

**Pinal County Juvenile Court Services’
Community and Family Engagement Initiative**
2022 Progress Report

Report by:



Overview

Established in the late 1990s, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) helps to reduce the number of youth detained and circumvent the long-term societal costs as a result of ongoing involvement in the juvenile and adult justice systems. Made possible through the support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, there are currently 300 JDAI sites across the United States today, including one based in Pinal County, Arizona.

In Pinal County, all racial groups of interest currently experience a Relative Rate Index above 1 when looking at Juveniles Detained in Pinal County, meaning all racial groups are at higher risk of detainment compared to white juveniles. What is more concerning, Pinal County’s Black/African American juvenile community is experiencing significant disparity compared to white juveniles — both at the initial level of police interaction and at the later stages of diversion program completion. According to Pinal County Juvenile Court’s 2019 data,² Black/African American juveniles were 2.43 times as likely to have a police referral and were 5.01 times as likely to be committed to Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC) compared to white juveniles.³ Additionally, Black/African American juveniles were approximately 40% less likely to complete a diversion program compared to white juveniles.

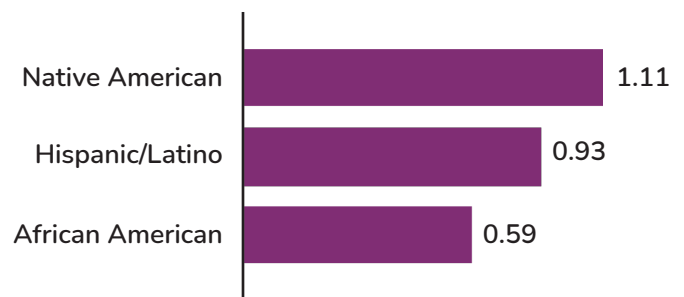
To address these disparities and reduce the overall prevalence of justice-involved youth, Pinal County Juvenile Court Services launched a new Community and Family Engagement initiative in late 2020, in response to the latest research-based best practices, which indicate that family engagement as being key to deep-end reform. As part of Pinal County’s Community and Family Engagement initiative, a localized study was conducted to examine the attitudes and perceptions of juveniles and parents/guardians’ experiences throughout the probation process.

To continue to advance the work of the Community and Family Engagement initiative, Pinal County Juvenile Court Services engaged Tracee L. Perryman, PhD, Founder of T. Perryman-Consulting and CEO of Center of Hope Family Services (COHFS) in Toledo, Ohio, to provide technical assistance between November 2021 and October 2022. During her tenure at COHFS, Dr. Perryman has successfully adapted the Community Connections for Youth (CCY) model, and has tailored it to the specific needs of the communities COHFS serves. She has implemented monthly resilience meetings for families, weekly parent education groups, and a framework for partnerships between the local governing bodies and the community.

Table 1. 2019 U.S. and Pinal County Juvenile Detention Rates^{1,2}

Race or Ethnicity	U.S. Rate	Pinal County Rate
Hispanic or Latino	1.90	1.89
White	1.00	1.00
Black or African American	6.30	1.22
American Indian and Alaska Native	4.10	2.22

Figure 1. 2021 Pinal County Diversion Completion Rates Compared to White Youth⁴



¹ https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/special_topics/qa11802.asp?qaDate=2019

² Pinal County Juvenile Court’s Relative Rate Index Compared to White Youth, 2019.

^{3,4} Pinal County Juvenile Court’s RED Report: Annual Analysis of Racial and Ethnic Disparities for Fiscal Year 2021.



