

# *Pennsylvania Progress*

## Juvenile Justice Achievements in Pennsylvania

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### **Juvenile Accountability, Continued: Update on the JAIBG Program in Pennsylvania**

by Patrick Griffin

Two years ago, readers of *Pennsylvania Progress* got an early look at the ambitious federal pass-through grant program known as JAIBG—the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant program—and the broad range of local juvenile justice initiatives being supported by the program during its first year in Pennsylvania. (See *Juvenile Accountability in Pennsylvania*, Summer 1999, Vol. 6, No. 3.) JAIBG is a large-scale effort, now in its third year, to promote juvenile accountability nationwide through incentive grants to local communities. To date, nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars has been appropriated for JAIBG grants. Pennsylvania's share of these funds—allocated and distributed to local government units by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and its Juvenile Advisory Committee (JAC)—has come to just over \$8 million in each of the program's first two years, and about \$7.5 million in the current year.

What effect has all that spending had here? What sorts of changes has it made? Most local JAIBG-funded projects were barely off the drawing board the last time *Pennsylvania Progress* took a look at them. But a recently completed evaluation of JAIBG implementation in Pennsylvania, conducted for the PCCD by the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ), offers a more current and comprehensive look at the experience of local communities participating in the JAIBG program—not only the projects to which JAIBG funds have been devoted but the planning and collaboration behind the projects, the obstacles local organizers have encountered in getting them off the ground, the outcomes they've aimed for, the successes they've achieved, and the lessons they've learned.

#### **A BROAD-BRUSH PORTRAIT**

**Pennsylvania Progress** is a publication of the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ)—the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. It is distributed to juvenile justice professionals within the Commonwealth and nationwide to acquaint them with important achievements of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Technical Assistance materials and additional information on the topics presented are available from NCJJ at (412) 227-6950.

**NCJJ**

NCJJ's assessment of JAIBG in Pennsylvania was based on a review and analysis of applications and reports from JAIBG grant recipients, a telephone survey of local officials, and a series of in-person visits to JAIBG-funded project sites throughout Pennsylvania. In all, about 160 local officials in 47 counties were interviewed in connection with the evaluation, which was conducted over a 21-month period beginning in January 2000.

The picture of JAIBG that emerges from all these sources is a complex one, but some of its primary features are clear:

- " *Initial Implementation:*  
Pennsylvania got off the mark in implementing JAIBG more quickly and smoothly than many other states. The local apathy and confusion that delayed program implementation elsewhere—in extreme cases, all but nullifying the program in the first year—were largely unknown here. Initial training and orientation efforts seem to have paid off.
- " *Fund Distribution:*  
JAIBG funds have been spread far and wide in Pennsylvania. In part because of the PCCD's early decision to waive the full "administrative" share of JAIBG funds to which it was entitled under federal law, each of the state's 67 counties was eligible for a grant of at least \$20,000 during each of the program's first three years. In all, 53 counties, or nearly 80% of the total, have applied for and received grants, along with a handful of municipalities. More than a third of all participating counties have been small or rural. Though these minimum-allocation counties were subject to the same planning and reporting burdens as counties receiving much larger grants, small county officials reported overwhelmingly favorable views of the JAIBG program, and none have dropped out of the program on account of allocation amount.
- " *Planning and Collaboration:*  
Local multidisciplinary planning bodies established for JAIBG purposes tended to be large, diverse, and relatively active. In many cases, the networking, collaboration, and information-sharing involved in putting together JAIBG plans proved to be of lasting value to local juvenile justice systems.
- " *Use of Funds:* In its first three years, JAIBG has funded an extraordinary variety of programs and services in Pennsylvania, ranging all the way from values education for seven-year-olds in

rural Franklin County to intensive police-probation sweeps of "hot spots" in Philadelphia's highest-crime neighborhoods. In general, however, JAIBG-funded programs have tended to target less serious offenders for swift and certain responses, often through diversion from formal processing.

