



Nonprofit Assessment Centers

Assessment Centers disrupt existing pathways to juvenile justice and child welfare systems by creating a single point of access to community-based resources and supports. Assessment Centers identify underlying issues and needs of youth and families and partner with them to access individualized services and/or resources. Assessment Centers can disrupt pathways by intervening through schools, at point of or after arrest, at the request of parents/caregivers, or through partnerships with other community stakeholders.

How are Assessment Centers established ?

An Assessment Center's point of intervention (contact) should be developed and refined based on local community data and needs. Developing an Assessment Center requires communities to first deepen their understanding of why and how youth encounter & move through systems processes. The National Assessment Center Association (NAC) supports communities in identification of areas for an Assessment Center to intervene, prevent, and divert. Through thorough data analysis and stakeholder interviews, a map is created to depict how youth currently encounter systems. Community and system stakeholders are convened to review the draft map and collectively identify opportunities for early intervention, diversion, and prevention through an Assessment Center.

Nonprofit Assessment Centers

An Assessment Center's operational structure can vary from community to community. Some Assessment Centers are operated by a county department or a judicial district. For county-run Assessment Centers, they can operate under court administration OR under a department separate from the courts such as a community services department. Assessment Centers can also be operated by community-based nonprofit organizations so long as they maintain neutrality in the service provider community (see [Benefit of Neutrality](#) article).

Those Assessment Centers ran by nonprofit organizations & non-court public agencies align with the effective diversion elements highlighted in the Anne E. Casey publication "Tradition vs. Effective Diversion." For nonprofit Assessment Centers, the "role of the probation agency" is "transferred to community organizations and/or non-court public agencies" and diversion is "overseen by a single community-based organization or by a coalition of organizations."

This document highlights three nonprofit Assessment Centers located in Louisiana, Colorado, and California and their implementation of diversion best practices.



Est 2014

Hahnville, LA

www.stcharlescaredcenter.org

The St. Charles CARE Center strives to meet the needs of children and families through an integrated system of care and support. Our mission is to engage, empower, and uplift young people and their families through programs that promote strengths, address challenges, and guide toward lifelong success. Our vision is for all young people to reach their full potential through the support of strong families and communities.

Population

Prevention:

- *School Partnerships:* The CARE Center is currently piloting a direct referral partnership with the local school district in which schools can refer students experiencing behavioral health challenges that place the child at-risk for court involvement. It is a completely voluntary service and parents have to provide consent for the referral.
- *Community referrals:* The CARE Center accepts walk-ins / self-referrals from any family in the community. Families often find us through word of mouth from other community members or through other community-based organizations in our network.

Pre-arrest Diversion: See status offenses in pre-charge diversion below. We hope to deepen our partnership with the sheriff's office in order to standardize their response to and processing of status offenses.

Pre-charge diversion:

- Status offense arrests are diverted by the district attorney from formal processing and referred to the CARE Center. We hope to eliminate this step overtime through pre-arrest diversion.
- Starting in the Summer 2023, the district attorney will use an objective decision making process which diverts

most misdemeanor delinquent offenses to The CARE Center for assessment, intervention, and referral services.

Interventions & Programming

The CARE Center's comprehensive family assessment model, called Family SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to...), is a series of 3 to 4 meetings designed to assess the strengths and needs of families. Through authentic relationship building and engagement, we aim to motivate families to recognize where they may need support and empower them to begin the change process. We pair families with a Navigator -- an individual who provides families with high-quality service navigation in order to improve access to services and empower them to achieve sustainable success. Youth and families can access our services for free at any time, regardless of their court involvement status.

Consequences for Court Noncompliance

When families are referred to diversion services from the court system, The CARE Center will advocate for families to not be referred for formal processing when their "noncompliance" is due to barriers such as unstable housing, emergent health and wellness needs, lack of employment flexibility or security, etc. When families are referred through prevention pathways (no court involvement), The CARE Center does not report any information to the court system.



**Juvenile
Assessment
Center**

Serving Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert & Lincoln Counties

Est 2000
Centennial, CO
www.jac18.org

The Juvenile Assessment Center (JAC) provides a coordinated site which contributes to the safety of youth, families, and the community through early intervention, comprehensive assessment and improved access to appropriate services in Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert and Lincoln counties in Colorado. Through in-depth assessment(s) and evidence-based screening tools, staff work to understand the barriers youth and families are experiencing at home, school or in the community.

Population

Prevention: Youth referred through the prevention track have no charges. The goal is to identify service needs and connect youth and families to resources and supports to prevent system involvement.

- *Community referrals:* The 18th JAC accepts walk-ins / self-referrals from any family in the community. Families often find us through word of mouth from other community members or through other community-based organizations in our network
- *School referrals:* The 18th JAC partners with 11 school districts in our jurisdiction to identify youth who are chronically absent or experiencing behaviors that would result in referrals to local law enforcement or the child welfare system.

Pre-Arrest Diversion: There are currently no pre-arrest diversion initiatives, however, this has been identified as an area of focus.

