



# **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

Lee County Juvenile Assessment Center  
2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd  
Ft. Myers Fl. 33901

## **Detention Services**

### **Q: How long do juveniles stay in detention?**

**A:** Juvenile detention in Florida is a short-term temporary program. Juvenile offenders who require long-term sanctions and rehabilitation are placed into non-residential or residential treatment programs. Within 24 hours after admission to the detention center, the youth will appear in court and have a detention hearing before a judge authorizing the youth's detention status. If the judge continues the youth's detention status, his/her length of stay may extend up to 21 days or more.

### **Q: How many detention centers are in the state of Florida?**

**A:** The Department operates 26 juvenile detention centers in 25 counties with a total of 2,057 beds. The detention centers provide custody, supervision, education and mental health/substance abuse services to juveniles statewide. Juvenile Detention Officers receive specialized training and certification.

**Youth in Lee County go to the Southwest Florida Juvenile Detention Center located at 2525 Ortiz Ave. Ft. Myers, FL. 33905. Phone Number 332-6927**

### **Q: Are males and females detained in the same centers?**

**A:** Yes, males and females are detained in the same detention centers. However, males and females are separated in different housing units, school classrooms, etc.

### **Q: Are families allowed to visit juveniles detained in detention?**

**A:** Yes. Visitation is an important component of a youth's stay in detention and is encouraged and supported by detention staff. Parents, grandparents, and legal guardians are approved visitors. Others may only visit if so ordered by the court or specifically approved by the Superintendent or designee. A youth's assigned Juvenile Probation Officer should be contacted to approve both visitation list additions and special visitation arrangements.

- ❖ Legal counsel, Probation, law enforcement, clergy and other professionals may visit youth outside of regularly established visitation times as necessary, and are subject to any requirements regarding signing-in and contraband.
- ❖ All visitors are subject to electronic search. Visitors shall not bring personal items (e.g. keys, purses, packages, etc.) into the secure area. The introduction of any unauthorized items into a detention facility is a 3rd degree felony.
- ❖ All visitors will be required to sign-in and sign-out on the Visitor's Log of the youth being visited. Visitors shall be denied entrance if they:
  - a. Are disruptive or uncooperative;

- b. Refuse to be searched;
  - c. Refuse to comply with officer instructions;
  - d. Are under the influence or appear to be under the influence of any intoxicating substance;
  - e. Fail to present proper photo identification;
  - f. Attempt to introduce contraband to the secure area; and/or
  - g. Are dressed in inappropriate attire as outline in the Facility Operating Procedures and as posted at the facility entrance.
- ❖ Visitation may be terminated if the behavior of the visitor or of the youth is disruptive or not in compliance with facility policies and procedures. The termination of a visit may lead to the suspension of future visitation privileges at the discretion of the Superintendent.
  - ❖ Any questions that a visitor may have regarding a youth's case or charges should be referred to the youth's assigned Juvenile Probation Officer. Other questions should be referred to the on-duty JJDO Supervisor.
  - ❖ Visitation shall take place in a designated area or room of the facility that contributes to a safe and secure environment. Visitation room or areas and any other common area shall be searched both prior to and following visitation to ensure the absence of any hazardous or dangerous items or items that would be considered contraband.

**Q: What happens to my son/daughter's property?**

**A:** The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice recognizes the need to safeguard the personal property of youth brought into its care. All of the youth's property is inventoried at admission and the valuable property is stored in the facility safe. Other personal property (clothing, shoes, etc.) is stored in a locked storage room for the duration of the youth's stay. Property is released to the youth upon release from the facility.

**Q: Can I bring them their medication?**

**A:** Yes. Only medication in the original container from a licensed pharmacy, with an appropriate, current label intact on the medication container may be taken into the facility.

· Proper labeling includes the following:

- Name and address of the pharmacy
- Telephone number of the pharmacy
- Date of dispensing
- Name of the Prescribing health care professional
- Name of youth
- Dosage directions (route/number of times taken (frequency) daily)
- Warning statements, if applicable, and/or additional instructions for use.

**Q: Do the youth receive medical treatment while in detention?**

**A:** Yes. Medical services are provided through a contract with a local health care provider. All youth

entering the detention center receive a routine medical screening within 72 hours of their admittance to the facility. Routine examinations may include TB, vision, and screening for sexually transmitted diseases. The medical clinic is staffed by licensed medical staff who are available to respond to health-related issues daily. Any medical problems that cannot be handled by medical staff will be referred to a local medical facility. Parents should contact the center if their child is in need of medical services. Parents will be notified if any emergency medical services are needed during the youth's stay in the detention center. In addition, detention staff are trained in CPR and First Aid to ensure that they are prepared to handle emergency medical situations if they may arise.