- " *Balanced and Restorative Justice:*  
Given the mission that guides the juvenile justice system in Pennsylvania, JAIBG has had a distinct BARJ flavor here. Local approaches to accountability have tended to encompass prevention and early intervention with young offenders, community and victim involvement, and system accountability as well as toughened sanctions.
- " *Overall Perceptions:*  
Officials from most local jurisdictions participating in JAIBG expressed strongly positive views of the program, affirming that it had enhanced their communities' ability to hold juveniles accountable. Most rated their individual JAIBG-funded projects as successful as well. But they tended to be skeptical regarding the sustainability of local initiatives in the absence of federal funding. And a significant minority of juvenile probation chiefs, particularly in small counties, complained that JAIBG had done little to help them with their primary problem, which is constant turnover due to inadequate salaries.

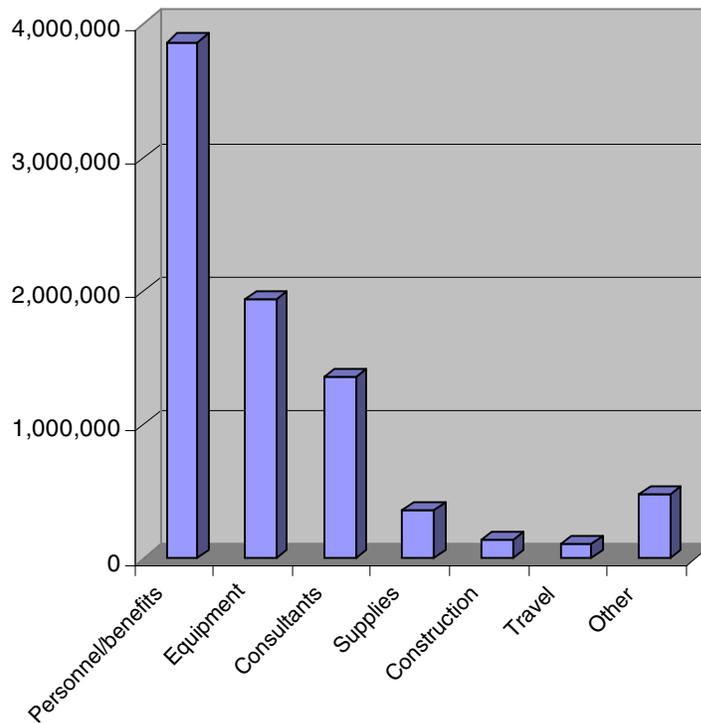
## ENTRY-LEVEL ACCOUNTABILITY

One of the more surprising findings of NCJJ's assessment was the extent to which JAIBG efforts in Pennsylvania have been aimed at low-level and first-time offenders—rather than serious, chronic, violent ones. JAIBG, after all, was billed as a "get-tough" program targeting dangerous juvenile criminals. More than half the enumerated purpose areas for which local JAIBG expenditures are authorized involve

**JAIBG BUDGET ANALYSIS**

The NCJJ evaluation of the JAIBG program in Pennsylvania included a detailed review and analysis of first-year budgets submitted by local units of government as part of the JAIBG application process. Budget numbers from all 55 first-year JAIBG applications approved by the PCCD were entered into a database and analyzed by NCJJ staff to determine how JAIBG funds were being expended locally. Personnel turned out to be the most commonly listed budget item, and by far the largest area of budget expenditure as well:

- “ 45 of 55 grantees (82%) planned expenditures for personnel
- “ \$3.8 million in combined personnel and benefit costs represented 47% of total application budgets
- “ Other big budget items included equipment and consultants



Source: Griffin, P. (2001.) *Evaluation of the Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Program in Pennsylvania*. Pittsburgh, PA: National Center for Juvenile Justice.

A review of budgets in the third year of the program revealed a slightly different pattern. Personnel costs still led the way: 72% of all grantees included personnel costs in their third-year budgets, and the combined \$4.6 million in personnel and benefit costs represented 57% of the total third-year JAIBG program budgets. But the volume of spending on consultants grew so much that, by the third year, grantees budgeted nearly \$2 million for consultants, or 24% of the total—making this the second largest spending category. By contrast, the proportion of JAIBG funds devoted to buying tangible things has diminished over time. By the third year of the program, the combined total devoted to equipment and supply purchases had dwindled to 11% of overall expenditures.

gangs, guns, drugs, or violence. Nevertheless, the most common program type funded by JAIBG in Pennsylvania has turned out to be front-end diversion. A total of 26 local communities (more than 40% of those funded overall) have made use of some or all of their JAIBG allocations over the first three years to divert young offenders from formal juvenile justice processing.

