



# **Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative in Multnomah County:**

*A successful system reform  
partnership*

Multnomah County Board of  
Commissioners

October 19, 2017

In 1992, Multnomah County was facing a number of challenges with its juvenile detention center

A federal lawsuit for unconstitutional conditions of confinement

Chronic crowding; daily emergency release meetings to comply with a federally mandated cap resulting from the lawsuit

A lack of meaningful alternatives to secure detention

A lack of any real data regarding detention populations

No real collaborative planning or oversight

**Multnomah County  
became one of  
the earliest sites to  
implement the  
Juvenile Detention  
Alternatives  
Initiative (JDAI)**



# JDAI uses eight interconnected strategies to enable jurisdictions to safely reduce reliance on secure detention

## **PURPOSE:**

To demonstrate that jurisdictions can establish more effective and efficient systems to accomplish the purposes of juvenile detention.

## **OBJECTIVES:**

- 1) Eliminate inappropriate or unnecessary use of secure detention
- 2) Minimize failures to appear and incidence of delinquent behavior
- 3) Redirect public finances to successful reform strategies
- 4) Improve conditions in secure detention facilities
- 5) Reduce racial and ethnic disparities

## **CORE STRATEGIES:**

**Collaboration**

**Use of accurate data**

**Objective admissions criteria and instruments**

**Alternative to detention**

**Case processing reforms**

**Reducing the use of secure confinement for 'special' cases**

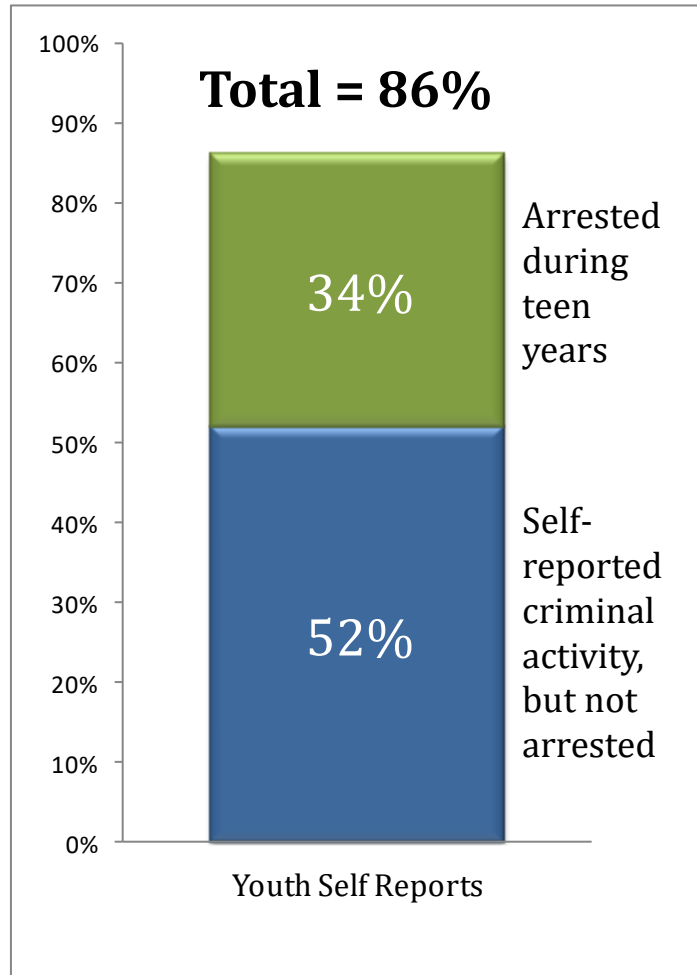
**Deliberate commitment to reducing racial disparities**