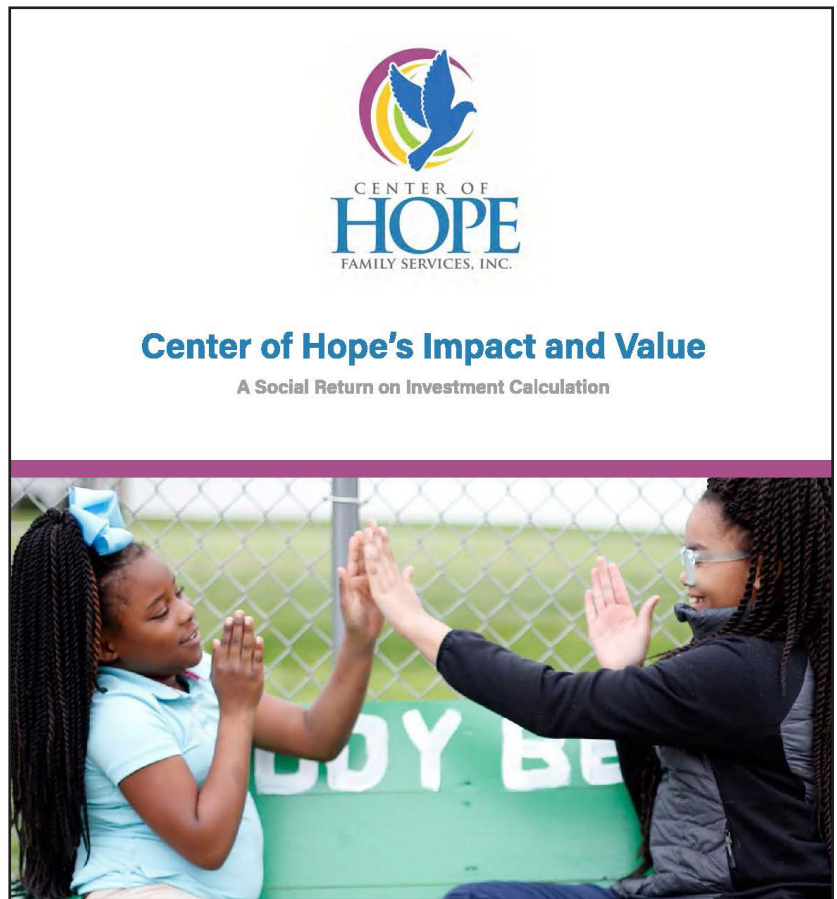
Dr. Tracee Perryman
Founder, T. Perryman Consulting;
CEO, Center of Hope Family
Services

Dr. Perryman has also added to the CCY model a comprehensive framework for developing an informed, intentional set of wraparound community-based supports for families. Additionally, she has enhanced the model through the creation of a data collection warehouse, designed to track the services that are most relevant to families, so that the organization and its community partners can provide rapid responses to their needs. The data collection warehouse also serves to inform the development and growth of the program. This COHFS program, named the Family Navigator Program, has served more than 1,000 families since 2016.

A recent report by independent research firm Measurement Resources Company indicated that the actual program cost per success was \$779, and saves as much as \$16,000 for each client success in future societal expenditures. Dr. Perryman's Family Navigator Program has also been cited in Urban Institute's *Engaging Youth and Families: A Deep-end Evaluation Feature Brief*. Dr. Perryman continues to refine family and community engagement strategies that will result in stronger, more sustainable diversion alternatives for youth.

In 2019, 40% of COHFS' youth participants were released without being retained, which leads to more positive outcomes for them, and saves community resources and tax dollars. In 2018, Dr. Perryman expanded the Family Navigator Program to serve families involved in the child welfare system. The program helps families better understand and navigate the child welfare system, while advocating for the supports they need to successfully regain custody of their children.

Then in 2022, Dr. Perryman expanded the program once more to encompass responses proven to reduce risks related to court involvement. To accomplish this, Dr. Perryman's team is exploring the prevalence of food deserts in the ZIP codes where the program's families reside. As of October 2022, court-involved families have provided input on their desired food choices and solutions to healthy food access. Currently, Dr. Perryman and COHFS are working on developing a best practices framework for culturally responsive solutions. These solutions will be presented to families, along with a range of advocates and stakeholders, who have the power to bring those desired solutions to the ZIP codes most impacted, and where COHFS' families reside.