“The system used to lose these kids,” says Tim Ward, whose position as the Erie County Juvenile Probation Department’s Failure to Comply (FTC) Officer was established with JAIBG funds in the first year of the program. The kids he’s referring to are those who fail to pay fines after receiving citations from police—typically for disorderly school conduct (fighting, threatening teachers, etc.) in violation of “zero tolerance” policies. In the past, these FTC cases were routinely referred to line probation officers, where they received the lowest priority treatment, and tended to stack up over time, until even locating the offenders involved would have been difficult and time-consuming. Occasionally, a case that originated with the failure to pay a fine of a few hundred dollars ended up consuming many times that amount in court and even placement costs. But more often, nothing at all was done—which sent precisely the wrong message to the young people involved, especially those poised on the brink of more seriously delinquent careers.

Now, thanks to JAIBG, that’s less likely to happen. Ward’s only job is to track down and informally adjust FTC cases, giving the young people involved a choice between paying the fines they owe or working them off at churches, libraries, museums, recreational facilities, nonprofit organizations, and other community service sites. “We wanted to make them accountable,” Ward says, underscoring the sense in which the FTC program, though targeting relatively trivial offenses, fits squarely into JAIBG’s broader purposes. This is entry-level accountability: “We hope we send you on your way, and you do not return. For the most part, that’s what we’ve been seeing. First-offenders get a taste of what the system is like,

and they really don’t like it. It’s a wake-up call, a warning.”

## PROBATION PLUS

A total of 18 Pennsylvania communities (about 29% of those participating) have used JAIBG funds to support specialized/enhanced probation programs—school-based and aftercare probation, various forms of intensive probation, and probation programs for adolescents with substance abuse problems or sex offense histories—making this the next most common JAIBG-funded program category. Many of these efforts have involved not just different approaches to probation supervision, but innovative collaborations between juvenile probation and other disciplines.

In Philadelphia, for example, the Youth Violence Reduction Project (YVRP) teams juvenile and adult probation officers, police sweep units, and indigenous “Streetworkers” in an intensive surveillance and monitoring effort aimed at clamping down on “essentially the one hundred most potentially violent youth on aftercare probation” in Kensington and North Philadelphia, two of the city’s most dangerous neighborhoods, according to YVRP Supervisor James King of the Philadelphia Family Court’s Juvenile Branch. Loosely modeled on Boston’s celebrated Operation Nightlight, YVRP also depends upon ongoing cooperation from the District Attorney’s office and the local courts, including expedited processing for those who are caught violating their probation. YVRP originated as a response to the unprecedented urban homicide rates of the mid-1990’s, and was in the works before JAIBG came along, but local planners saw JAIBG as an opportunity to fund supervisor/coordinator positions in several of the agencies involved in the effort, as well as to pay for the services of the neighborhood Streetworkers who act as advocates and mentors for the young people in the program and help to link them with community supports.

The collaborative approach can bring peace to troubled communities, backers of the program say, and save lives too. Since YVRP's inception in 1999, for example, only two of the young men who have been involved in the program have been implicated in violent deaths—one as a victim and the other as a perpetrator. "In the 27 years I've been here, this is the most exciting thing I've been involved in," King says. "This is what I call real probation work."

JAIBG has made it possible for other juvenile probation departments to experiment with multidisciplinary collaborations. In York County, the JAIBG-funded JUMP program—Juvenile Probation United with Mental Health Programming—assigns adjudicated delinquents with diagnosed mental health disorders to a team consisting of a juvenile probation officer, a privately contracted family therapist, and a York County Mental Health caseworker who has been put on the juvenile probation payroll. The idea is to keep troubled young people in the community and out of inappropriate and/or expensive placements, by creating an interagency "group home without walls." Each member of the JUMP team has a distinct role—intensive probation supervision, therapy, and casework services, respectively—but they work together out of the same building, conducting the initial family interview as a group, and conferring in weekly case reviews in which they share information and insights regarding clients and draw on one another's professional knowledge and strengths. "We know the kids so much better," JUMP Coordinator Ron Crone says. And, adds his colleague, JUMP Intensive Case Manager Debra Naugle, "Our knowledge of each others' jobs has increased a hundredfold."