**Improving conditions of confinement**



# Research shows that most juveniles engage in criminal behavior, but don't continue into adulthood

## YOUTH SELF REPORTING CRIMINAL ACTIVITY



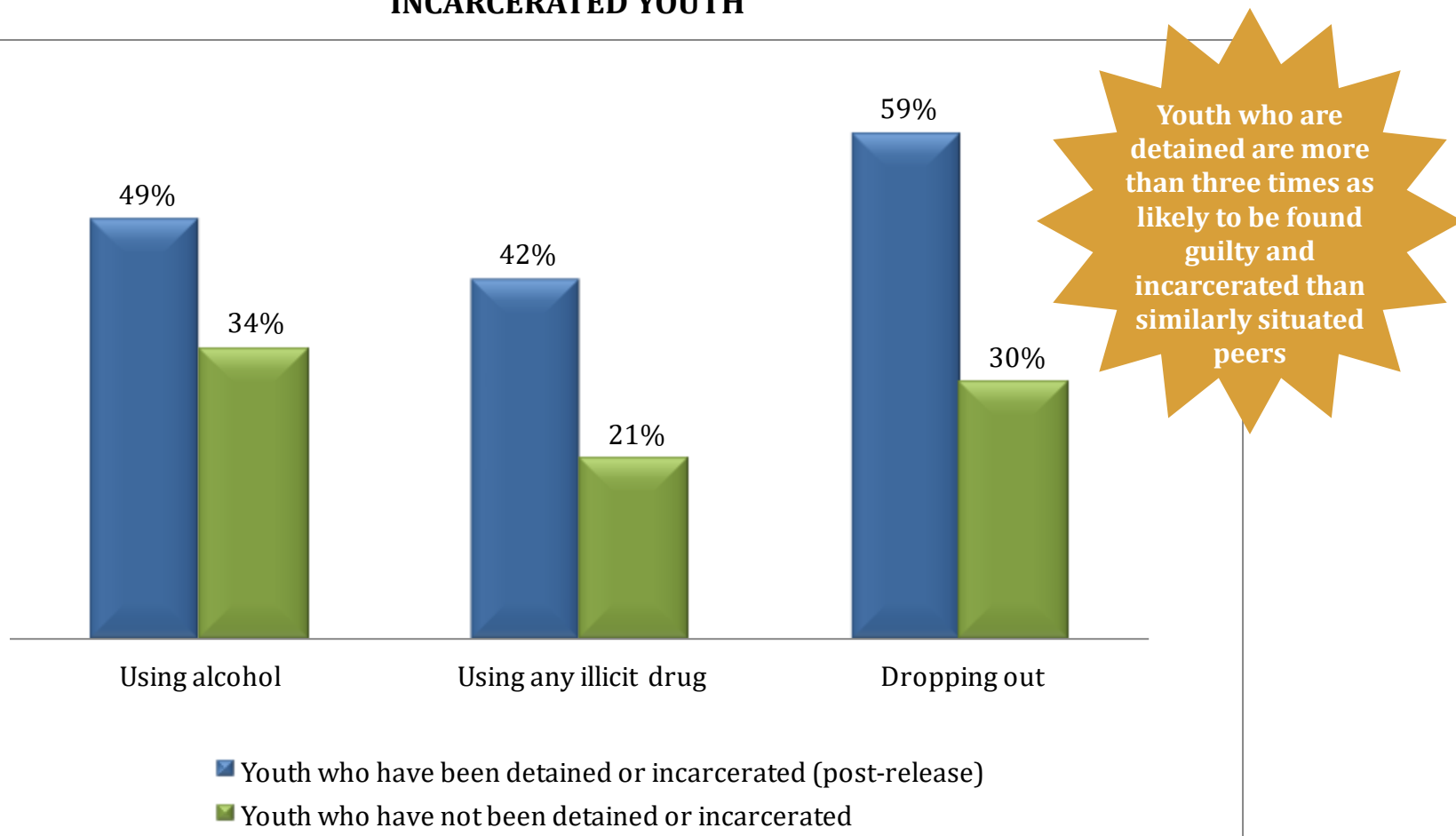
**Most youth age  
out of criminal  
behavior on  
their own**

- ▶ Longitudinal studies begun in the 1950s show **most juvenile offenders age out** of criminal behavior
- ▶ Researchers believe this is because the **transition to young adulthood 'cements' bonds to society** and deters most from continued criminality



Detention leads to worse outcomes. After release, detained youth are far more likely to drop out of school and use drugs and alcohol

