The Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) would like to thank the following for making this project possible:

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP): OJJDP provided funding support for this project. OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports the efforts of states, tribes, and communities to develop and implement effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that enhance public safety, ensure youth are held appropriately accountable to both crime victims and communities, and empower youth to live productive, law-abiding lives.

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Children’s Services Agency: Juvenile Justice Programs staff Lawana Jarrett, Juvenile Justice Technical Assistance and Program Manager and Broderick Dwyer, Department Analyst provided project oversight and technical assistance and support. MDHSS provides opportunities, services, and programs that promote a healthy, safe, and stable environment for residents to be self-sufficient. Their vision is to develop and encourage measurable health, safety, and self-sufficiency outcomes that reduce and prevent risks, promote equity, foster healthy habits, and transform the health and human services system to improve the lives of Michigan families. MDHHS does not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, genetic information, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, political beliefs or disability.

Public Policy Associates Inc (PPA): Robb Burroughs, Project Manager at PPA, served on the project steering team, and contributed to the overall planning and direction of the project, focusing specifically on the project components requiring data collection and analysis. PPA provides clients across the country with the evaluation, research, and strategic consultation to make smart public policy decisions that improve lives, enrich communities, and strengthen institutions.

Family Court Administrators: The following juvenile courts provided technical assistance and peer mentorship for the urban, suburban, and rural pilot sites for the Michigan Juvenile Justice Continuum of Care Initiative (MJJCCI):

- Berrien County Trial Court, Family Division: Elvin Gonzalez, Family Division Administrator, provided technical assistance and peer mentorship for the urban county pilot site.

- 20th Circuit Court, Family Division, Ottawa County: Sandi Metcalf, Court Director, provided technical assistance and peer mentorship for the suburban and rural county pilot sites.

- 42nd Circuit Court, Family Division, Midland County: Michele Bell, Juvenile Care Center Assistant Director/Court Services Director, provided technical assistance and peer mentorship for the urban county pilot site.

Urban, Suburban, and Rural Pilot Sites: Juvenile Justice professionals from the three juvenile courts, including judges, court administrators and probation staff, participated in the MJJCCI as pilot sites, with the goal of improving their local systems to reduce the use of out of home placements for justice-involved youth.
The Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the effectiveness of policies and systems that address the prevention and reduction of youth and adult crime. Founded in 1956, MCCD believes everyone is entitled to equal access and treatment within justice and human service systems and the public must be an informed and active participant in developing crime prevention and reduction policies. Through research, collaboration, and advocacy-oriented strategies, MCCD works to shape public policy, educate justice system stakeholders, and support the safety of all Michigan communities.
National data illustrates that the majority of states are reducing the number of youth in residential placement and secure detention. Instead, jurisdictions are implementing community-based programs which cost less, reduce reoffending, and improve youth and family well-being.

Michigan is following this national trend. Across the state, justice-involved youth are increasingly treated and supervised while remaining at home, or rehabilitated in less restrictive environments. Since the height of the tough on crime era in the mid to late 1990’s, Michigan has closed eleven state-run youth facilities, decreased youth placement by thousands, and begun increasing the use of community-based programs at the local level.

However, despite its progress, the state still remains among the highest in the nation for confining youth in public and private facilities. The majority of these young people present with histories of trauma, are served by the child welfare or mental health systems, struggle in school, and are disproportionately youth of color.

To combat this issue, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) answered the call to OJJDP’s 2016 Smart on Juvenile Justice: Reducing Out-of-Home Placement Initiative with a strategy to shift state and local priorities towards community-based programs and away from youth placement: the Michigan Juvenile Justice Continuum of Care Initiative (MJJCCI). This report outlines the structure, implementation, and early outcomes of the MJJCCI, including lessons learned to encourage continued success and replication.
MICHIGAN’S OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYSTEMIC IMPROVEMENTS

The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) is responsible for establishing state-level policy, operating two state facilities, and service monitoring and funding. Conversely, the state’s 83 counties and 57 circuit courts overwhelmingly maintain responsibility for justice-involved youth and have great autonomy in deciding how local care is provided. As a result, no two local jurisdictions deliver juvenile justice in the same way. Much of this variance is due to county resources, differing capacities for youth program providers, various levels of data collection, and overall local discretion, either by the judiciary or other youth justice stakeholders.

There is also limited funding to expand community-based services. One main resource, the Child Care Fund (CCF), pays for 50% of eligible juvenile community-based services in Michigan. Accessing the CCF requires up-front investment by the county to pay for the service before seeking partial reimbursement. As a result, counties with limited local funding can have more trouble than wealthier counties when using this key resource. Other funding sources do exist, including federal funds and private or local grant dollars. However, these sources require significant investments of time to apply with no guarantee of success; if successful, the funding is frequently limited as most grants are not long-term.