Pre-Charge Diversion:

- *Status and Misdemeanor offenses:* Starting June 2023, in an agreement with the District Attorney's office, youth who have committed an alleged status or low level Misdemeanor offense are referred to the 18th JAC in lieu of a case being filed in court.
- *Summons:* For youth who are issued a summons in District Court, the 18th JAC partners with a clinical diversion program through the District Attorney's office to identify service needs and make recommendations for youth. Upon completion of services and recommendations, the case is expunged.

Interventions & Programming

Youth referred to the 18th JAC through prevention or pre-charge diversion pathways are never on a probation caseload. JAC staff engage youth and families in a screening & assessment process followed by acute case management post assessment. Typical case management is 3 months, but can take as long as the family needs to be connected to services or as long as they need the extra support.

The JAC process is at no cost to youth & families. Resources and services youth and families are connected to (i.e., therapy) may have a fee but staff do their best to ensure the cost is covered or is very minimal.

Consequences for Court Noncompliance

For youth served through the prevention pathways, there are no consequences for not participating in the assessment center process. It is and always will be voluntary. For youth in the status or low level misdemeanor offense pre-charge diversion process, youth are expected to engage in the screening and assessment process, however, there are no consequences for failure to engage in the services or resources identified and connected to by the JAC;

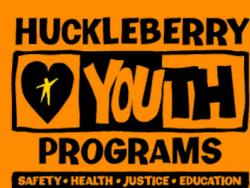
participating in the screening & assessment is all that is required. If youth and families opt not to participate with the screening and assessment process, they do go through the traditional court process.

For youth in the summons diversion process, youth who refuse to participate in the process, do have to go through the traditional court process and there can be consequences for non-compliance. They may still be offered diversion, but it is less likely if they refused to participate. In our experience, it is rare for youth to refuse participation. It is explained that their case will be expunged after successful completion or not even filed in court if they participate in the pre-charge JAC diversion process.

Post-Arrest Diversion: C.A.R.C. partners with the Public Defender's Office, District Attorney's Office, Community Youth Center, Instituto Familiar de la Raza, the SF Police Department, Sheriff's Department and 8 other law enforcement agencies. C.A.R.C. staff consult with Probation at time of arrest regardless of citation type to confirm the disposition even though eligibility is identified.

- *Misdemeanor offenses:* All misdemeanor offenses are diverted through C.A.R.C. and are not referred to or overseen by probation or the courts. This includes youth active on probation.
- *All other offenses:* C.A.R.C. serves as a single point of contact for all youth arrested in San Francisco.

Pre-Charge Diversion: The district attorney has the discretion to divert youth back to C.A.R.C. for programming and referral to services.



C.A.R.C.
Est 1998
San Francisco, CA
www.huckleberryyouth.org

The Huckleberry Community Assessment and Resource Center (C.A.R.C.) is a single point of entry for crisis intervention, assessment, service integration and referral of arrested youth. Staff from CARC including case managers & mental health clinicians, community-based organizations, the sheriff's department, police and probation work together in the same space to assess and case manage youth who are arrested for a variety of offenses, both felony and misdemeanor.

Population

Prevention: Youth referred to the prevention or “service only” track under C.A.R.C. have not had an arrest, but a need for support and engagement into services has been identified.

- *Status offenses:* Status offenses such as truancy can be referred to the services only track.
- *Community:* C.A.R.C. accepts walk-ins / self-referrals from any family in the community. Families often find us through word of mouth from other community members or through other community-based organizations in our network.
- *School:* In addition to status offense referrals, Project READY is an internal program focused on youth with truancy and behavior challenges during 7th grade; support throughout 8th grade-first semester of 9th grade with social-emotional focused case management, mental health supports, & enrichment programming.

Pre-Arrest Diversion: C.A.R.C. is at the beginning stages of developing a pre-arrest program in collaboration with system partners: District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Probation, Mayor's Office, Police Department, & Public Defender's Office.

Interventions & Programming

Once at C.A.R.C., youth meet with a case manager who conducts a voluntary assessment. C.A.R.C. staff develop a case plan based on need(s) identified in the assessment. The goal is for youth and their families to leave with a new sense of support, opportunity, and hope.

Case managers work with youth to reintegrate them into their schools, arrange for special educational services, obtain mental health services, complete community service and probation requirements, and engage the youth in positive social, arts, athletic, and youth development programs. Case Management and services usually last between 3-6 months depending on the needs of the youth. Youth and families are not charged fines and fees for services.

For youth diverted to C.A.R.C. who complete their case plan, the case is expunged.

Consequences for Noncompliance

Youth referred to C.A.R.C. through the prevention or post-arrest track are not referred to the court for formal processing. For youth referred to C.A.R.C. post arrest, failure to complete agreements/plan, can impact agreements if future arrests and/or their ability for future diversion eligibility. Youth can be diverted up to three times. Staff at C.A.R.C can, and do, advocate for diversion especially when specific circumstances are known.