**LIKELIHOOD OF BEHAVIOR: INCARCERATED VS. NON-  
INCARCERATED YOUTH**



Through JDAI, Multnomah County implemented key reforms that resulted in significant, sustainable improvements in detention practices

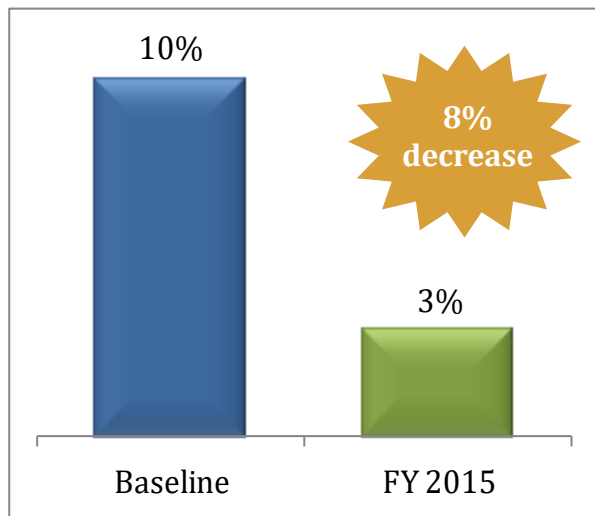
## KEY DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

- ▶ Designed and tested an objective risk assessment instrument to guide admissions decisions
- ▶ Established an array of community-based alternatives to secure detention
- ▶ Commenced the 11:00 meeting where stakeholders meet to staff cases set for preliminary hearing; discuss release/hold recommendations and release plans
- ▶ Expedited case processing to reduce length of stay
- ▶ Opened the Juvenile Reception Center
- ▶ Established protocol with the DA's office with the goal of diverting more youth at the front end into culturally specific community services and supports
- ▶ Implemented a graduated sanctions grid to reduce probation violations, which will soon include a more robust list of responses including incentives
- ▶ Formed the Juvenile Justice Council, a collaborative body designed to oversee and push for continued detention reforms