Supervision agencies that have seen positive outcomes recognize that transforming the role of officers requires realigning their mission, vision, and day-to-day practices to support their staff as agents of change

—Ed Latessa and Myrinda Schweitzer Smith, University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute
The Michigan Juvenile Justice Continuum of Care Initiative (MJJCCI) had two main goals: To 1) improve the overall outcomes of justice-involved youth with trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate services in the community and 2) reduce the number of confined youth. To meet these goals, the MJJCCI stakeholders used a multi-pronged approach including activities such as:

- Creating a cross-system planning team to assess the use of juvenile community-based programs and the existence of related data;
- Identifying and building county pilot sites to foster new local strategic plans and community-based programming;
- Developing educational resources and expanding outreach to juvenile justice partners to sustain and replicate successful local continuums of care across the state.

There were three main groups of stakeholders participating in MJJCCI: The statewide steering team; an ad hoc cross-systems planning team; and local pilot site implementation teams.

The project steering team was led by the MDHHS Division of Children’s Services Agency, and included partnerships with the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD), a non-profit organization dedicated to youth and adult justice advocacy and systemic improvements; and Public Policy Associates, Inc. (PPA), an independent public policy research and consulting firm. The youth representative from the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice was also engaged as a steering team advisor.

Each of the steering team members maintained separate project responsibilities. MDHHS, the lead grantee from OJJDP, maintained the funding and overall grant reporting responsibilities. MCCD was subcontracted to provide staffing, administration, consultation, and coordination for the statewide project. This also included creating trainings and accompanying materials, aiding in the formation and facilitation of local planning teams, and assistance in data collection and evaluation.

PPA served as advisors on the steering team in overall planning and direction of the project, especially focused on data collection and analysis. This included partnering with the technical assistance teams and working directly with local stakeholders as they implemented and evaluated their pilot sites.

Ad Hoc Cross-Systems Planning Team

Steering Team members invited additional experts to participate in the project planning, including representatives from the State Court Administrative Office, the University of Michigan Child and Adolescent Data Lab and juvenile court administrators who had successfully reduced out-of-home placements in their jurisdictions. This group, whose participants changed depending on the planning need, helped determine available data, crafted interest and eligibility surveys, provided outreach to juvenile courts, and aided in the selection of an urban, suburban and rural county to invite as pilot sites.⁵

Local Pilot Site Implementation Teams

A key component of MJJCCI was to pilot and replicate successful countywide planning and implementation strategies to reduce youth detainments and increase community-based care.

After counties voluntarily agreed to participate in MJJCCI, local teams were formed to design and implement pilot site activities. Each local team was led by the juvenile courts and assigned representatives from MCCD and MDHHS to help with coordination. Most importantly, the teams were also matched with two technical assistance (TA) mentors from other counties who were previously successful at reducing youth detainments and operating model community-based programming. The TA mentors aided with strategic planning and overall guidance and troubleshooting during local pilot site implementation. The teams met monthly to check-in on progress, data reporting, and any other changes to the site.
ENGAGING YOUTH AND FAMILIES

One of the objectives of MJJCCI was to improve the visibility and collective voice of justice-involved youth and their families. This proved challenging to implement at the state planning level. Youth currently under court supervision are typically focused on completing school work and other programming during business hours and are not available for planning meetings. However, the statewide steering team did engage the youth representative from the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, the governing body overseeing the implementation of the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Act, on an advisory basis.

At the local level, the pilot sites were more successful. The Rural and Suburban sites invited system-impacted youth to participate in planning and needs assessments during large stakeholder meetings and community forums. The Urban site creatively engaged youth in outreach and buy-in activities with a youth-led basketball tournament with law enforcement called Hoops for Heroes.
Once the partners were in place and a project work plan was developed, the MJJCCI steering team guided implementation of key activities. In addition to working with the pilot site teams, the steering team members conducted statewide data assessments, developed training and resource guides, and co-hosted a state roundtable with juvenile justice leaders.

STATEWIDE DATA COLLECTION AND ASSESSMENT OF PROGRAMS

Data advisors on the ad hoc planning team were invited to help assess the baseline of juvenile justice information available, as well as any gaps. Information on the types of community-based programs across the state was easily gathered; however data on effectiveness and overall use of placement and community-based programs proved more difficult to obtain. The team determined that no statewide data existed to provide an accurate statewide analysis and decided to work with individual counties through various data surveys in order to move the MJJCCI forward.

COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS TOOLKIT AND RESOURCE GUIDE

First published in 2013, the Toolkit and Resource Guide was developed by MCCD to assist Michigan’s juvenile courts, service providers, and other juvenile justice stakeholders to enhance their array of community-based programs. It provides an overview of proven, evidence-based practices and tools that can be applied when implementing risk assessments, community-based programs, and evaluations. MDHHS also encouraged the use of this Toolkit among their In-Home Community Care Grant recipients as they began creating and implementing new programming.

MCCD created and updated an online version for further use in developing and enhancing community-based services in participating counties, as well as other local partners going forward. This new version provides more information on sustaining programs and long-term funding, such as investing in information management; a clear process for linking risk/needs assessment to case planning; expanding programming and partnerships; ongoing training and technical assistance needs; and tracking success through evaluation.

IN-HOME COMMUNITY CARE:

From 2014 to 2018 the legislature funded the In-Home Community Care Grants, a reinvestment strategy to increase resources for community-based programs in rural Michigan. This approach focused primarily on financial incentives to encourage improvements at the local level. Operated by MDHHS, twenty rural counties participated in the IHC Grants and implemented new, or enhanced existing, evidence-based community programs aimed at youth who would otherwise be placed out-of-home. While the IHC Grant was defunded, most of the new programs were eventually sustained by the CCF or other sources and over 350 youth were kept from out-of-home placement during the four years of the grant operation.
IMPLEMENTATION

MICHIGAN SAFETY AND JUSTICE ROUNDTABLE

In September 2018, leaders in the field of youth justice convened for a full-day Michigan Safety and Justice Roundtable event devoted to “co-creating a vision for effective and equitable juvenile justice in Michigan.” Hosted by the Hudson Webber Foundation and the Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, with assistance from MJJCCI partners, the Roundtable assembled experts from local and state government, members of the judiciary, law enforcement, academics, community leaders, and philanthropic investors to share promising practices, common challenges, and to craft common-sense policy recommendations to move Michigan’s justice system forward. Input from participants was used to develop a report containing a series of briefings on statewide issues impacting the juvenile justice system, including data collection, evidence-based practices, community-based programming, diversion and prevention strategies.

TRAINING TO DEVELOP COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

MDHHS hosted a statewide training for rural juvenile court administrators called, “Creating Collaborative Partnerships to Benefit Court-Involved Youth: How to Expand the Continuum-of-Care in your Community,” to expand community-based services by developing relationships with partners who have access to Medicaid, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), and Workforce, Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) resources. MDHHS and MCCD jointly developed a curriculum for the training, which included opportunities for participants to hear from Medicaid, ESSA, and WIOA experts; learn from counties that have successfully partnered with federal and state agencies; and, problem-solve about how to create partnerships with their local agencies to access/develop additional services for court-involved youth.
COUNTY PILOT SITES

The project pilot sites provided critical information on how juvenile justice continuums of care could be expanded to reduce youth confinement across the state. All of the pilot teams carefully chose project designs that fit their unique local needs and could be incorporated into their everyday work, ensuring sustainability after the grant funding expired.

Ultimately, the three local teams initiated pilots intended to improve their juvenile justice system in various ways, including increasing diversion for youth with low-risk offenses; minimizing the use of secure confinement as a sanction for technical violations of probation; and increasing the number of evidence-based programs used by juvenile courts.

PILOT SELECTION AND SET-UP PROCESS

To gain buy-in and identify sites, the steering team sent surveys to every court with support from the Michigan Association of Family Court Administrators and the Northern Michigan Juvenile Officers Association. (See Appendix 1). These surveys asked questions related to selection criteria crafted by the steering team, including information about:

- Rates of detention and out-of-home placements;
- Interest in receiving technical assistance and participating as a pilot site; and
- Readiness or capacity for local improvements.

Twelve juvenile courts responded to the survey and the information shared was compared to data compiled for Michigan’s OJJDP annual report. County rates of youth confinement were established for each responding court using U.S. Census data to determine the total number of youth aged 10-16 and any potential errors or inaccuracies were resolved through follow-up conversations with respondents. This baseline information informed the pilot site selection process by prioritizing the courts by confinement rate, region, size and readiness for change. Finally, steering team conversations with prioritized sites led to the selection and confirmation of one urban, rural and suburban county for the project.
AGREEMENTS

Following selection and confirmation, agreements among the project partners were drafted, revised, and executed. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally created an agreement between pilots, technical assistance providers, the grant manager and project manager agency. It delineated roles and responsibilities of each party and provided contact information, timelines, and terms for modifying or terminating the agreement.

