in the right place for the right reason, we believe JDAI needs to focus on eliminating the School to Prison Pipeline and addressing racial and ethnic disparities in schools. The Summit brought stakeholders together from the areas of public education, juvenile justice, child welfare, and those with lived experience who spoke on the harms of the school-to-prison pipeline and its impact on achieving equitable outcomes for youth, and offered a vision for a different path forward. Through the format of mini keynote speeches, presenters dove into definitions and data to explain the complex challenges presented and to explore potential impactful actions that a collaborative group of community members can take to disrupt and eliminate the school to prison pipeline.

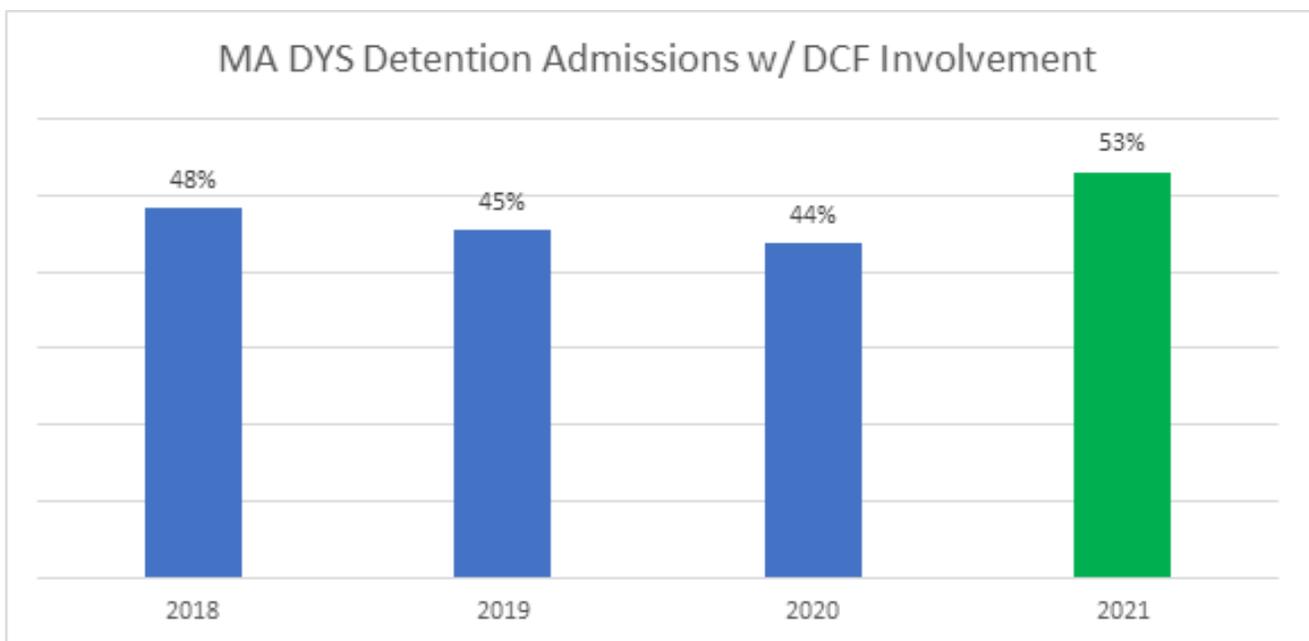
Continuing the work highlighted in the October Summit, the School to Prison Pipeline Community of Practice Group continues to work to establish a community of practice to address the School to Prison Pipeline. We believe we can create long-lasting, impactful change centered in equity and justice. Future activities include a project and resource map of agencies and initiatives working to dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline, a Racial Equity Self-Assessment of these agencies and initiatives, increased collaboration with school districts and ongoing training and conversations with educators to identify where and how we can make the most impactful changes to interrupt the pipeline.