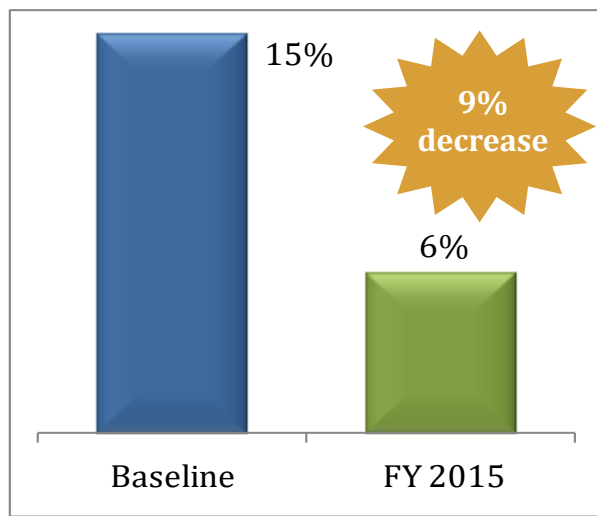


# Moreover, measures of public safety are vastly improved

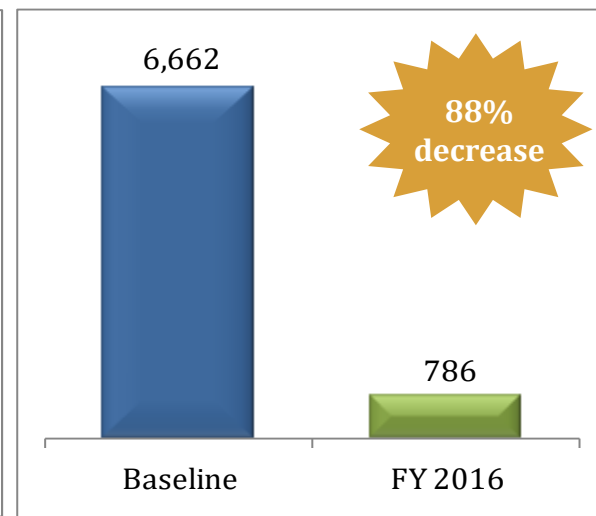
## FAILURE TO APPEAR



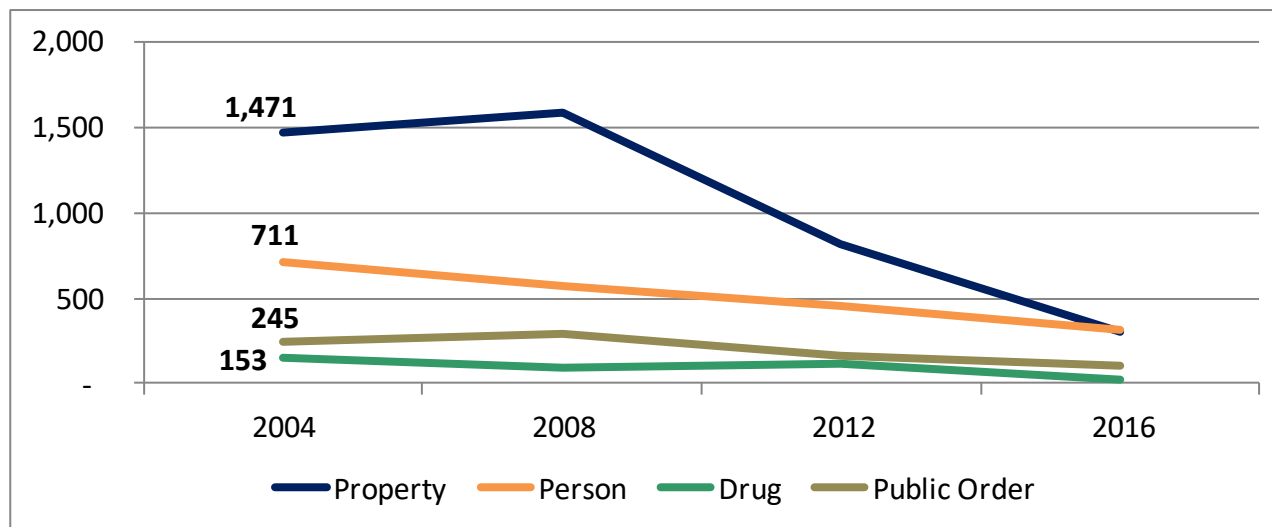
## RE-ARREST



## CRIMINAL REFERRALS

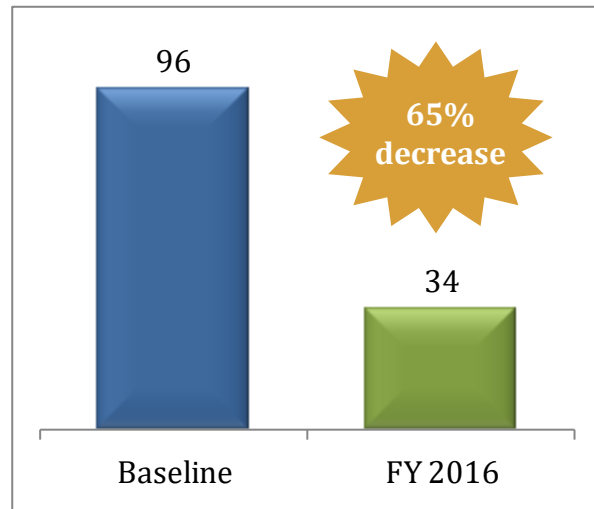


## REFERRAL TREND IN MAJOR CRIME TYPES 2000-2016

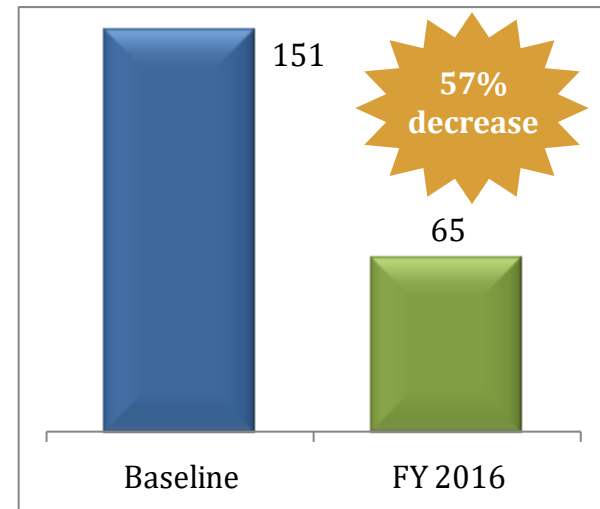


As a result, juvenile incarceration in Multnomah County has plummeted and certain racial disparities have improved

