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HOME DETENTION AS A POLICY ALTERNATIVE
FOR OHIO'S JUVENILE COURTS:
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

by

NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY

July, 1986

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BACKGROUND

This project was funded by the Governor's Office of Criminal Justice Services with funds appropriated by the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. The project commenced on April 11, 1985, and terminated on March 31, 1986.

The project had two principal goals: (1) to determine, via a statewide survey, the extent to which pre-adjudicatory "home detention" is being utilized by Ohio's juvenile courts and with what results, and (2) to select one or more exemplary program(s) of home detention for a "case study" and more detailed analysis.

HISTORY AND EVALUATIONS OF NATIONAL HOME DETENTION PROGRAMS

The first formal home detention program for juveniles in the United States began in 1971 in St. Louis. The early history of that program and six others based on the same programmatic model has been well documented in evaluations (Keve and Zantek, 1972; Young and Pappenfort, 1977).

Structure and Operations

These early programs, like most of those today, were administered by juvenile court probation departments. In general, these programs were staffed by paraprofessionals, each of whom had a caseload of five youths at any one time. These youth workers were expected to exercise daily supervision of their caseloads and to keep their supervisees "trouble free and available to the court."

Surveillance was accomplished primarily via daily personal contacts (at least one per day) with these youths and daily personal or telephone contacts with the youths' parents, teachers, and (where applicable) employers. Rules (frequently embodied in written contracts) typically included: (1) attending school; (2) observing a specified curfew; (3) notifying parents or worker as to whereabouts at all times when not at home, school, or work; (4) abstaining from drugs; and (5) avoiding companions or places that "might lead to trouble."

Programs were based on the rationale that close supervision would generally keep juveniles "trouble free and available to the court" and that this type of program would enable youth workers to provide needed services to youths and their families, thus increasing the probability of success. Youths who did not adhere fully to program requirements could be taken to secure detention by youth workers.

Youths Served

All of the programs accepted either alleged delinquents only or both alleged delinquents and alleged status offenders. Burglary was the most frequent delinquency charge filed against program participants. Most delinquency charges filed against program participants were judged to be moderately serious, and participants were similar to those in secure detention except for charges of homicide, aggravated assault, and rape (relatively infrequent and rarely released to such alternative programs).

Program Outcomes

Depending on one's operational definition of "success," evaluations of home detention programs indicate that success rates nationally range from 71% to 98%. That is, if one uses the most restrictive definition of success (completing home detention without incident), the least successful programs are 71% successful. If, on the other hand, one adopts a more liberal definition of success (completing home detention without any new alleged offenses), the best programs attain success rates as high as 98%. Furthermore, these evaluations indicate that most of those who "fail" on home detention are returned for rules violations, rather than for alleged new offenses or for running away.

Programs designed exclusively for alleged delinquents are as effective as those accepting status offenders as well as delinquents, underscoring once again the fact that "offense category" is a poor predictor of future risk. Indeed, evaluators have concluded that additional youths could have been handled in home detention programs and other alternative programs and that some courts were "unnecessarily timid" in referring youths to such programs (Young and Peppenfort, 1977:31).

One state legislature (California) has mandated that each county probation department initiate a program of "home supervision" (home detention) for youths "who would not otherwise be detained." Caseloads in these mandatory California programs are not to exceed ten (Rubin, 1985:142).

Costs

National evaluative data (Keve and Zantek, 1972; Rubin, 1979) and the present study indicate that home detention programs cost only one-third to one-fourth the per diem cost of secure detention facilities.

THE PRESENT STUDY

This research relied on numerous sources of data, including: (1) a comprehensive literature review; (2) a statewide survey (mailed questionnaire) of all Ohio juvenile/probate court judges active in hearing juvenile cases (97 judges representing all 88 counties); (3) an in-depth case study of Ohio's largest home detention program, the Cuyahoga County Home Detention Project; (4) a statewide conference on home detention; and (5) information obtained from two of the nation's most established and best-known home detention programs, located in Louisville and San Diego.

The Statewide Survey

Despite successful pre-tests in three Ohio juvenile courts, two revisions of the survey instrument to incorporate suggested changes, and a favorable written review by one of the state's leading authorities on juvenile justice, the statewide survey was not endorsed by the Ohio Association of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, largely due to active opposition by the (then) president of the Association.¹ The absence of endorsement undoubtedly had a significant adverse effect on the response rate which, despite numerous efforts, remained disappointing, with only 28 (approximately one-third) of Ohio's 88 counties represented. However, the statewide survey served two purposes: (1) it provided some statewide data concerning home detention, and (2) it provided information on each program's scope, database, and willingness to serve as host site for a "case study."

Findings from the Statewide Survey

As noted, the response rate for the statewide survey never met the researcher's expectations. Furthermore, a comparison of respondents with non-respondents indicates that the respondents represent less populous counties. This may be attributable, at least partially, to the lack of endorsement by the judges' association, which may have had more influence in the urban counties. Therefore, caution is urged in generalizing from the results of the statewide survey, since only one-third of Ohio's counties are represented among the respondents.

¹ The final report contains extensive discussion and documentation of these events.

The Decision to Use "Home Detention"

How do juvenile court judges decide whether a youth is an appropriate candidate for home detention? According to our respondents, three factors are most frequently considered in reaching this decision (listed in rank order of importance): (1) the seriousness of the alleged offense; (2) the youth's previous record; and (3) the home environment. Respondents also indicated that the recommendations of court staff, especially probation officers, are very important in the decision to use home detention.

Making, Monitoring, and Enforcing Agreements

Somewhat surprisingly, most respondents seldom or never use written agreements specifying the conditions and restrictions to which the youth is to be subjected. Also, only a small minority of respondents reported that they include in written agreements the sanctions to be imposed if the agreement is broken. However, the data clearly show that such sanctions are imposed when agreements are violated, with the most frequently-imposed sanctions consisting of placement in detention or other placements and/or further restrictions on privileges.

Probation staff and parents/guardians are most frequently relied upon for supervision. The most frequently employed means of monitoring are visits to the youth's home and telephone calls, followed by visits to schools and employers. Staff responsible for monitoring releaseses generally have the authority to place them in detention or in other placements if they violate the terms of their release.

An important factor in monitoring and enforcing agreements is caseload size. Respondents reported that in 1984, the average caseload at any one time for those responsible for such monitoring ranged from 2-45. Most reported having no established policy concerning maximum caseload size.

Assessments of Home Detention

Respondents were about equally divided between those defining "success" as "appearance for adjudication without any new arrests" and those defining it as "no violation of the terms of the agreement." Of 2,708 youths released on "home detention" by our respondents in 1984, a total of 2,470 (91%) successfully complied with the conditions imposed on them and subsequently appeared for adjudication. Technical violations of agreements accounted for far more "failures" than did arrests for new offenses.

With respect to overall assessments of home detention, 85% of our respondents thought the results were either "very good" or "good." None rated the results worse than "fair." However, when asked what their communities' assessments were, they expressed somewhat more apprehension, with nearly half (46%) perceiving their communities' reactions as "mixed."

Comparative Costs

According to our respondents, secure detention costs average \$42.57 per day. Non-secure detention and other non-secure placement costs average \$28.07 per day. By comparison, the average cost of home detention is \$14.94 a day. Thus, daily costs for home detention average about one-third the cost of secure detention and about one-half the cost other non-secure placements.

In-Depth Case Study

Following a preliminary analysis, the Cuyahoga County Home Detention Project was selected for a detailed case study, which utilized several sources of information: (1) official records concerning program participants; (2) interviews with judges; (3) interviews with the Project's director; (4) interviews with Project caseworkers; and (5) field observations of caseworker monitoring and counseling activities.

Background

The Cuyahoga County Home Detention Project was begun in August, 1981, in response to concern about the burgeoning population of the detention home. The Project was initially funded via the Law Enforcement Assistance Act, and subsequent to the demise of the LEAA, the Project's funding has come primarily from the State of Ohio (Am. Sub. H.B. 440).

Administration and Staffing

Structurally, the Project is an integral part of the detention home of the Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court. Project staff include a director, a senior home detention worker, six caseworkers, and a secretary.

Intake and Referral

The Project can receive referrals at two points in the adjudicatory process, for both status offenders and delinquents (either alleged or adjudicated). The initial point of referral is at intake, and this referral may be

made immediately upon preparation of the complaint. Each juvenile is initially referred (and, technically, admitted) to the detention home prior to being assigned to a probation officer. This facilitates the youth's return to detention if he/she subsequently violates the conditions of release.

Such pre-adjudicatory referrals from intake officers and probation officers initially dominated the program, but the mix of referrals shifted quickly to a balance between pre- and post-adjudicatory referrals, then (in 1985) shifted dramatically toward a majority of post-adjudicatory referrals.

A second referral point occurs when the youth appears for the adjudicatory hearing. At that point, the judge is the source of referral and the juvenile is referred to the home detention project via the detention home.

Following referral, the youth and his/her parent or guardian meet with the project supervisor to assess the appropriateness of the referral and the program's capacity to provide adequate supervision of the youth. For those accepted, the next step involves discussing the behavioral guidelines, which are embodied in a contract signed by the youth, his/her parents/guardians, and the Project supervisor. The Court retains legal jurisdiction over the youth during the period of home detention.

Caseworker Responsibilities

Home detention caseworkers have two primary responsibilities: (1) to see that the youth appears in Court for necessary hearings without any new arrests or infractions, and (2) to provide constructive alternative activities for each youth. The primary method of supervision is via unscheduled, face-to-face contacts with the youth every day. In addition, the caseworker contacts parents/guardians daily and makes regular contacts with school personnel and employers.

Prior to the court hearing, the caseworker completes a final report which summarizes the juvenile's home detention experience and is a valuable aide to the Court.

Client Population Trends

The Project provided supervision to 2,377 youths and nearly doubled in size between 1982 and 1985. It is projected that this program will serve 800-1,000 youths in FY86. Referrals have been about equally divided between blacks and whites, with only occasional referrals of other clients.

Approximately 60% of all referrals have been males, and the average age has remained at about 15. Referrals for delinquency charges have outnumbered those for status offenses, 63%-37%.

One of the most important trends is the growth in the number of "alternative care days" (the number of days that would have to be added to the detention home's aggregate detention days in the absence of the home detention program). In 1982, the program provided a total of 4,040 alternative care days. Between 1982 and 1985, that figure increased dramatically (215.6%) to a total of 12,752 days of alternative care, thus reflecting the confidence of its referral sources (judges and referees) and providing significant cost benefits to Cuyahoga County.

Measuring "Success"

If the least restrictive definition of success (remaining trouble-free and available to the Court with no new arrests) is applied, success rates for the Home Detention Project are as follows:

1983:	97.8%
1984:	95.2%
1985:	94.2%

Obviously, these success rates are extremely high. Furthermore, there is not much variance in success between pre-adjudicatory and post-adjudicatory referrals:

Pre-Adjudicatory Successes Post-Adjudicatory Successes

1983:	97.3%	1983:	96.3%
1984:	94.5%	1984:	95.8%
1985:	95.1%	1985:	93.8%

To evaluate the success of the program according to the more restrictive definition (remaining out of the detention center and available to the court), a random sample (N = 417) of the client population (1981-1985) was constructed. In applying this more restrictive definition the key difference, of course, is in the statistical treatment of "in-program failures." Using the least restrictive definition, youths who were returned to the detention home were not counted as failures because they had not been arrested for new alleged offenses and were still available to the court for their hearings. An alternative view of such cases, however, is that they do, in fact, represent program failures if the goal is to keep the youth in the community, rather than locked up in the detention home.

Applying this operational definition, of course, results in lower success rates than those obtained according to the least restrictive definition. The following "success rates" were calculated for the overall sample and for specific subgroups:

Success Rates

Overall Sample:	82%
Males:	87%
Females:	73%
Blacks:	82%
Whites:	83%
Delinquency Charges:	84%
Status Offense Charges:	79%
Age:	
11:	100% ²
12:	69%
13:	87%
14:	82%
15:	83%
16:	74%
17:	86%
18:	100% ²

It is apparent that success rates do vary, especially by sex and by offense category. There is, in fact, an interaction effect between these two variables, since males constitute a far higher proportion of delinquency referrals, while females are much more likely to be referred for status offenses.

Confidential interviews with program staff members and with the director suggest that the most difficult youths to supervise in home detention are "unruly females," while delinquent males generally comply more readily with the restrictions imposed by home detention.

² Age-specific success rates for 11 and 18 year-olds are not reliable due to insufficient subsamples in these two age categories.

Correlates of Success: A Closer Look

While useful, aggregate success rates may mask many important factors. For policymakers and program managers, it is important to assess the contribution of specific variables to the overall success rates. For this reason, the data were analyzed using logistical regression analysis. This analysis indicated that one variable, the number of contacts with the youth, was statistically significant in determining success in the program. It is likely that caseworker contacts with a youth have both deterrent and socializing effects, since they provide occasions for both monitoring and counseling/advising the youth.

Also, though not necessarily causally related, an increase in the number of days spent in the detention home was associated with a lower "success rate" for youths in the program.

Program Funding and Costs

State Youth Services subsidies to the Cuyahoga County Home Detention Project for the five most recent fiscal years were as follows:

FY83:	\$ 98,000
FY84:	109,919
FY85:	146,826
FY86:	204,299
FY87:	222,463

These subsidies provide funds for program staff salaries and benefits. Other costs are borne by Cuyahoga County. To understand what this means, in terms of savings to the County, one need only examine the last available full year of cost data (1984):

Alternative Care Days Provided:	8,740
Cost Per Day, Detention Home:	\$79.56
Cost Per Day, Home Detention:	14.68
Cost of Providing Care (Detention Home):	\$695,354.40
Cost of Providing Care (Home Detention):	128,303.20
SAVINGS TO COUNTY:	<u>\$567,051.20</u>

Other Issues

Two other issues emerged from this study. The first concerns the degree of discretion exercised by home detention staff. As might be expected, staff members vary

in their use of discretion. Some staff believe that the standards and expectations applied to youths should be uniform and argue that too much variation among workers' decisionmaking (with respect to revocation and return to detention, for example) is unfair to those youths who happen to have a "strict" worker. And, since some youths are placed on home detention status more than once, those youths may be confused and even more likely to fail if, over time, they are supervised by workers with significantly different "tolerances."

By way of contrast, other staff stress the desirability of allowing workers the flexibility to exercise their judgment in making "field decisions" as they see fit. These workers argue that it would be impossible to create totally uniform policies to be applied to events that are inherently non-uniform. This debate is, of course, commonplace in criminal and juvenile justice administration, and each side has its proponents.

A second issue of potential importance in some programs concerns the possibility that home detention programs may be perceived as "competing" with probation programs, especially where more intensive probation programs exist. This issue could be very important in some courts, and could result in some self-defeating "turf battles" if not anticipated and controlled. The goals and objectives of home detention programs must be carefully articulated and contrasted with those of other programs, especially those likely to be perceived as similar.

National Exemplary Programs

In addition to the statewide survey conducted in Ohio and the detailed case study of the Cuyahoga County project, representatives of several national exemplary programs were contacted and information concerning these programs was obtained.

In Jefferson County (Louisville), Kentucky, house arrest is imposed on the youth and his/her parent/guardian. The probation officer is expected to discuss with the youth and family all conditions imposed by the court prior to their leaving court, to insure that the youth and family have a contact at the agency 24 hours a day, and to check for compliance " . . . if the probation officer suspects for any reason that these conditions are not being adhered to" and " . . . to inform the Court of any non-compliance" (Jefferson County Juvenile Probation Services, 1983).

The Jefferson County Juvenile Court may also impose "home supervision" if a juvenile and his/her family are thought to be in need of additional support services during the adjudicatory process. Workers supervising youths placed in home supervision status have maximum caseloads of five and are expected to (1) execute a contract with the youth and the parent/guardian prior to their leaving court; (2) have at least one face-to-face and one telephone contact with the youth each day; and (3) have at least one face-to-face or one telephone contact with the parent/guardian each week. These contacts are intended to enable staff to identify problems, monitor the youth's adjustment, and provide needed services. If a youth violates the provisions of the agreement, a conference is held to determine whether to return the youth to court for non-compliance.

The San Diego County Home Supervision Program began in 1976 in response to statewide legislation encouraging increased community treatment and the separation of status offenders from delinquents. The State of California requires counties to operate home supervision programs as one type of community alternative to the use of secure detention. Further, California law requires the probation officer to release a minor from the detention center and place him/her on home supervision if the probation officer " . . . believes 24 hour secure detention is not necessary in order to protect the minor or the person or property of another, or to ensure that the minor does not flee the jurisdiction of the court" (San Diego County Probation Department, 1986). Two goals are mandated for such home supervision programs in California: (1) to assure appearance at interviews and court hearings (goal: 98% compliance) and (2) to assure that the minor obeys the conditions of release and commits no offenses (goal: 80% compliance).

Workers' salaries are essentially subsidized by the state and caseloads may not exceed ten. San Diego County's commitments, in return for these funds, are: (1) to maintain at least 80% of the minors in the community without returning them to custody; (2) to personally contact each minor at least once a day; and (3) to provide supervision for at least 800 minors who would otherwise be detained. Minors who do not comply with the terms of home supervision may be arrested by probation officers and returned to juvenile court for review and, possibly, placement in secure detention. The program reports that its success rate exceeded 97% in 1983-1984 (San Diego County Probation Department, 1986).

Statewide Home Detention Conference

Another valuable source of information was the Ohio Conference on Home Detention, held at Ohio State University on December 11, 1985. This conference was designed to: (1) disseminate the findings of the statewide survey, the secondary analysis of national exemplary programs, and the Cuyahoga County case study; (2) provide a forum for the exchange of information concerning operative home detention programs; (3) enable those considering home detention programs to acquire valuable information concerning the operation of such programs; and (4) identify issues and trends with respect to the use of home detention.

More than 50 persons attended and participated in this conference. This group included juvenile court judges; court directors; home detention project directors; probation officers; researchers; planners; court placement directors; and representatives of the Ohio Department of Youth Services. Operative home detention programs were described and a number of issues were discussed, including: (1) the use of volunteers to supplement court staff in monitoring youth placed on home detention; (2) differences in program design as related to differences in county composition and resources; (3) criteria for "success"; (4) profiles of youth in home detention programs; (5) methods of monitoring for compliance with home detention conditions; (6) home detention as an informational resource for the court at the adjudicatory and dispositional stages; (7) the proper role of law enforcement in such programs; (8) caseload size; (9) enforcement/revocation policies; (10) comparative costs; and (11) job descriptions/expectations for program staff.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Taken collectively, the information and data generated by this study have significant implications for juvenile justice policy, though the lower-than-expected response to the statewide survey is a significant constraint that may limit the generalizability of the study. The policy implications may best be discussed in the context of the major policy issues confronted in this research project.

Legal Issues

Despite a controversy which arose concerning the "legality" of home detention in Ohio, this research has concluded that there is nothing in Ohio law to preclude the use of home detention. The sections of the Ohio Revised Code (O.R.C.) cited by those who raised concerns were O.R.C. 2151.31, 2151.311, 2151.314, and Juvenile Rules 6 and 7

(actually, O.R.C. 2151.312 and Juvenile Rule 13 are also relevant to this issue).

Despite the fact that the Ohio Legislature did not specifically include (and may not have been cognizant of) "home detention" as an alternative to the use of secure detention, it appears that Ohio juvenile court judges have ample discretion to issue home detention orders. In fact, in delineating permissible places of detention, O.R.C. 2151.312(A)(4) recognizes as acceptable " . . . any other suitable place designated by the court." Surely such language is broad enough to encompass the home (or a home) as a suitable place if so designated by the court. All that would remain, then, would be a semantic distinction between "home detention" and "conditional release" to the custodial parent or guardian.

Home detention also affords a less intrusive type of control - - one which corresponds more closely to the recommendations of the Institute of Judicial Administration/American Bar Association's (1980) Standards Relating to Interim Status. Even the Supreme Court's controversial decision concerning the preventive detention of juveniles (Schall v. Martin, 467 U.S. 253, 104 S.Ct. 2403 [1984]) was limited to an environment where due process protections and the conditions of confinement far exceed those typically encountered in the juvenile justice system in America (Brown, et al, 1985).

Thus, it appears that home detention is not only legally permissible in Ohio, but also may be viewed as a less intrusive form of control that is consistent with the philosophy, articulated by several national commissions and many experts, that the least restrictive means available should be utilized whenever possible. From this perspective, the restrictive measure of secure detention should be reserved for only a small percentage of juveniles, particularly those who may pose a "clear and present danger" to the community.

Potential Impacts on Detention Populations and Costs

The widespread implementation (and, where already existing, responsible expansion) of home detention programs in Ohio could significantly reduce the population of local juvenile detention centers in our state - - an impact that could greatly alleviate some of the overcrowded conditions now existing.

It is evident from the information accumulated from national exemplary programs and our own statewide conference

that home detention programs have considerable potential for reducing overcrowded detention facilities, forestalling the need to construct additional facilities at great cost, and saving significant sums of money when compared to the operational costs of detention centers.

Quality Control

The findings generated by this study underscore the importance of "quality control" in the structure and operation of home detention programs. Important variables include competent management and staff; good working relations between the home detention program and the juvenile court, including the probation department; small (5-6) case-loads for home detention workers; and emphasis on frequent contacts, including at least one unscheduled daily contact with each youth.

Public Acceptance and Support

Finally, there is the important issue of public support. Most citizens probably were unaware of home detention programs until the recent nationwide publicity surrounding house arrest programs for adults (often focusing on programs utilizing electronic surveillance, such as electronic "ankle bracelets"). Managers of home detention programs must be cognizant of the need to develop and maintain community support, since any alternative to confinement may be viewed as a test of community tolerance. Three factors would appear to be especially important in developing and maintaining support in the community:

(1) CAREFUL AND RESPONSIBLE SCREENING OF ALL CANDIDATES FOR HOME DETENTION. It would be advisable, for example, to eliminate from consideration those charged with violent personal offenses.³ These offenses pose the greatest threat to public safety; therefore, those charged with such offenses pose the greatest potential risk to the community. Home detention programs accepting such referrals put at risk the survival of the entire program, since community backlash to one highly-publicized assault could quickly undermine the program's base of political support.

³ Careful screening should also take into account police reports and such factors as "overcharging" by prosecutors and "felony murder" charges, which may not accurately reflect violent behavior.

(2) AGGRESSIVE, FREQUENT, UNSCHEDULED MONITORING OF ALL YOUTHS DURING THEIR TIME IN THE HOME DETENTION PROGRAM AND A WILLINGNESS TO RETURN THEM TO SECURE DETENTION WHEN NECESSARY. Data produced by this study clearly demonstrate that frequent contacts with the youth is the most important variable associated with successful completion of home detention. FOR THIS TO OCCUR, CASELOAD SIZE SHOULD NOT EXCEED 5-6 PER WORKER. And for those youths who do not comply with their agreements and whose behavior poses a risk to the public, return to secure detention should be viewed as protection of the public via crime prevention, and not simply categorized as a "failure." TO PREVENT MISUNDERSTANDING AND CLARIFY EXPECTATIONS, ALL AGREEMENTS SHOULD BE WRITTEN AND SHOULD SPECIFY ALL CONDITIONS AND EXPECTATIONS, AS WELL AS POSSIBLE SANCTIONS IF THE AGREEMENT IS VIOLATED.

(3) COMMUNICATION OF PROGRAMMATIC GOALS AND ACHIEVEMENTS TO THE COMMUNITY AND TO OTHER AGENCIES. Home detention program managers must be acutely sensitive to the fact that such programs constitute a continuing test of community tolerance. Such programs must be operated responsibly, in the public's interest, and the public and relevant agencies must be accurately informed concerning the program's goals and achievements.

* * * * *

If home detention programs are successful in developing and maintaining the support of their juvenile courts and their communities, they can represent a less intrusive method of social control and a source of significant cost savings to Ohio's counties. This study has indicated that such programs, when properly structured and well-managed, can be very successful in keeping juveniles "trouble-free and available to the court." The careful development and responsible expansion of such programs in Ohio is supported by this study.

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