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## Dually Involved Youth

JDAI will continue to work with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) both at the State and local levels to address the unique needs of Dually Involved Youth, youth who have an open case with DCF at the time that they enter detention. At the State level JDAI will be working closely with the Juvenile Justice Policy and Data Board (JJPAD)'s Community Based Interventions (CBI) subcommittee as they explore the Child Requiring Assistance (CRA) system which was designed to divert youth from the delinquency system. JDAI has also created its own Dually Involved Youth (DIY) Subcommittee to standardize a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for county wide case conferencing projects. In 2022, the work of the subcommittee will continue as this multiagency group develops a best-practices manual for courts or counties seeking to utilize a multi-disciplinary team meeting approach to serve DIY youth.



This graph represents the number of youth entering detention in a given year, who had an open case with DCF (either a Care and Protection or Child Requiring Assistance matter) at the time of entry into DYS. Note that there is a significant increase in percentage of these youth in 2021. This is, in part, due to a change in data collection methodology. In previous years DCF involvement data was gathered mainly through self-reporting by youth entering detention. In 2021, DYS verified this data directly with DCF and found that the previous method of data collection resulted in underreporting of DCF involvement at the time of entry into detention. Thus, the graph does not necessarily indicate an increase in dually involved youth for the year 2021, but a more accurate percentage based on better data collection/verification methods that will continue to be employed moving forward.

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## Youth Voice

### STATEWIDE YOUTH COMMITTEE

In partnership with Trinity Boston, JDAI is working to develop a DYS Statewide Youth Committee that will exist within, and serve to inform, the decision-making process of JDAI. Providing youth a seat at the table shifts youth voice from the sidelines to playing an active role in influencing decisions that will impact their lives and the lives of members of their communities, who historically have been excluded from the decision-making process. In doing so, each agency is required to carefully examine its commitment to equity and inclusion. Elevating authentic youth input will move our organizations closer to success. Best practices in youth work advocacy will be utilized to inform and support an organic youth-led experience. This will be achieved through collaboration among agencies that have a shared purpose and vision for empowering youth to lead. The application of restorative justice concepts, strong meeting facilitation, and a focus on equity will ground how the agencies work together.

### YOUTH IDENTITY CURRICULUM

Complimentary to the Statewide Youth Committee, JDAI plans to work with Trinity Boston to create a robust Youth Identity Curriculum (“the Curriculum”) with the goal of helping systems-involved youth develop their own anti-racist “toolkit” to face future challenges through art and self-exploration. The Curriculum will focus on the impact of racial inequality, racialized trauma, and overall trauma experiences of Youth of Color. Youth will reflect critically on how they interpret, experience, and navigate the world and cultivate the much-needed space to reflect on experiences of trauma. Their peers will then affirm and support their reflections thus empowering each other to advocate for themselves and others in their communities. We aspire for this to be a collaborative space where youth and staff can feel comfortable to show up, exist, be seen, exercise vulnerability, ask for the things they need, and make plans for effective change.



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## JDAI Project Grants

In 2021 JDAI provided four local county programs with \$12,500 to address immediate needs related to the COVID-19 virus. Listed below are the programs that received funding and how they were able to utilize the funds.

### **UMASS MEMORIAL HEALTH COMMUNITY HEALTHLINK, INC.**

UMass Memorial Health Community Healthlink (CHL), works collaboratively with other youth-serving sectors to provide better outcomes for youth. The 26 Queen Street facility houses CHL's Motivating Youth Recovery (MYR), a 12-bed acute detoxification and stabilization program for adolescents 13 – 18 years old.

Impact of COVID-19: Clients in the MYR program at CHL's 26 Queen Street facility had limited face to face access to family members due to COVID-19, with all visits being conducted virtually. This change impacted the clients' recovery and mental health. The most immediate and vital link caregivers could provide their clients was consistent personal care and reliable virtual contact with families. This virtual contact became the lifeline for clients.

How the Grant funds were used: With funding granted to them CHL was able to purchase five devices (iPads) for the 26 Queen Street facility with firewall protections that ensured that youth could connect with their families while inpatient at MYR without constant staff supervision. To ensure the infrastructure was in place to make consistent, reliable virtual visits with families possible, the facility upgraded its internet hardware. The replacement of desktop computers significantly improved the treatment of clients by ensuring the availability of reliable portable remote contact between care providers and clients and family members.