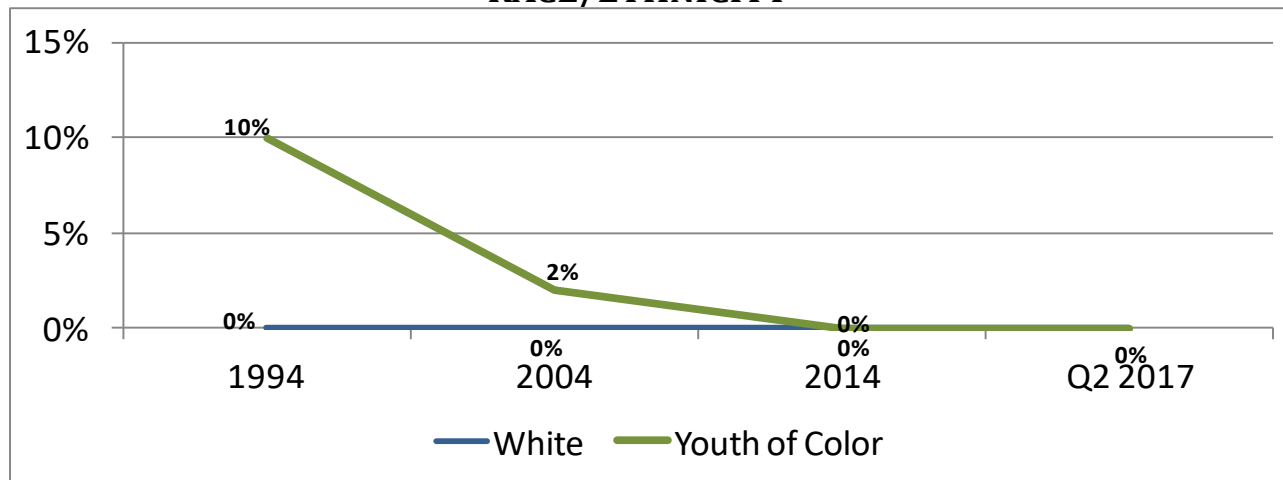
**AVERAGE DAILY POPULATION**



**STATE COMMITMENTS**



**% DIFFERENCE OF JUVENILE ARRESTS DETAINED, BY RACE/ETHNICITY**



The County was able to close detention beds, freeing up millions of dollars that could be redirected into other county initiatives

If we were still detaining youth at the rate we were prior to JDAI, we would have had 472 more admissions to detention last year at a cost of \$2.14 million dollars to the County.



