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Alternatives sought for juveniles in trouble

Home News Tribune Online 10/7/06

STAFF REPORT

UNION COUNTY — Juvenile justice reform that offers better outcomes for youths while maintaining public safety is being sought under a new program in Union County.

The county was one of two in the state chosen by the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission to participate in the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative places a strong emphasis on collaboration and integration among various state and county agencies and institutions involved in the juvenile justice system. Participants in the program work to assist Family Court judges in identifying more viable community-based programs for youth as alternatives to incarceration where appropriate.

"It's important to find alternatives to incarceration when dealing with troubled youth, especially those deemed 'low risk.' Through the JDAI we are able to present those particular youth with feasible alternatives including community-based programs," said Freeholder Chairman Alexander Mirabella.

In December 1992, the Annie E. Casey Foundation launched the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative project. New Jersey became a statewide program site in April 2004.

Currently there are five pilot juvenile alternative program sites in New Jersey; Atlantic, Camden, Essex, Hudson and Monmouth counties. The New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission wants to have 10 counties participating 00001in the program by 2007.

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