The same kinds of benefits are flowing from Allegheny County's Comprehensive Mental Health Assessment and Treatment of Juvenile Sex Offenders Program, now in its third year of JAIBG funding. It's a partnership between the county juvenile probation department's Special Services Unit (SSU) for sex offenders and the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center's Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic (WPIC), featuring regular consultation between the

clinicians who assess and treat the adjudicated sex offenders in the program and the juvenile probation officers who counsel and supervise them. Besides adding a vital treatment component to the county's handling of this special population, says SSU Supervisor Mary Lee Tracy, the partnership gives her probation officers "a lot more material" to go on in working with their SSU clients. "You learn things you wouldn't learn otherwise," she explains. "It helps overcome denial."

## ACCOUNTABILITY TO VICTIMS

Victims of juvenile offenders have been the intended beneficiaries of JAIBG-funded initiatives in 13 local jurisdictions (20% of those participating), making victims' programs the third most common use of JAIBG funds in Pennsylvania. Some grant recipients, like Blair County, sought to improve their overall system responsiveness and sensitivity to victims—generally by hiring victim/witness coordinators or consultants to train personnel and revamp procedures. Others, like Schuylkill County, established or beefed up restitution payment programs. Still other counties—Chester, Butler—took steps of various kinds to promote "victim awareness" and empathy among juvenile offenders. And this doesn't even count the many other JAIBG-supported programs, particularly diversion programs, that expose offenders to victim awareness training as a sideline.

There's a reason for the attention to victims' interests in local JAIBG programming here: victims' advocates were involved in the planning from the beginning. Although all applicants for JAIBG funds were required to form multidisciplinary juvenile justice planning coalitions that would identify local accountability-based needs and propose projects for funding on the basis of those needs, federal JAIBG guidelines did not stipulate that victims' services representatives should sit on those coalitions. Pennsylvania did—in keeping with the balanced and restorative justice mission and guiding principles it has formally adopted for its juvenile

justice system. And it seems to have made a difference.

Admittedly, many of the steps taken in this area have been, in effect, first steps. “We realized we were weak” in terms of outreach and sensitivity to victims, Blair County Chief Juvenile Probation Officer Nancy Williams says, describing the state of her juvenile court prior to the engagement of a victims’ services consultant in JAIBG’s first year. Victims of juvenile offenders got nothing from the court in those days but a couple of forms, she says. Not even a cover letter: “That was it. It was pathetic.” JAIBG made possible the first small but important changes in attitudes and procedures—more information for victims, more sensitively worded forms, waiting areas that were separate from those used by accused offenders—that have since been supported and institutionalized by other funding streams, such as the Victims of Juvenile Offenders (VOJO) program. According to Linda Ringdal, one of two Victim-Witness Coordinators that have been hired in Blair County with VOJO grant funds, “JAIBG was perfect in that it helped us prepare an action plan for the Victims’ Bill of Rights.”

## JAIBG IN SCHOOL

School-related initiatives of various kinds were supported by JAIBG grants in 8 local jurisdictions, or about 13% of those participating in the program. JAIBG funds have been used in support of law- and values-related educational programs as well as efforts to improve school safety—with security equipment and on-site security training and conflict resolution efforts in one case, the organization of a coordinated law enforcement response to school violence in another, and the hiring of a School Resource Officer in a third.