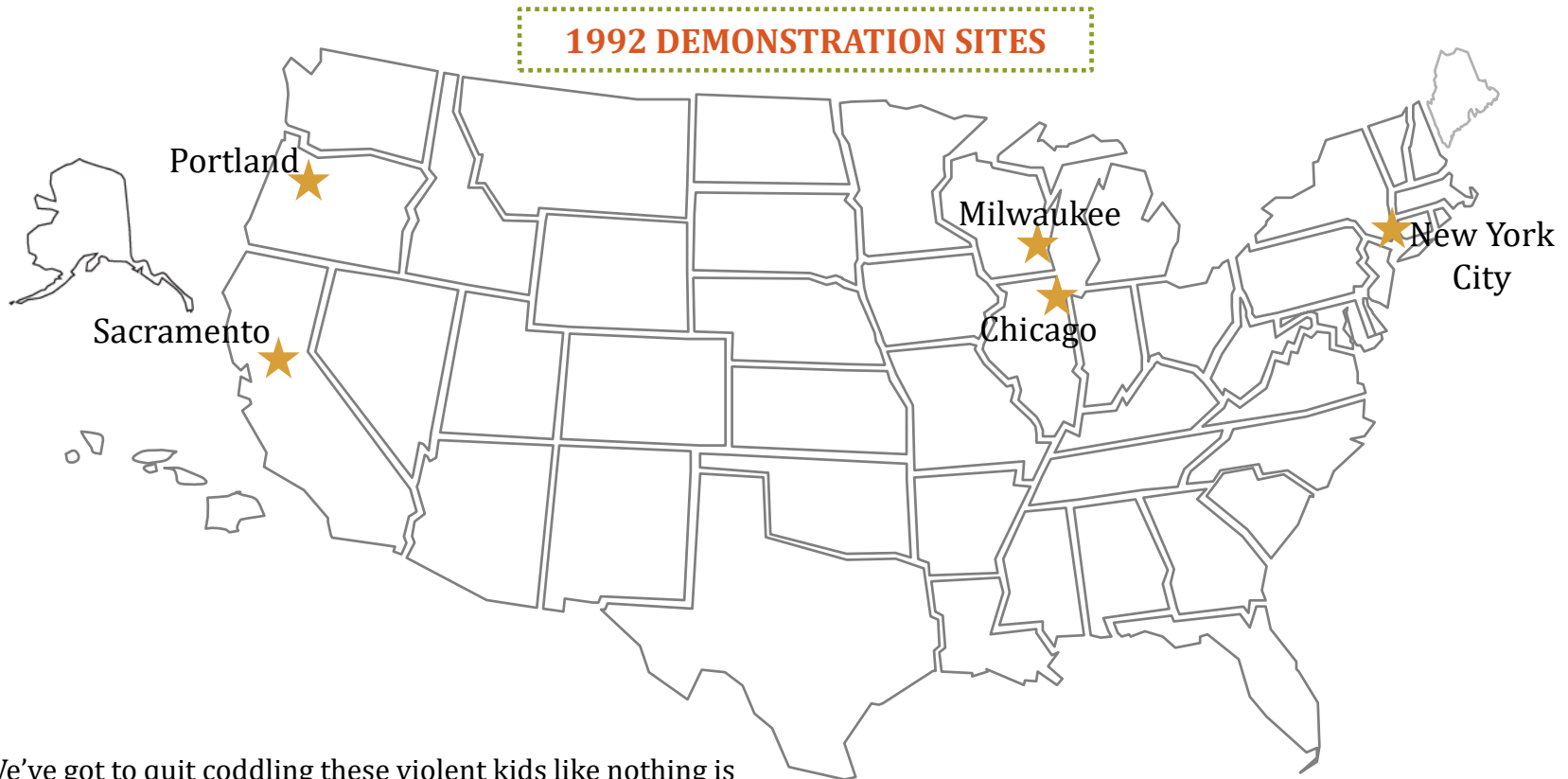
Multnomah County now hosts JDAI sites from around the country to share its story and provide insight into challenges many sites face

### **MODEL SITE ACTIVITIES**

- ▶ In more than 15 years as a JDAI model site, Multnomah County has served as a learning laboratory for other jurisdictions
- ▶ Approximately 130 delegations have attended Multnomah County model site visits over the past 17 years
- ▶ About 3,000 policy-makers and practitioners have visited to learn from Multnomah County's experience



# As JDAI launched its demonstration sites, the national conversation about juvenile justice was moving in a very different direction

