



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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## PRESS RELEASE

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### COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE LEADERSHIP RECOGNIZED

Demonstrating its leadership in reducing juvenile detention and improving outcomes among youth offenders, a delegation of Santa Cruz County justice system stakeholders recently participated in the 25-year anniversary of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI).

Started as a pilot project to reduce reliance on local confinement of court-involved youth, the JDAI model is now operating in nearly 300 counties nationwide. It was one of the first programs to recognize the problem of a growing population in jails and prisons, and was founded on the principle that despite posing little or no public safety threat, youth placed into locked detention centers prior to court hearings face significantly increased odds they will be committed to corrections facilities and reduced prospects for future success.

Santa Cruz County was the first national replication site for JDAI, has been a national model site for JDAI since 2000 and has hosted juvenile justice stakeholders from across the country interested in replicating local successes. The County has worked continuously to improve outcomes for youth by strategic engagement of justice system stakeholders and community members. Current and former justice system leaders were featured in the 25th anniversary video created to mark the Annie E. Casey Foundation's historic milestone in justice reforms.

"As a juvenile judge, I am excited to be working collaboratively with our Probation Department, public safety officers and community leaders to improve outcomes for youth in our delinquency system," Santa Cruz County Judge Rebecca Connolly said. "I was honored to be part of the delegation and reflect



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upon Santa Cruz's role as a leader in implementing alternatives to detention in our juvenile justice system and strategizing about improving outcomes for youth. It was inspiring to be a part of a collaboration committed to improving public safety and positive youth development."

According to a report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation celebrating the 25-year anniversary of JDAI, participating jurisdictions have collectively reduced the annual number of days in juvenile detention by about 1.4 million days; cut the overall annual admissions by 49 percent — about 90,000 admissions; and documented juvenile crime falling by more than 40 percent, on average, across all indicators evaluated.

Along with Judge Connolly, Santa Cruz County Probation Chief Fernando Giraldo and several members of his team; Watsonville Police Chief David Honda; and representatives of Santa Cruz County Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, the Santa Cruz County Administrative Office and United Way of Santa Cruz County also attended the conference, which was held in Orlando, Fla.

To view a video commemorating 25 years of the JDAI (featuring interviews with local officials), visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eH9ejXLXMRO>

To read the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "JDAI at 25" report, visit: <http://www.aecf.org/resources/jdai-at-25>.