### **COMMUNITY TEAMWORK YOUTHBUILD LOWELL**

Community Teamwork's YouthBuild Lowell Program (YBL) provides an education and employment training program that specifically prepares at-risk, out-of-school, low-income youth for careers in one of two industries: Construction or the Hospitality/Culinary arts field.

Impact of COVID-19: Youth faced hybrid learning requirements attendant to the pandemic without the appropriate technology to cultivate a learning environment in their home. Smart TVs, Smart Boards and upgraded computer software were needed to ensure uninterrupted access to education.

How the Grant funds were used: With the funding granted to them, YouthBuild Lowell was able to purchase Smart TVs and Smart Vibe Boards to use for education, construction, and life skills classes. This new technology in the classroom allowed teachers to engage students in the classroom as well as through digital media such as Google classroom and zoom. Teachers gained the ability to teach live lessons in front of students as well as students who are social distance-learning from home. The program was also able to purchase headphones that were critical for the at-home learning.

### **NORTH SHORE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COALITION**

North Shore Community Development Coalition (North Shore CDC) supports opportunities for youth through several of its community-focused development programs. YouthBuild is an innovative workforce development program that supports educational attainment for out-of-school/out-of-work youth. Harbor Crossing prioritizes youth, ages 18–24, who are aging-out of foster care or currently experiencing homelessness. Their Young Parents' Program (YPP) provides education, workforce development and opportunity, to empower young parents to take positive control over their lives.

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Impact of COVID-19: Food insecurity was a tremendous challenge for the North Shore CDC’s target population even prior to the pandemic. The loss of work and challenges to accessing education brought about by the pandemic further exacerbated the struggles for low-income young people on the North Shore.

How the Grant funds were used: The North Shore CDC provided internet and computer access for youth involved in their programs, as well as day-to-day expenses required by participants. Throughout the pandemic North Shore CDC continued to serve young people virtually ensuring that their young people received the educational instruction, support, food, and mentorship they needed.

## **PARENT/PROFESSIONAL ADVOCACY LEAGUE**

Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL) advocates for access to mental health services for youth and their families. Employees with lived experience provide training to families and help parents navigate the education, healthcare, child welfare, and juvenile justice systems.

Impact of COVID19: Families served by PPAL lacked internet access for both remote learning and medical/behavioral health appointments, resulting in youth missing school and in some families using libraries and other public spots to access appointments. This reliance on public internet spots impeded the ability of parents to focus and have privacy when talking to schools and providers and made many concerned that when schools reopened there would be an increase in CRA and/or 51A filings with the Department of Children and Families.

How the Grant funds were used: PPAL provided 100 hotspots to families to address the lack of internet access. This allowed families to use their cell phones or other devices in the safety and privacy of their homes. It also allowed youth who were unable to log in to school or appointments or who had spotty reception, to have a dependable connection. PPAL provided coloring books and pencils as a means to keep youth occupied during appointments, freeing up parents to participate without interruption. To address school reopening concerns, PPAL offered families interactive presentations by experts on educational rights, alternatives to CRAs, navigating explosive/challenging behaviors, and adolescent brain development. Input from families shaped the presentations to ensure that the most frequent concerns were addressed.



## County-Level Snapshots

JDAI’s work is rooted in our county-level collaborations. While each county committee is guided by the same goals, the work varies depending on what each committee chooses to focus on, who is a present and active participant of the county committee, and the context of the local community. There are six active JDAI county committees in Massachusetts. In December of 2021, each committee finalized a workplan to guide their efforts to bring the JDAI goals to life in the upcoming year. Highlights of each county’s workplans are included below.

