

**SUPERIOR COURT OF NEW JERSEY
PASSAIC VICINAGE**

**CHAMBERS OF
DONALD J. VOLKERT, JR.
ASSIGNMENT JUDGE**



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Passaic Vicinage to Implement Program for At-risk Youth and Families

The Passaic Vicinage will implement a new program that provides community-based services to at-risk youth and their families, Assignment Judge Donald J. Volkert Jr. announced today.

The Human Services Advocate Program (HSAP) will match trained advocates with families in need of services to help youth comply with the court's orders while they await adjudication of their delinquency cases.

Advocates will provide individualized support, mentoring and counseling and also will assess other family needs and help them find additional services.

"HSAP will help bridge the gap between what the court expects of youth in our detention alternatives programs and what they actually achieve," said Judge Volkert. "It will be particularly helpful for youth whose circumstances at home might be improved by trained social workers."

The goal of the program is to reduce the number of juveniles who violate the conditions set by the court or acquire new charges while under court supervision and to strengthen family relationships that are key to successful results for at-risk youth.

The program will be funded by a \$120,000 grant from the New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission as part of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI). JDAI is a project undertaken by the Annie E. Casey Foundation to reduce the number of youth held in detention while awaiting the outcome of their court case.

Under the initiative, juvenile justice programs are changing their focus from detaining youth to providing effective alternatives such as home monitoring and evening reporting centers that allow youth to remain in their communities but also help them to avoid additional offenses. The goal of JDAI is to rely on secure detention only for serious and chronic youthful offenders, and to create effective and efficient alternatives that maintain public safety and ensure court appearances by youth awaiting their court dates.

JDAI has reduced significantly the cost of juvenile justice in New Jersey. The Annie E. Casey Foundation selected New Jersey to serve as a nation model site for statewide implementation of JDAI.

Since it implemented JDAI in 2009, Passaic Vicinage has greatly reduced the number of juveniles in secure detention from an average daily population of 70 in 2008 to an average daily population of 25.5 in 2012, a 63.7 percent reduction. Passaic youth in detention are now housed at the Essex County Juvenile Detention Center.

Passaic Vicinage offers numerous alternatives to detention that provide rehabilitative services to its juvenile population. These include home detention, electronically monitored home detention, the Evening Reporting Program, the Probation Detention Alternatives Program and the Total Life Program, which is an intensive “last chance” program requiring six months of full-time participation in a program of individual and group counseling combined with community service. All of these afford Passaic Vicinage the ability to keep youth out of detention while addressing the behavior leading to their placement in the juvenile justice system.

HSAP will complement existing services by helping ensure that youth in detention alternatives receive additional support to meet the terms of their court orders. The grant money will be used by the Passaic County Department of Human Services to engage trained advocates to provide specific comprehensive assessments and referrals to juveniles and their families.

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