Second, a written Data Sharing Agreement was needed. This agreement was critical to establishing trust for all of the MJJCCI partners and provided a clear understanding of the reporting and analysis process for the project, as well as the underlying goals for capturing and evaluating the information. The agreement was made between PPA (the evaluating agency) and the pilot sites, and conducted on behalf of, and shared with, MDHHS and MCCD. It identified the primary data set to be used, the data transfer protocol, and ensured the data was aggregated and de-identified. It also included the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder and addressed data security and confidentiality, permissible uses, publication and dissemination, indemnifications, and terms for modifying or terminating the agreement.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE MENTORS

A critical feature of the pilot projects was to match the pilot sites with technical assistance (TA) peer mentors. This included representatives from Berrien County Trial Court, Family Division; 20th Circuit Court, Family Division, Ottawa County; and the 42nd Circuit Court, Family Division, Midland County. The mentoring pairs were matched based on their compatibility to the pilot site, including court type, caseloads, county populations, and any existing relationship. Because of the distance between most mentors and pilot sites, most meetings were conducted by conference calls where mentors shared resources, engaged in collective problem-solving, and provided moral support for the local pilot stakeholders.

These voluntary TA mentors were Michigan juvenile court leaders who had already implemented improvements to reduce their jurisdiction’s use of out-of-home placements. Similar to engaging the pilot sites, gauging buy-in, workload availability, knowledge of the unique needs of pilot site systems, and overall capacity were key factors to consider prior to onboarding the TA mentors. These stakeholders took on the mentoring roles as representatives of their courts, thus needing appropriate permissions from their local leaders and chief judges to take on the commitment of extra work as part of their daily tasks and to share any work-product from their counties. Additionally, while TA mentors signed MOUs and sharing agreements that outlined their clear roles to serve as successful examples and aid in the development of the local pilots, it was understood by all that this commitment with the pilot site likely meant more than just a one-time project; like any mentoring relationship, it was intended as a peer-to-peer connection that could bolster innovations and progress for years to come.
MDHHS PROJECT-BASED GRANTS
MDHHS identified additional funds and awarded them to the pilot sites to implement new training and/or software that helped support the project’s goals. These $32,000 grants also included a travel stipend for the TA mentors.

PILOT SITE NARRATIVES
Implementing an evidence-based decision-making platform such as an intake process to expedite low-risk youth to diversion programs

URBAN COUNTY PILOT SITE
The Urban County entered into the MJJCCI project with an overall goal of “creating a treatment-oriented and data-driven juvenile justice system that emphasizes local, evidence-based programs for moderate and high-risk youth, and expedites low-risk youth to evidenced-based diversion programs.” Their project focused on three main areas of improvement:

1. Reducing use of secure detention for low-risk youth and technical violations of probation

As a primary step towards reducing secure detention for low-risk youth, the Urban County implemented the Accountability and Incentives Management Program (AIM Program), which was adapted from the TA mentor’s Administrative Sanctions Program. This program, based on evidence-based practices, ensures swift, certain and equitable sanctions for technical and non-criminal violations, by utilizing a Graduated Sanctions Matrix for youth on probation or with other Court-operated community-based services (See Appendix 2). Additionally, the Urban County updated their case management system to include weekly detention reports. These reports now include a Youth Level of Service (YLS) risk and needs assessment and programming and supervision are based upon these reports.

2. Implementing an evidence-based decision-making platform such as an intake process to expedite low-risk youth to diversion programs

To ensure proper service delivery for each court-involved youth in the Urban County, probation staff also went through a six to eight month Effective Practices in Community Supervision (EPICS) training conducted by specialists at the University of Cincinnati, in order to help translate the risk, needs, and responsivity principles into practice and aid in their use of the new decision-making platform.

The county also implemented an intake process to expedite low-risk youth to appropriate diversion programs. Their process now includes a review by the Intake Referee to determine if diversion is an appropriate action; a dedicated diversion probation officer; and a short YLS assessment form used to screen and inform decisions. It also utilizes local partnerships with staff and students from the University of Michigan Flint and the existing county teen court to help with diversion options.

3. Establishing court-operated family foster care homes

Lastly, rather than rely upon contracting with outside agencies, the Urban County juvenile court started the licensing process to become a child-placing agency for family foster care and for independent living. They are currently evaluating technical assistance providers and evidence-based training curriculums to support their success in taking on this new responsibility.
RURAL COUNTY PILOT SITE

The Rural County stakeholders quickly identified that detention was the default in its county, as the area’s small population attracted only a few community-based providers and offered scarce options for youth with complex needs.

The site sought to expand its community-based resources and reduce reliance on juvenile placement by completing a strategic plan, training court staff in evidence-based Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and EPIC curriculums, and adopting a new case management system, YouthCenter. The Rural County also hosted a community forum, which helped the court identify:

- **Youth mentoring programs as well as opportunities to help expand the pool of mentors trained to work with court-involved youth.**
- **Parenting education and support resources and problem-solve how the courts might engage more effectively with parents.**
- **Transportation options and how the courts might partner with additional providers.**

Leadership from the court, community mental health, and the local intermediary school district agreed to redefine the county’s existing Kids Network to be more intentional in focusing on the needs of court-involved youth and their families.