**Q: Does a mental health counselor see the youth while in detention?**

**A:** Yes, depending on the needs of the youth. The department currently contracts with a private mental health provider to provide mental health services at each of the detention centers. The Designated Mental Health Authority (DMHA) is a licensed mental health care worker. Mental health staff provide of mental health and substance abuse treatment services. The mental health care staff ensure youth with identified mental health, substance abuse, and suicide issues are seen for the purposes of screening, assessment, treatment, and crisis intervention services.

**Q: What is Home Detention?**

**A:** Home Detention Program allows eligible youth to await his/her next court appearance at home or at another appropriate placement. All detained youth are screened for the Home Detention Program prior to their detention hearing. At the time of the detention hearing, the judge will specify whether the youth is to be held in secure detention, placed on Home Detention or Released. When a youth is placed on the Home Detention Program, a Juvenile Probation Officer will supervise them. The parent or legal guardian and youth sign a home detention contract. If for any reason this contract is violated or the youth is charged with a new law violation, he/she can be transferred back to secure detention until their case is resolved.

**Q: What can we bring our son/daughter?**

**A:** Clothing and personal hygiene items are provided for all youth. The detention center provides supplies and clothing for the youth. Detained youth are not permitted to have money. Gifts are discouraged while the detainee is in the detention center. Snacks are provided by the detention center every night. Detained youth are not permitted to have any tobacco products at any time while they are in the detention center.

**Q: When is court and where?**

**A:** Within 24 hours after admission to the detention center, the youth will appear in court and have a detention hearing before a judge authorizing the youth's detention status. If the judge continues the youth's detention status, his/her length of stay may extend up to 21 days or more. **The court house in Lee County is located at 2075 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd Ft. Myers, FL. 33901**

## **Education Services**

**Q: How many students are served by regional juvenile detention centers and how is education provided?**

**A:** Each year approximately 52,000 youth are temporarily judicially ordered to one of the state's 26 regional juvenile detention centers, each with a self-contained school funded by the local school district.

**Q: How many students are served in self-contained prevention programs such as PACE Centers for Girls and what is their source of educational funding?**

**A:** Over 37,000 youth participate in community-based prevention programs, also with contracts from the Department of Juvenile Justice and educational services provided by the local school district.

**Q: What community-based juvenile justice educational intervention programs are available to youth as an alternative to large public schools?**

**A:** Associated Marine Institutes of Florida serves approximately 1,033 students annually in day treatment programs with support services provided by juvenile justice contracts and education funded by the local school district.

**Q: How many students are court-ordered to separate juvenile justice facilities and how are their educational services provided?**

**A:** Approximately 15,000 youth are committed to the Department by the local judiciary and placed in mandatory day treatment or residential commitment programs. Providers with DJJ contracts administer approximately 95% of the 130 programs. Of these, approximately fifty percent incorporate public school employees in partnership with their local district and the remaining program administrators contract with the public schools for funding to employ their instructional personnel. The state operates 100% of the regional juvenile detention centers and approximately five percent of its residential programs.

**Q: What are the demographics and academic standings of students served in juvenile justice programs?**

**A:** Of the fifty thousand Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) students served in juvenile justice facilities during the 2003-2004 school year according to the Florida Department of Education's dropout prevention automated student database, demographics are as follows:

- 74% were male (48% black, 37% white, 15% other).
- 26% were female (42% black, 46% white, 12% other).
- 72% were enrolled in grades 8-10, with 54% in grade 9.
- 70% were overage for grade placement (the single factor with the highest correlation for dropping out of school), compared with 53% of all dropout prevention students and 21% of the general student population.

**Q: Do youth in juvenile justice programs receive credit while in school?**

**A:** Each juvenile justice school is a separate school requiring student enrollment, withdrawal, maintaining and forwarding of transcripts to ensure continuity of educational services. School personnel, whether private or publicly provided, are subject to all applicable federal, state and local rules. In addition, the DJJ and DOE provide for regular program monitoring.

**Probation and Community Intervention**

**Q: My child was arrested. What happens now?**

**A:** An overview of the delinquency process is provided on the DJJ website at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Parents/juvenileprocess.html>.

**Q: What is the PACT and how is it used to help my child?**

**A:** The Positive Achievement Change Tool (PACT) is used to assess a delinquent youth's risks and needs and guides treatment recommendations. The assessment process begins with a PACT Pre-Screen interview administered to all youth referred to DJJ. The initial assessment takes approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. A single PACT Pre-Screen interview at intake assists the Juvenile Probation Officer to identify if a youth is in need of further mental health, alcohol, or substance abuse assessment. A more detailed assessment (called the PACT Full Assessment) is given to youth who score at Moderate-High or High risk to re-offend on the PACT Pre-Screen. Information from the PACT Full Assessment can be used to develop plans specific to the youth's identified needs. The Department calls this plan the Youth Empowered Success (YES) Plan.