⁵ <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/102764/engaging-youth-and-families.pdf>

Perceptions of Justice-involved Youth and Their Caregivers Related to Prospective Community Partners

Dr. Perryman conducted a second survey in 2022, to measure youth and parent perceptions of the community partners suggested by Pinal County. The selections Pinal County made were based upon a comprehensive framework that Dr. Perryman provided, which helped them develop an intentional method for linking services to youth/family needs, and selecting services that promote resiliency.

Of court-involved youth (n = 27), 33% of respondents indicated connections to career counseling, academic support or tutoring, and employment opportunities as the top areas they would like to see additional assistance and resources made available to them. Parents/guardians echoed their desire for these three resource areas, and also indicated the need for additional support around strengthening family relationships and their children's peer relationships. Transportation was another area (26%) that youth identified, where increased resources are needed.

Overall, both youth and their caregivers were unfamiliar with many of the prospective community partners listed in the survey. More than 60% of respondents had never heard of 16 of the partners, and nearly 90% had either never heard of or had never utilized the services provided by the 19 partners listed, which included:

- Arizona Complete Health
- Arizona Department of Child Safety*
- Boys and Girls Club
- Calvary Chapel
- Casa Grande Alliance
- Casa Grande Police Department*
- Catalyst First Baptist Church
- Compass Christian Church of Casa Grande
- Covenant Presbyterian Church of Casa Grande
- Crossroads Church of Casa Grande
- First Things First*
- Habitat for Humanity Housing
- Housing Authority of Pinal County*
- MASH Unit Furniture and Appliances
- Mercy Care Behavioral Health
- MIKID
- Native American Fatherhood & Families Association
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe Regional Partnership Council
- Pinal County Arizona @Work
- Public Health – Pinal County*
- Saint Anthony of Padua Catholic Church
- Seeds of Hope
- St. Vincent de Paul Society Casa Grande
- Sun Valley Church Casa Grande

Another key finding, youth perceptions of more traditional community partners (denoted with "*" in the list above) ranked low in terms of name recognition and/or perceived level of helpfulness. Most youth respondents indicated that they had either not heard of the following partners or had not experienced their services: the Casa Grande Police Department, Arizona Department of Child Safety, First Things First, Housing Authority of Pinal County, and Public Health – Pinal County. To explore perceptions of less traditional prospective community partners, 19 additional organizations were listed. For youth, Pinal County Arizona at Work, Boys and Girls Club, Mash Unit Furniture and Appliances, and Sun Valley Church Casa Grande, ranked highest in terms of perceived helpfulness.

Similar to justice-involved youth, the parents/guardians of justice-involved youth indicated they had not heard of or had not used the services of the more traditional community partners. Of the non-traditional community partners, caregivers were aligned with youth perceptions in ranking Boys and Girls Club and Mash Unit Furniture and Appliances highest. Caregivers also ranked Catalyst First Baptist Church and Seeds of Hope among their top four choices of the 19 organizations listed in the survey.

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Pinal County's Family and Community Engagement Goals and 2022 Results

Throughout eight technical assistance sessions in 2021 and 2022, Dr. Perryman provided context and content, and conducted primary research. She also helped the participants of Pinal County's Family and Community Engagement initiative set goals, test assumptions and compare their plans against best practices in youth development, family engagement, and culturally responsive practices. Throughout the engagement, Dr. Perryman facilitated dialogue so that Pinal County could further refine and accelerate progress against their goals. Below are the goals and the progress made within this timeframe.

Goal 1: Identify a Culturally Responsive Family Engagement Framework

Using a data-driven approach, participants identified a theoretical framework. Through this framework, youth and their families will drive the prioritization of resources and selection of community partners that youth and their families need to lead healthier, more productive lives, and significantly reduce the prevalence of youth involved in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, Pinal County can leverage the framework for the purpose of soliciting funds to support community and family engagement efforts.