JAIBG money has also been used to set up truancy reduction programs in several localities. Among the most interesting and ambitious is the Truancy Reduction and Curfew for Kids (TRACK) program in Bucks County, a

collaborative anti-truancy program involving school districts, social services agencies, specially designated “truancy courts,” and municipal police departments as well as Bucks County Juvenile Probation. School-age young people who are cited by police with violations of daytime curfew ordinances during TRACK truancy sweeps in participating communities get more than just a date with a magistrate. They get attention from youth and family service agencies, who arrange home visits, counseling, drug and alcohol services, school conferences, and whatever else is necessary to address the underlying causes of the truancy. “Agency workers routinely find parents who condone truancy,” says TRACK Project Coordinator Karen Kreller. In such situations—where, as Kreller puts it, “the mom is sacked out on one sofa, the kid on the other”—daytime curfew enforcement is “just the doorway” into the family’s difficulties, a way to “stop a problem before it gets out of control.”

Besides connecting troubled youth and their families with sources of help, Kreller says, TRACK also appears to have dramatically boosted attendance in some local schools, and arguably reduced juvenile crime during school hours as well. Bill Ford, Bucks County’s Chief Juvenile Probation Officer, is enthusiastic about the county-wide cross-disciplinary collaboration that has made these results possible. “Before, we weren’t talking frequently,” he says. “What JAIBG got me involved in was being able to face-to-face with senior command officers from police departments, school administrators, mental health people, Children & Youth people, private providers, district justices. That group had never formally met.”

## EVERYTHING ELSE

Although diversion, specialized probation, victims’ and school programs happen to be the four most common uses of JAIBG funds to date, they come nowhere near exhausting the list. In fact, the flexibility of JAIBG as a funding mechanism is such that JAIBG money in

Pennsylvania has found its way into the budgets of an astonishing array of program types, including electronic monitoring, house arrest, and similar programs (7 counties); computer-related information management and information-sharing improvements (6 counties); dedicated juvenile district attorney and/or public defender positions (6 counties); tutoring, empathy-building, anger management, and other forms of competency development (6 counties) as well job preparation and/or job placement programs for offenders (3 counties).

These don't exhaust the list either. JAIBG funds established, expanded, or otherwise helped support targeted law enforcement programs led by five municipal police departments; five expedited case-handling initiatives; four construction projects; three balanced and restorative justice coordinator or aide positions; three local evaluation studies; two needs assessments; two weekend sanctions programs and an after-school reporting program; two videoconferencing initiatives; two probation officer safety programs; and the purchase of plenty of equipment devoted to miscellaneous purposes.

JAIBG has funded "innovation," as some of the above program descriptions make clear. But it has also made it possible for many strapped counties to shore up known weaknesses, to fill gaps in services—or to do what they've been doing all along, only better. Replacing ancient computers. Adding staff positions. Buying cars so that probation officers making home visits don't have to run theirs into the ground. "We didn't have the luxury of trying something new," Blair County's Nancy Williams says. "We had too many needs."

## LOOKING FORWARD

It's not too early to start thinking about ways JAIBG funding could help Pennsylvania communities meet local needs in the next year. The federal government has already appropriated more than \$7.8 million for Pennsylvania in the fourth year of the JAIBG

program. The PCCD is now working out the exact JAIBG allocations for qualifying local government units around the state, and will notify them by letter when the process is completed some time in November. But local allocations should be roughly the same as in the program's third year—which means that even the smallest counties will have a minimum of \$20,000 to work with.

Depending on the local circumstances, that might be enough to hire an additional probation officer or a special program aide, buy landscaping equipment for a community service program, contract with a treatment provider for drug and alcohol or other services for juveniles, add needed security equipment, upgrade an automated information system, acquire a car for the use of probation officers or a van to transport probationers to work sites—all of which have been done by counties receiving minimum allocations during the first three years of JAIBG. A local funding match may be required, but it's only 10% (except where the project involves construction of a permanent facility, in which case it's 50%). And as anyone who has participated during the program's first three years can tell you, the PCCD has consistently granted local communities the flexibility they need to adapt JAIBG program requirements to local realities.

A copy of the full report of NCJJ's evaluation of the JAIBG program in Pennsylvania will soon be available for downloading at PCCD's website ([www.pccd.state.pa.us/](http://www.pccd.state.pa.us/)). If you would like to know more about JAIBG funding opportunities, contact JAIBG Coordinator Don Sadler at (717) 787-8559 ext. 3033, or JAIBG Monitor Tara Kasper at (717) 787-8559 ext. 3089.



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