### BRISTOL

The Bristol County JDAI Committee plans to focus on strengthening collaboration in the county and continuing to educate stakeholders in the Juvenile Justice System about the racial and ethnic disparities that exist within the region. The committee is also working to address the particular needs of dually involved youth through exploring the development of a case conferencing model. This multi-disciplinary team approach has been implemented in various counties throughout the Commonwealth and has proven to be an effective way to connect youth and families with the supports and services needed to allow them to be successful in their communities.

### ESSEX

Essex County continues to focus on eliminating gang violence and supporting its youth and families in addressing the heightened needs brought on by COVID-19. To address the root causes of the violence, the JDAI Committee will be working in partnership with the Mayor’s office to conduct a community needs assessment. Additionally, the county committee will be supporting the operationalization of the Diversion Learning Lab, a new state-level youth diversion initiative launched by DYS, in partnership with the Office of the Child Advocate (OCA). Family Services of the Merrimack

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Valley (FSMV), a longstanding agency in the City of Lawrence, will house the Diversion Learning Lab in Essex County and will provide high-quality, evidence-based youth programming that can serve as an alternative to arresting youth or prosecuting them through the Juvenile Court.

## **HAMPDEN**

In Hampden County, the JDAI Committee will take a collaborative and inclusive approach to the following projects, which will be achieved through the work of subcommittees. The Restorative Justice (RJ)/Mediation Subcommittee will identify and implement a vision for RJ/Mediation work in partnership with the Holyoke Juvenile Court to assist with harassment petition diversion. The Education Subcommittee will further revise and implement the Holyoke Public School diversion pilot effort to maximize student attendance and prosocial indicators, thereby decreasing the number of DCF and court-involved youth and families in Holyoke. Hampden County, with the continued help of Mass Mentoring Partners, will also undertake a Transformative/Credible Messenger Mentoring initiative that will positively affect the lives of justice involved young people who are or would be involved in the system. The long-term goal is to successfully implement an intensive, hyper-local, approach to mentorship that capitalizes on the lived experiences of community members to reach and support youth who have been left behind by traditional systems.

## **MIDDLESEX**

The Middlesex County JDAI Committee will support NFI Massachusetts, Inc. in launching the DYS/OCA Diversion Learning Lab in Middlesex County. NFI is a community based juvenile justice partner agency with locations throughout Middlesex County and north east Massachusetts. The committee will also continue to develop goals to support youth dually involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. These goals will be the focal point for the County's work for 2022.

## **SUFFOLK**

The Suffolk County JDAI Committee plans to reduce the number of youth entering DYS detention and to reduce the length of stay of youth held in detention through the use of their CORE (Community Options Release Engagement) model. This model supports youth and their families via a multidisciplinary team that meets bi-weekly to identify their individual needs and connect them with appropriate community-based agencies, who provide services and case management. The Suffolk Committee will also examine ways to reduce the number of Black and Hispanic/Latinx youth entering the juvenile legal system as a result of school based referrals, specifically focusing on how Restorative Justice (RJ) programming can be used to reduce these numbers.

## **WORCESTER**

The Worcester County JDAI Committee plans to identify a vision for Restorative Justice work with the hope of increasing knowledge and awareness around its effectiveness in child welfare serving agencies. The committee plans to increase access to alternative services for Dually Involved Youth by identifying deficits in services and engaging key stakeholders throughout the county. The committee will also take on a more active role in existing diversion work within the county by working with the City of Worcester and the Worcester Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (WYVPI) and through the launch of the DYS/OCA Diversion Learning Lab, run by Family Continuity, a mental health and social services supporting agency in Central Massachusetts.

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# 2022 Outlook



## WHAT TO EXPECT FROM JDAI IN 2022?

- Release of documentary film *Seeing RED 2.0: Moving from Change to Transformation* told through the voices of youth and families of color
- Race/Equity Listening Sessions
- DIY Case Conferencing Manual
- Policy brief on the *Experience of Latinx Youth in the Juvenile Justice System*
- Relaunch of interactive JDAI Data Dashboards
- JDAI expansion into other counties (Berkshire)