Goal 2: Identify Areas to Engage Culturally Responsive, Community-based Partners

Initiative participants identified areas for engaging culturally responsive, community-based partners: access to quality healthcare, access to quality education tailored to needs and interests, development of work-ready skills, promotion of self-concept, positive decision making and hope for the future; access to employment; peer support; bonding with adults; building of skills; sense of belonging in the community; access to out of school time programs. Dr. Perryman developed and implemented a survey instrument to measure youth and family perceptions related to these seven areas.

Goal 3: Identify at Least One Community-based Partner Organization

Pinal County identified 28 prospective community-based partners. Included as part of the youth and family perceptions survey, respondents were asked to provide input on 19 of the 28 prospective partners. Using this feedback, Pinal County selected the top-ranked organizations for further investigation and analysis, to determine the best fit based on the extent to which the needs as identified by youth and family can be met by the organization, the history of the organization's involvement with juvenile and adult justice systems, and the alignment between the composition of staff members' gender/racial/ethnic/cultural and that of justice-involved youth in Pinal County, among other factors.

As a result of the vetting process, Pinal County selected Casa Grande Alliance, for its comprehensive supports to families, as well as mentoring and support groups. Boys and Girls Club was selected to help provide resources court-involved youth and their siblings. Pinal County also identified Arizona at Work as the organization best positioned to provide workforce development resources to youth.

To advance the development of these partnerships, Pinal County will share the responsibilities until a Family Engagement Specialist is hired to implement the Family Advisory Council. The Family Engagement Specialist will liaise between the court and families, and will establish and maintain relationships with community partners.

Goal 4: Identify Three Policy Changes to Support Family Engagement

Pinal County Juvenile Court Services has formed a Parent Advisory Council to better understand what will contribute most to building trust among the Court, justice-involved youth and their families. This Parent Advisory Council will seek out individuals with lived experience to lead the identification and development of solutions, resources, and partners; provide input on how to eliminate barriers existing resources; and to identify ways that Pinal County can empower families to more easily navigate the court and other systems. Families will be actively invited to participate in family engagement strategies (e.g., surveys, focus groups, etc.), and Pinal County will provide incentives for participation, in addition to providing a meal at every meeting.

Strategic Recommendations for Success and Sustainability

Building on the momentum of Pinal County's Family and Community Engagement initiative in 2022, the participants have identified three strategic priorities to ensure the long-term success and sustainability of the initiative.

Investment in Family Advisory Council.

From investing in the Family Engagement Specialist position and delivering culturally responsive training to systems staff, to providing incentives for family participation, Pinal County will invest in fostering a welcoming environment for all families with past or present lived experience with the juvenile justice system.

Connections to social services.

Because the majority of families surveyed were not aware of many of the services suggested by Pinal County, efforts to increase awareness and linking families to resources will be prioritized. Additionally, Pinal County, through the work of the Family Advisory Council, will focus on collecting feedback and input from families input on the types of services they need, and what they define as quality.

Investment in comprehensive family support services that reduce justice involvement.

To provide the family support services as identified by the youth and families, investments will be required to facilitate strategically selected community partnerships and to coordinate the delivery of programs, services, and/or resources. The demand and effectiveness of these programs, services and/or resources must also be monitored to inform continuous improvement efforts.

Internal policies and procedures.

In addition to training and technical assistance on culturally responsive community engagement practices for all Pinal County staff who interact with youth, their families, and the community, a lead staff coordinator will be identified. The coordinator will sustain and grow family and community engagement initiatives. Pinal County will also commit to advancing family and community engagement, tracking performance measurement, implementing continuous improvement initiatives, and building out policies and procedures for engaging and maintaining relationships with community partners, community residents, and credible messengers.



“I think we have evolved in our thinking about who needs to be involved to make this work sustainable and rewarding for both the families and our organization.”

Next Steps and Commitments Through 2025

Dr. Perryman has provided the following recommendations related to the activities and priorities for the next three years (2023 through 2025) to support the ongoing work of the Family and Community Engagement initiative.

YEAR ONE (2023)

- Launch the Family Advisory Council, and involve them in the process of identifying the Family Engagement Coordinator.
- Engage the community-based partner.
- Identify the Family Engagement Coordinator.
- Meet regularly with the Family Advisory Council to collect and document their input on priorities, the types of services to be provided, input on providers, and thoughts on how the court can serve them better.
- Develop the plan for community and family engagement for the purpose of improving outcomes for families and youth.
- Refine the plan based on input and feedback from families and youth.
- Conduct resource mapping to inform strategy for Year Two.
- Identify and prioritize specific strategies, and the activities for each strategy.
- Assign team members to lead and contribute to each strategic area and their associated activities.
- Develop a strategy and action plan to ensure that youth and family voices and participation remain central to all strategies and activities.
- Identify credible messengers to bring families and the community to the table.
- Invest in data collection by an independent third party, whose expertise lies specifically in culturally responsive strategies for family and community engagement and systems reform.

YEAR TWO (2024)

- The Family Engagement Coordinator to begin in role, and lead the work of the Family Advisory Council.
- Continue meeting regularly with the Family Advisory Council to collect and document their input on priorities, the types of services to be provided, input on providers, and thoughts on how the court can serve them better.
- Deliver technical assistance to the Family and Community Engagement Coordinator on:
 - How to implement the initiative, including prioritizing and organizing duties, determining support staff needed, and other resources to address unforeseen issues, concerns, and barriers.
 - Balancing systems/community relationships and providing culturally responsive family engagement activities, enlisting credible messengers, and liaising between the system, community, families, and internal staff.
 - Reviewing engagement activity plans, providing feedback, troubleshooting issues and concerns, monitoring effectiveness of community partners, helping community partners goal set, and helping community partners develop programs and services to meet the needs of youth and families in ways that reduce racial disparities for justice-involved youth.

“Looking more in depth into the needs of the community and gaining their input, also it’s important to the families to understand what we are trying to do. My outlook has gotten better because if we can accomplish this goal, which I know we can, we will have a team that is set up to engage the community to make things better for the youth.”

YEAR THREE (2025)

- Continue meeting regularly with the Family Advisory Council to collect and document their input on priorities, the types of services to be provided, input on providers, and thoughts on how the court can serve them better.
- Conduct a process evaluation to discover key findings.
- Identify which activities produce the desired outcomes, and which among those are replicable.
- Conduct an outcomes evaluation to determine, describe, and quantify the impact on:
 - Family engagement.
 - Participation.
 - Community engagement.
 - Justice system reform.
 - Youth justice involvement.

Conclusion and Contributions to JDAI

Pinal County has developed a framework for identifying culturally responsive community partners through the engagement of youth and families. While it has uncovered some potential community partner organizations, more overall awareness of community organizations among families is needed prior to determining whether or not these partners could become “credible messengers” on behalf of the court.

This project has resulted in significant contributions to JDAI, including the delivery of an intentional framework for advancing community engagement and family engagement. The framework for advancing community engagement has helped Pinal County make progress toward the identification of culturally responsive community partners who are credible messengers, and has helped mapped the County’s skills, expertise, and supports proven to reduce justice system involvement. This framework has also provided pathways for continuous improvement and power sharing across various systems throughout the community. The framework for advancing family engagement will ensure linkages between families and community partners. It will also support the development and maintenance of comprehensive family support linkages that positively impact family life outcomes. The framework also includes strategies for cultural responsiveness in engaging families, and has helped defined the focus and direction for the Family Advisory.

As a result of establishing these two frameworks, Pinal County’s contributions to JDAI will be measurable, adaptable, and replicable. And through future evaluations, the impact of these initiatives will add to the growing body of research, which seeks to demonstrate how we can radically reform the juvenile justice system together.

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