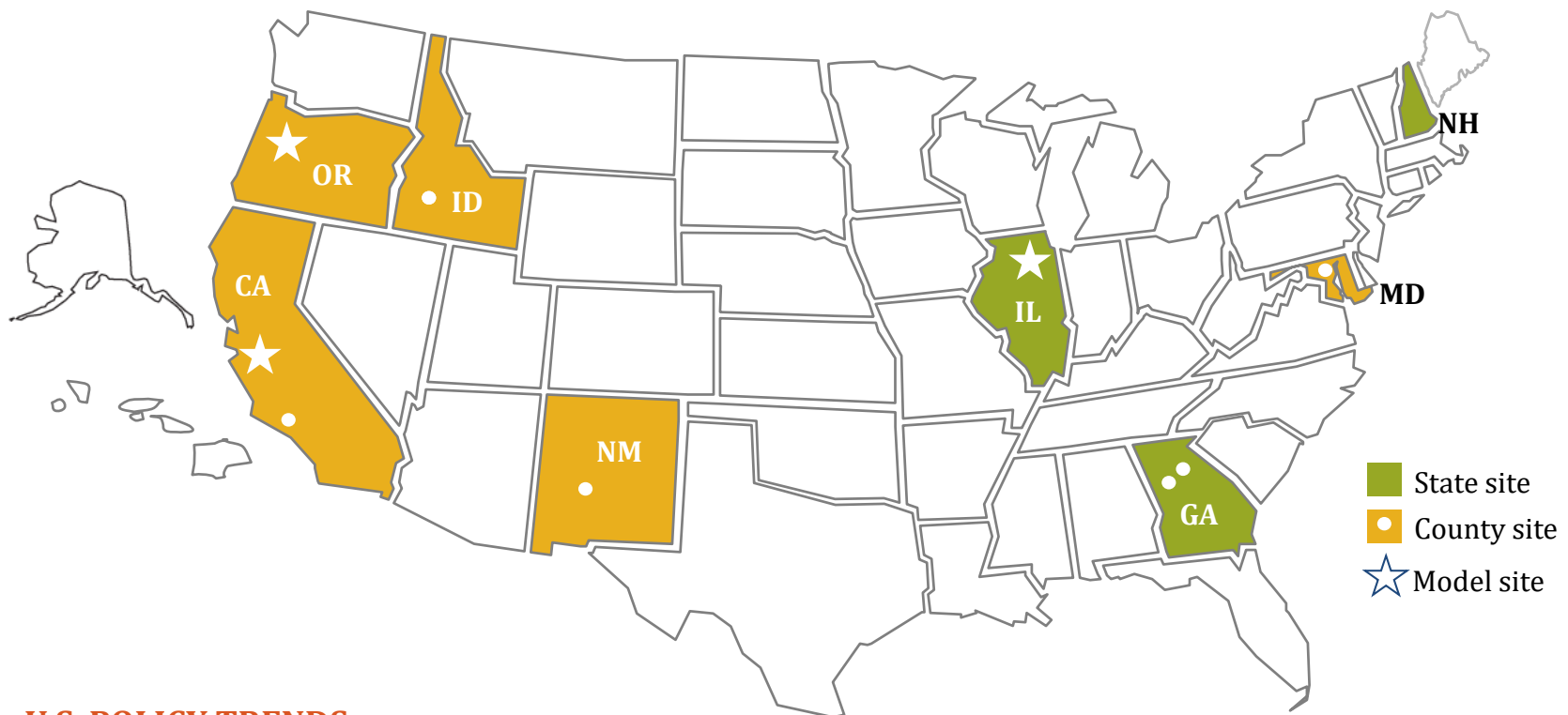


“We’ve got to quit coddling these violent kids like nothing is going on. . . We’d all like to rehabilitate these kids, but by gosh we are in a different age.” — **Orin Hatch, U.S. Senator from Utah**

“I’m always uncomfortable being a predictor of doom, but I think we’re in real trouble. I think our society is coming apart when it desperately needs to be coming together. You can see it in rising crime rates; you can see it in the increasing amount of violence among our young people.” — **Bill Clinton, presidential candidate**



Based on the initial results and early lessons, JDAI began expanding, despite the harsh political climate of the time