SUBURBAN COUNTY PILOT SITE

The Suburban County integrated the MJJCCI project into the court’s ongoing work to support its System of Care (SOC), a recently formed cross-system collaboration of youth, parents, schools, and agencies working together to lead positive systems change and improve services in their community. Prior to creating the pilot site, the county engaged their court staff and other members of their SOC in trainings conducted by the University of Cincinnati Corrections Institute in order to establish an evidence-based Mobile Crisis Response and Stabilization system and reduce arrests and recidivism. As a result of training, the Suburban County juvenile court adopted an evidence-based assessment tool and other processes, but the pace and breadth of the changes overwhelmed the court staff and members of the SOC.

Partnering with the MJJCCI project allowed the Suburban County to develop comprehensive programming to address service gaps for justice-involved youth.

Like the Rural County, they decided to engage in a strategic planning process, resulting in a multi-year road map with annual strategic goals to help staff prioritize projects.

The local planning team chose two main programming gaps to fill with the MJJCCI project: 1) a reduction of probation supervision time to an average of six months and 2) an increase of services that focus on youth diversion, vocational or skilled trades, and family engagement.

During implementation, the local planning team emphasized the need for not just new programs, but for true culture change among the juvenile justice staff and leadership. The pilot site leaders understood that this will take multiple steps to accomplish, including a change in communication between detention and probation staff, and increased use of graduated sanctions in the court to reduce technical violations.

The local team also implemented and trained its staff on the evidence-based Boys Town’s Common Sense Parenting program to better engage with families. This program teaches positive parenting techniques and behavior management strategies to help increase positive, decrease negative, and model appropriate alternative behaviors for children.
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDED TO LOCAL TEAMS

In addition to the trainings and resources mentioned previously, various types of technical assistance resources were shared among the pilot sites, either from technical assistance mentors, MCCD, MDHHS, or project evaluators. This included materials such as model policies, detention review processes, sample family notification letters, and national reports related to evidence-based practices.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning was used in two of the three sites to aid in forming a long-term vision for the juvenile courts; to develop goals, specific focus areas, and 2019 strategic projects; as well as to create cohesive buy-in from the sites’ stakeholders.

Both pilot sites identified goals, objectives, and strategic projects to reduce reliance on detention and residential placement. More specifically, the Rural County saw their strategic planning as a “long-range roadmap” that was essential to expanding their continuum of care for justice-involved youth. The Suburban County entered into their strategic planning process due to changes in judicial leadership and saw this as an opportunity to make data-driven decisions for the next few years as the court enters into a transitional phase.

COMMUNITY FORUMS

The local planning teams and MCCD hosted community forums to further their pilot site implementations, expand collaborative problem-solving, and build awareness that court-involved youth “belong” to everyone in the room. These forums were held in both the Rural and Urban Counties and both were well-attended, drawing in attendance from system-impacted youth, their families, and other stakeholder groups. Prior to the event, each chief judge and juvenile court administrator identified three to five unmet community-based service “needs” for court-involved youth and their families. During the two to four hour forums, participants identified existing community assets, as well as service gaps and barriers to accessing existing services, in the three to five areas of concern. Small affinity groups engaged in problem-solving to resolve the gaps and barriers and then attendees collectively identified the top three ideas from each category and assigned a person or agency to develop next steps. Finally, MCCD recorded the ideas and assignments during the forum and sent follow-up emails and resources to participants to aid with implementation.
Evaluation was a core component of the MJJCCI project. In addition to measuring and documenting the progress made by the pilot sites, MDHHS and the steering team identified evaluation as an important source of input to guide future efforts to expand continuums of care beyond the pilot sites.

Based on the grant’s performance measures established by OJJDP, as well as the specific goals identified by the pilot sites, PPA worked with the steering team and the pilot sites to develop a core list of data elements. The list included:

- Number of juveniles placed in detention
- Number of detentions
- Number of detentions by reason for detention
- Average length of stay in detention
- Number of out-of-home placements (other than detention), by type of placement
- Average length of stay in out-of-home placement

Using this list of core data elements, PPA developed a web-based reporting form for the pilot sites to use for entering aggregate data. To establish a baseline measure, pilot sites provided aggregated annual data from 2017, the calendar year prior to starting the project. Then, to assess changes following implementation, the data for the same elements were collected for calendar year 2018 and again for the first four months of 2019.¹¹ The section below provides a summary of findings from the pilot site data, with particular emphasis on changes in the use of detention and other out-of-home placements.
IMPACT ON DETENTIONS