The PACT also identifies those strengths (or protective factors) that can be built upon to turn the youth's life around. The benefit of measuring risk factors and protective factors is that juvenile justice professionals involved with a particular youth are better able to match a child's current needs with the right programs and services. PACT Reassessments are completed periodically to help the Juvenile Probation Officer and other professionals measure the progress that the youth is making on addressing factors related to delinquent behavior.

**Q: What is a Juvenile Probation Officer and what are they responsible for?**

**A:** Juvenile Probation Officers are employed by the Office of Probation and Community Intervention of the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. This section of the Department provides two important services.

1. Initial intake services upon arrest or referral
2. Community supervision and services to those youth, under the age of 18, who are referred to the agency by law enforcement.

Juvenile Probation Officers are the front-line staff that deliver case management services to the youth and their families. Examples of work performed by a Juvenile Probation Officer include:

- Completes an initial review of complaints of delinquent acts committed by youth;
- Interviews youth, parents, law enforcement, victims, and other persons having knowledge of factors relating to youth or the offense;
- Performs a needs and risk assessment (the PACT);
- Makes recommendations to the State Attorney's Office concerning judicial or non-judicial alternatives;
- Makes recommendations to the court once a youth is found to be delinquent;
- Links youth and families with the services that they need;
- Develops and coordinates case plans for delinquent youth and families;
- Supervises youth on court ordered Probation and monitors progress towards completion of court ordered sanctions and other case plan goals;
- Prepares reports for the court regarding the youths' compliance with his or her Probation supervision; and
- Maintains an active youth record (maintenance of case file, updates Juvenile Justice Information System, etc.)

**Q: Why is my child being assigned a Juvenile Probation Officer if they are not on Probation?**

**A:** An "intake" Juvenile Probation Officer is assigned to all youth referred to the Department. This does not mean the child is or will be on Probation. The purpose for assigning the youth a Juvenile Probation Officer is to gather information by assessing the nature of the offense, the risk the youth presents to the community, damages incurred to the victim by youth's actions, and the needs of the youth and family. The Juvenile Probation Officer then makes a recommendation to the State Attorney's Office presenting the assessment of information gathered and a plan to address the delinquent offense. This plan will be individually tailored to ensure adequate protection of the community, accountability of the youth to the victim, and a rehabilitative plan to address the youth's needs and prevent recurrence of delinquent behavior. The recommendation presented by the Juvenile Probation Officer may range from a non-judicial diversion program to court ordered diversion, Probation supervision or residential commitment.

**Q: What is the difference between "adjudicated" and "adjudication withheld"?**

**A:** An adjudicated delinquent is a youth who a judge has ruled to be responsible for committing a delinquent act. Adjudication Withheld is a court decision, at any point after filing of a criminal complaint, to continue court jurisdiction but stopping short of pronouncing judgment.

**Q: What are my responsibilities as the parent or guardian of a youth on Probation supervision?**

**A:** The Department needs your help to ensure that the individual needs of your child are being met and to ensure that he or she is successful in achieving the treatment goals and sanctions in the court order. As a parent or guardian you can help ensure your child's success by doing the following:

- Maintain regular contact with your child's assigned juvenile Probation officer and keep him or her informed of your child's successes and struggles while on Probation. The more information we have the better able we are to meet his or her needs.
- Cooperate with school officials to help your child stay on task academically. Share concerns of poor attendance, performance, or behavior with the assigned Juvenile Probation Officer so the right steps can be taken to help your child succeed in school.
- Attend all court proceedings with your child.
- Ensure that you and your child attend any required counseling or therapy.
- Arrange for transportation for your child to counseling, community service work sites, employment, etc. If transportation is a problem, contact the Juvenile Probation Officer for assistance in finding alternative transportation.
- Ensure that your child completes court-ordered goals and sanctions within established timeframes.
- Provide a home for your child that is safe, nurturing and recognizes the youth's strengths and successes.

**Q: How long will my child be on Probation?**

**A:** Only the court can terminate a youth's Probation supervision. The Juvenile Probation Officer is responsible for recommending termination to the court upon the youth's completion or substantial completion of all court ordered sanctions and treatment goals. The Department must close the youth's case when it loses jurisdiction to supervise the case because the youth reaches age 19 (21 or 22 in some cases); or the Department loses jurisdiction of a case based on the charge. For example, if a youth is adjudicated delinquent and placed on Probation for a 1st degree misdemeanor then the Department has one year of jurisdiction to supervise the youth.

**Q: My son or daughter is on Probation and did not come home last night; I think he or she might have run away. What do I do?**

**A:** If you do not know the whereabouts of your child or you suspect he or she has runaway, call the police immediately and place a missing persons report. Be ready to give all pertinent information including: description, height, weight, date of birth, current address, legal status (Probation, pre-placement supervision, conditional release) date and time last seen. