

# Fairfield County

Judge Terre L. Vandervoort

## Program Name

Diversion Accountability Program

## Program Intervention

## Primary Service Location

In-Home, Community, School, Other: Fairfield Co Juvenile Court Assessment & Intervention Center

## Program Description

- The purpose of the Diversion Accountability Program (DAP) is to divert eligible first-time, low/moderate risk misdemeanor and unruly offenders from formal court processing.
- The OYAS diversion screen is administered along with substance abuse and mental health screening tools to determine a youth's risk to re-offend as well as any underlying mental health, behavioral health and substance abuse issues. Appropriate youth are subsequently referred for additional services.
- A range of community and pro-social activities serve to address each youth's unique issues and involve minimal treatment intensity and court contact.

## Outcomes

- 92.2 % of youth who were successfully terminated have not re-offended. The recidivism rate is 7.8%.
- Since the inception of the program (14 months) 151 youth have successfully the program. Of those youth, 87 were not processed formally through the court. It is anticipated that the completion number of 87 will be closer to the projected 100 in future years.
- An Accountability Agreement was developed and executed for 100% of youth participating in DAP

## Lessons Learned

- Open communication and cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office is critical to the success of the Diversion program – from the decision to divert the case to filing charges expeditiously with the prosecutor's staff should the youth not be successful.
- Most importantly we are learning that **Diversion works** to reduce a youth's likelihood to re-offend. The program's recidivism rate is much lower than projected. It is our perception that even for difficult cases and perhaps even more so, the relationships between youth and Officers is critical to helping youth succeed and build the skills needed to stay out of the juvenile system.

## Program Snapshot

(As of June 30, 2016)

### Gender:

57.5% Male  
42.5% Female

### Race/Ethnicity:

11.9% African American  
84.1% Caucasian & 4% Other

### Age Range:

10 to 18

### Offense Level:

Misdemeanor, Status, At-Risk

### Youth Re-offense Risk Level:

Low & Moderate

### Screens & Assessments:

OYAS, CRAFFT (Substance Abuse Screening Tool), DUKE (Mental Health Screening Tool)

### Program Start Date:

May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015

### Received Services:

226 Youth and Families

### Program Completion Successes:

151 Youth & Families  
42 Youth & Families Continuing into FY17

### Average # of Service Units:

3.67 Direct Service Hours per Successful Youth & Family

### Program Partners:

- Fairfield County Family, Adult and Children First Council
- The Recovery Center (AOD)
- New Horizons Counseling Center
- Decorative Arts Center
- Lancaster High School Football Training Camp
- Fairfield County 211
- All Fairfield County Schools
- Fairfield Prosecuting Attorney

## Program Information Contact

Becky Edwards, Director  
Fairfield County Juvenile Court  
Assessment & Intervention Center  
123 East Chestnut Street  
Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
740-652-7378  
[redwards@co.fairfield.oh.us](mailto:redwards@co.fairfield.oh.us)

# Fairfield County Early Successes - DAP

“The creation of the Diversion Accountability Program, funded through the Ohio Department of Youth Services Competitive RECLAIM funding, has allowed the Fairfield County Juvenile Court to provide services and interventions for youth and their families that are consistent with their underlying risk and needs. Our ability to divert youth from formal court processing enables court probation staff to focus increased efforts and resources on youth who are higher risk. Through the Diversion program we are able to provide the right level of intervention at the right time, reducing the likelihood that this group of youth will reoffend in the future.”

**Judge Terre L. Vandervoort**  
**Fairfield County Juvenile Division**



“We in Fairfield County are encouraged with the creation of the Juvenile Court Diversion Accountability Program. The focus is on reducing the number of youth who will reoffend. The program rightfully includes restitution, community services, and problem solving; there are appropriate referrals, such as referrals for skill building services and substance abuse treatment. This is a practical, evidence-based approach to better our community.”

**Dave Levacy,**  
**Fairfield County Commissioner**



“In any organizational or professional relationship you must have trust, commitment and compassion from all stake holders to be most effective. In Diversion, the staff I have worked with demonstrate all three characteristics. The staff in the Diversion program have shown themselves to be trustworthy through regular and effective communication, follow through and support of the administration at Thomas Ewing. Committed to being relevant in the lives of students, the staff uses time and resources to make connections, develop rapport and support the families. They are compassionate toward families and circumstances. They take each case, individually, effectively avoiding stereotypes and generalizations that would derail progress. As the staff at Diversion and the staff at Thomas Ewing improve their levels of communication and rapport, the effectiveness of the Diversion program will strengthen as well.”

**Brian Lawson**  
**Dean of Students**  
**Thomas Ewing Junior High School**

**Youth Success Story** – DR entered the Diversion Accountability Program with the charge of Unruly Child for running away. DR had been placed under the guardianship of extended family members and it seemed that everyone in the home was having issues adjusting to this arrangement. The entire Diversion department came together to help this young man. Services were put in place, such as summer work and football camps, among other positive pro-social activities to keep him busy and focused. During this entire process there were continuing family conflicts at home, questions about where DR would live long term, transportation issues to all of the services that had been put in place for him, and even some resistance from DR. Everyone continued to work diligently to keep DR on the right path. Diversion entered this young man's life because of a life situation that caused him to make some poor choices that could have set him on a path for continued involvement in the court system. With the intervention and support of the Diversion team he began making better choices, was able to excel at school, and was on the A/B honor roll for the entire year. He was also a standout athlete at his school and was able to make many new positive friends.

**Program Success Story** – A challenge to the implementation of the Fairfield County Diversion Accountability Program was the initial lack of endorsement from the Fairfield County Prosecutor's office. Timeliness of prosecution and the desire for accountability for youth were major concerns. Meetings were held with the Prosecutor's office staff to better explain the processes, timing, eligible offenses, and all factors of the program to provide the opportunity for input in final development. Open and honest conversation was held to understand and honor each stakeholder's concerns.

The program model was modified to address those concerns that did not fundamentally change the vision of Judge Vandervoort. Open dialogue continued until a model that was acceptable to all was developed. In April of 2015 the Prosecuting Attorney's office agreed to refer Diversion cases directly into the program without formal filing. Diversion administrators were given access to the Prosecuting Attorney's data system to enable electronic receipt of referrals and collateral documentation.

The court's strategy to provide open dialogue and education to create a Diversion program that meets the needs of all parties has yielded a system that is efficient, resulting in referrals that vastly exceed the estimated number of youth anticipated at this early stage of the program.

## **Lessons Learned –**

First Lesson: Every case is different! Understanding the family dynamic is critical to providing support to the youth so that they can be successful in Diversion. A theft offense may be very straight forward or become very complicated depending upon the youth's life situation.

Second Lesson: Open communication and cooperation with the Prosecutor's Office is critical to the success of the Diversion program. From the decision to divert the case to filing charges expeditiously should the youth not be successful require the Diversion Officer to have easy access to the Prosecutor's staff.

Third Lesson: Most importantly we are learning that **Diversion works** to reduce a youth's likelihood to re-offend. The program's recidivism rate is much lower than projected. It is our perception that even for difficult cases and perhaps even more so, the relationships between youth and Officers is critical to helping youth succeed and build the skills needed to stay out of the juvenile system.

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