Although it is too early to identify the full nature and scope of the project’s impact on the use of youth confinement, early data indicates movement in the right direction. Across all three sites, there were a total of 433 detentions reported for the 2017 baseline year. That number dropped to 409 in 2018 and is estimated to drop to 276 in 2019.¹² Importantly, the drop in confinement appears to have outpaced a similar drop in the overall number of juveniles referred to the pilot courts, as the rate of detentions decreased from 21 detentions for every 100 referrals to 15.
As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the Urban site’s overall number of annual detention placements dropped over the two and a half years of the project’s implementation compared to the number of annual detention placements reported for the year prior to implementation. The court reported 192 detentions in 2017, 149 detentions in 2018, and an estimated 135 detentions in 2019.

Over this same time period, though, there were also significant changes in the overall number of referrals to juvenile court within the county, with 919 referrals in 2017, 711 in 2018, and 1,107 estimated for 2019. As a result, despite 43 fewer detention admissions in 2018 than in 2017, the rate of detentions remained steady at about 21 detentions for every 100 referrals. However, data from the first four months of 2019 show that the rate of detentions to referrals has also started to drop (See Figure 2).

The largest changes were related to detentions due to violations of existing court orders. The number of detentions ordered by the court for reasons other than new violations dropped from 88 in 2017 to an estimated 12 detentions for 2019. Even after factoring in the changes in referrals over the same time period, the changes still represent a sizeable decrease from about 10 detentions for every 100 referrals to less about one detention for every 100 referrals. Conversely, detentions for violations of probation remained consistent with previous rates, and detentions resulting from new criminal law violations increased.

Over the course of implementation, the average length of stay in detention decreased within the urban site. The average time spent in detention was 30.7 days in 2017, 28.0 days in 2018, and 22.6 days during the first four months of 2019, an estimated decrease of 26%.
SUBURBAN PILOT SITE

Based on data from the first four months of 2019, the Suburban site is on pace for 65 fewer detentions during 2019 than in 2017. As shown in Figure 3 below, the court reported 184 detentions in 2017, 185 detentions in 2018, and an estimated 120 detentions in 2019.

However, when factoring in the simultaneous drop in referrals, the rate of detentions has not decreased. As shown in Figure 4, throughout the data-collection period, the detention rate has remained nearly constant at about 19 detentions per 100 referrals to juvenile court.

Similar to the Urban site, the number and rate of detentions dropped for court-issued pickup orders. However, while detentions resulting from new criminal law violations remained fairly steady, the detention rate for violations of probation increased in the Suburban site.

While the overall detention rate in the Suburban county has not decreased, the average length of stay in detention did decrease significantly. The average detention stay in 2017 was 97 days. The average dropped to 35 days in 2018 and 32 days during the early months of 2019, a decrease of 67%.
**RURAL PILOT SITE**

Consistent with the other two pilot sites, the overall number of detentions decreased within the rural county over the course of the initiative. As shown in Figure 5 below, the court reported 60 detentions in 2017, 49 detentions in 2018, and an estimated 21 detentions in 2019.

The volume of detentions within the rural pilot was only about one-third of the volume reported from the other two pilots. However, based on the number of referrals, the rural site also demonstrated the largest decrease in detention rates. As shown in Figure 6, the baseline detention rate of about 35 detentions per 100 referrals in 2017 dropped to 22 detentions per 100 referrals during the first four months of 2019. However, because there were no detentions resulting from new criminal law violations or other court orders during the early months of 2019, the overall detention rates dropped.

Again, as with the other sites, the average length of time spent in detention also decreased within the rural site. The average detention stay was 13 days in 2017 and dropped to 7 days in 2018.
IMPACT ON OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS

The early data from the pilot sites also show signs of movement toward fewer out-of-home placements. Across all three sites, a total of 54 out-of-home placements were estimated for 2019, which would represent a 58 percent decrease from the 128 out-of-home placements reported for 2017. The simultaneous drop in the number of referrals alone is not sufficient to explain the change, as the rate of out-of-home placements also dropped from about six placements for every 100 referrals in 2017 to about three in the early months of 2019. A discussion of changes in the prevalence of out-of-home placements within each of the pilot sites follows.
**URBAN PILOT SITE**

The numbers of out-of-home placements and rates of placements per 100 referrals reported by the urban pilot are provided below in Figure 7 and Figure 8. Compared to baseline data, the count and rate of secure and non-secure placements decreased over the course of implementation.

**Figure 7**

### Number of Post-Adjudication Out-of-Home Placements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Pilot Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 8**

### Number of Post-Adjudication Out-of-Home Placements per 100 Juvenile Court Referrals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Pilot Site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Placements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUBURBAN PILOT SITE

The numbers of out-of-home placements and rates of placements per 100 referrals reported by the suburban pilot are provided below in Figure 9 and Figure 10. Data from the early months of 2019 indicated the county was on pace for 23 fewer placements in 2019 than in 2017. However, because the number of referrals was also projected to be much lower, the rate of placements per 100 referrals was only slightly lower in 2019 than in 2017.
RURAL PILOT SITE

The numbers of out-of-home placements and rates of placements per 100 referrals reported by the rural pilot are provided below in Figure 11 and Figure 12. Despite already being very low, the number of placements did decrease slightly in 2018. For the first four months of 2019 the court only reported two out-of-home placements. While it is not possible to generate a reliable annual estimate for such a small volume, it appears likely that the number of placements will remain low in 2019.

*Reliable annual estimates for 2019 were not possible given the very low number of placements overall.
Elements of MJJCCI can and should be replicated across Michigan. This project was intended as an initiative to teach, encourage, and grow evidence-based practices at the community level in order to reduce youth confinement. Below are broad learned lessons which can inform future work in Michigan or other jurisdictions desiring to expand their continuums of care and reduce youth confinement.
1) Don’t skimp on planning

**Plan ahead and reach consensus when possible.** Like any multi-year project with many moving parts, making an action plan is paramount to ensuring the work stays on task. MJJCCI was no different. To reach its broad goal of reducing youth incarceration, the initiative had to be broken into smaller steps and a wide variety of juvenile justice stakeholders had to be part of implementing the project plan.

**Use formal strategic planning.** Creating a juvenile court-specific strategic plan increases participation and buy-in for system improvements with all levels of staff. Aided by independent consultants or neutral technical advisors, the process of both creating and administering a plan paves the way forward for making significant systemic improvements. Court leadership and youth serving staff should agree on the needs and actions in order to improve their day-to-day work. The strategic plan also acts as a roadmap to ensure priority project work teams stay on task and all partners remain committed to the larger goals.

**Develop written memorandums of understanding, contracts, and/or data sharing agreements.** Every pilot site and their technical assistance providers signed agreements with each other. These formal agreements ensure that all partners are equally dedicated to a project and understand what roles and responsibilities they will be playing to reach a project’s goals.
Host community forums to engage all stakeholders. Building new or enhancing current practices in the juvenile justice system must start with buy-in, or consistent agreement that change is needed and desired from all individuals who work within the system. One successful way to engage all stakeholders with the same message is to conduct community forums or other similar large-group meetings. These events can build uncommon partnerships, uncover or expand resources to the juvenile courts, reignite dedication to innovative practices, and ultimately secure community buy-in to better serve court-involved youth and their families.

These forums should have professional facilitation to ensure staff can fully participate as content experts, including an agenda with a robust asset, barriers and gaps analysis for the most pressing areas of need. Community stakeholders should also be engaged in generating solutions to resolve gaps and barriers. Key stakeholders invitees should include, at a minimum: government agencies such as community mental health, workforce development and rehabilitation services, health and human services and public health; non-profit service providers; schools and ISD’s; local foundations; elected officials; law enforcement; faith-based leaders; and mentoring organizations.

Utilize peer mentors to provide technical assistance. Juvenile courts, like many other professional settings, have their own unique work culture. Those in leadership have to balance multiple priorities and relationships, while ensuring due process and public safety for their community, which often includes services for a complex population of youth. Inviting juvenile court leaders who have successfully reduced out-of-home placements in their own jurisdictions to provide mentorship for new projects honors their hard work and expertise, engenders trust through their insider status and supports efficient replication of successful practices without having to “reinvent the wheel.”

In addition to being embedded in each pilot site, TA mentors influenced every aspect of the project, providing content expertise as the steering team planned and executed each of the MJJCCI activities. Additionally, as with many successful mentoring relationships, the peer connections made often continued beyond the end date of the project. This meant that mentors, and any of their supervisors, chief judges, or staff that rely upon them, had to clearly understand the role of TA mentoring, agree to sharing resources, and prioritize the large time commitment of the mentor taking on this role. As such, buy-in with the mentors and their local stakeholders is key to ensuring a long-lasting and successful peer-to-peer relationship.
3) Build in Evaluation

- **Continually assess and evaluate.** Before, during, and after project implementation, it is critical to assess and evaluate the work being done to improve outcomes for court-involved youth. No one wants to unintentionally undo positive changes or make a situation worse. The best way to make sure the project is hitting its intended marks is to collaboratively identify the system’s problem areas, assess possible solutions, and evaluate each stage of implementation.