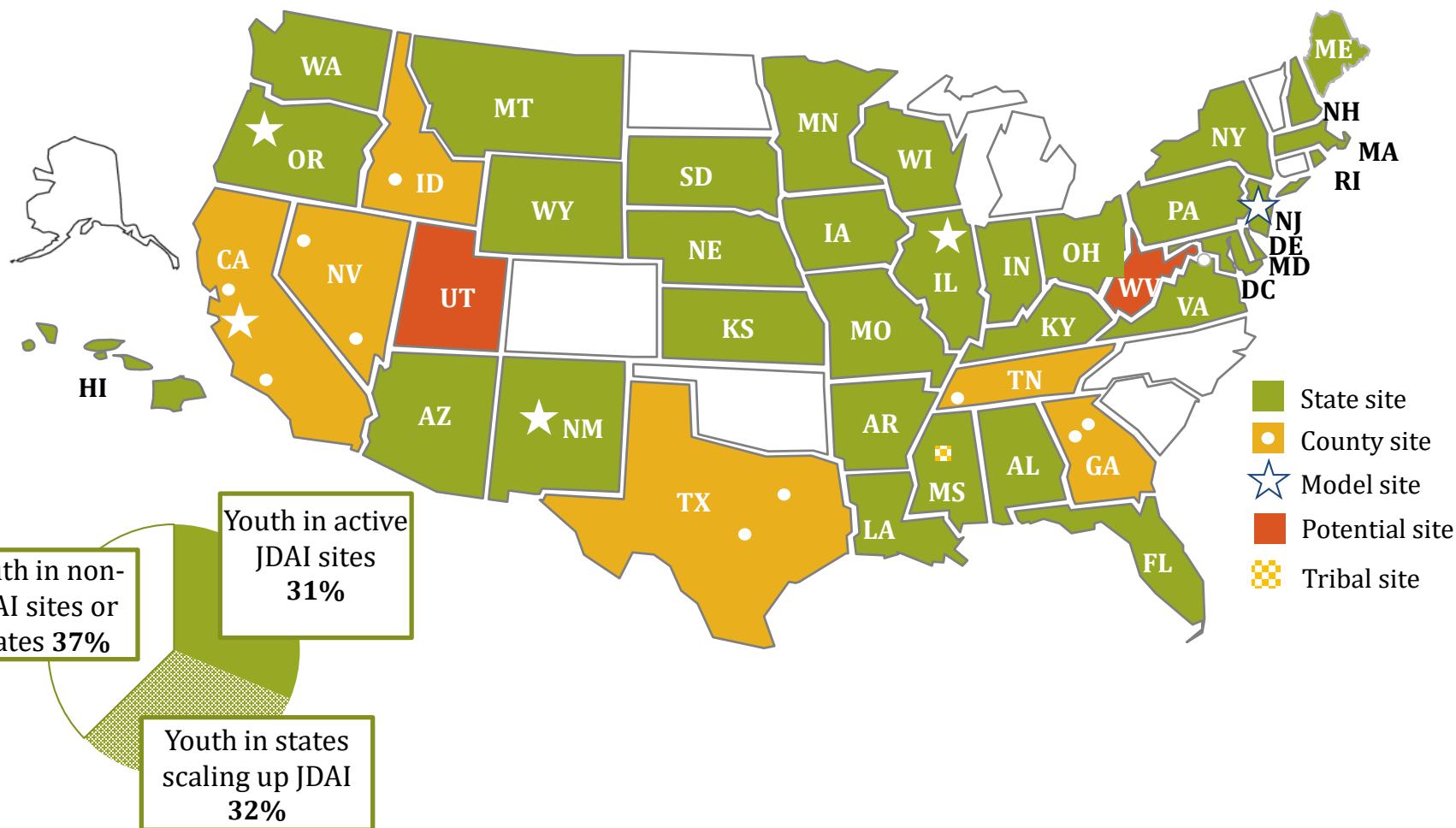


### U.S. POLICY TRENDS – MID- TO LATE 1990s

- In 1995, John Dilulio coins the term “superpredator” to describe a new breed of sociopathic youth that would soon be wreaking havoc on the nation (which was later de-bunked)
- Between 1992 and 1997, all but six states enacted or expanded provisions to transfer youth to criminal court
- Between 1993 and 1996, three states lowered the upper age limit for juvenile jurisdiction (WY, NH, WI)
- In 1999, the Columbine shooting led to the proliferation of “zero tolerance” policies in schools



Multnomah County's efforts have helped influence the expansion of JDAI to more than 300 counties, spanning 39 states, the District of Columbia and two Tribes



# Thank you!

## Questions?

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