- **Create evaluation milestones.** When crafting the initial plan, build in evaluation markers. This could be as simple as monthly team meetings with a regular agenda item to check-in on progress. Consider hiring a neutral evaluator to collect data, evaluate progress, and report to the team. These steps can provide feedback during the project and allow for any needed tweaks over time.

- **Build trust to ensure honest assessments and evaluations.** The juvenile justice system, like any other social system, includes intricate roles, responsibilities, and relationships between multiple stakeholders, none of whom can make the system change for better or for worse on their own. Reducing youth confinement requires help from courts, prosecutors, direct service providers, government agency administrators, researchers, youth advocates, technical assistance providers, and community members. But to participate collaboratively in successful systemic change, each of these groups has to be self-aware and transparent about their successes and areas for continued improvement.

MJJCCI provides a few successful examples of how project partners worked to build trust. First, potential pilot site survey responses were kept confidential amongst the planning work group to encourage candid responses. After sites were selected, each was identified publicly as the Urban, Suburban or Rural site, unless they wanted their identity to be known. Additionally, the pilot projects were evaluated independently and work product confidentiality was protected through data sharing agreements. Only aggregate outcomes were assessed to determine if pilot sites were able to reduce youth placements.
LESSONS LEARNED

4) It takes time.

Be patient and diligent with system improvements. Expanding continuums of care requires a county-by-county approach, especially in a state with a decentralized juvenile justice system. It cannot be overstated how difficult and lengthy change can be when working on this level of systemic improvements. This OJJDP-funded project was only two years in length; however, MDHHS and many of the project partners have been working to increase community-based options in the juvenile justice system at the state and local levels for many years prior to this project and will continue to do so after it is over.

Acknowledge successes, large and small. Making new professional relationships, sharing information, forms or procedures, completing a strategic plan, hosting a large stakeholder meeting–these steps can make a difference in the day-to-day operations of a juvenile court. To stay focused on the big picture goals of expanding continuums of care and reducing youth placements, celebrate each success in counties or statewide, and honor the work that will build and sustain those efforts over time.

There are many small MJJCCI successes to highlight over the past two and a half years. In addition to small, early reductions in detention and out-of-home placement rates, all juvenile courts in the pilot counties established new partnerships with community-based resources and providers. The technical assistance mentors consistently met for troubleshooting with their local pilot sites. And all sites expanded their continuum of care for court-involved youth.

Encourage training and education on a continual basis. Every court pilot site engaged their staff in training. Ongoing training is integral to working with an ever-changing population of young people, and it supports keeping current with new, evidence-based practices. It can also reawaken staff interest in their profession when implementing new practices leads to improved outcomes for the youth they supervise and support.

Beware of improvement “burn-out.” As one of the local team partners expressed, taking on too many changes at once “can be overwhelming to staff” and may prevent future willingness to participate. Every pilot site already knew there were issues with data collection, limited infrastructure, and funding. Projects like MJJCCI provide a “boost” for stakeholders to continue seeking solutions to improve their practices and expand internal and external resources for the youth they serve.
Broad systemic improvements take patience, flexibility and cooperation from all project partners and stakeholders, benefit from strong technical assistance and support, and should include regular implementation check-ins and evaluation.

Over the two and a half years of implementing MJJCCI, the difficulties of supporting statewide improvements within a decentralized juvenile justice system have been identified. By analyzing the successful implementation of the pilot sites, we now have a roadmap for addressing the differing needs of urban, suburban and rural communities in Michigan that inform how this work can be taken to scale.

The MJJCCI project was created with the intent of decreasing local juvenile justice system reliance on youth detention and out-of-home placement across Michigan. Early outcomes indicate that MJJCCI can and should be replicated across the state. It is an initiative that teaches, encourages, and grows evidence-based practices at the local level, balancing the differing needs among Michigan's communities. Finally, the MJJCCI project underlined the tenacity and perseverance of stakeholders within the state and local juvenile justice systems who are determined to ensure Michigan's court-involved youth are treated safely and humanely, with the services and supports they need to be successful.


5. See section 4 infra for more information on pilot site selection.

6. See infra Section 4 for more information on pilot site development.


8. https://hudson-webber.org/reports/

9. The identities of the pilot sites are intentionally kept confidential due to agreed upon terms of the project MOUs and Data Sharing Agreements.

10. https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VWpg9B56mFxmaK174cmKvmeUMgvZmJd3U8I0QFk/edit

11. Pilot site data gathering and evaluation by PPA stopped in mid-2019, as the OJJDP grant funding ended during this time. However, it is understood by MJJCCI project leaders that local sites are still gathering and assessing information on their own.

12. To allow for comparisons with the annual data collected for 2017 and 2018, the evaluators calculated annual estimates for 2019 based on data collected during the final four months of the grant period.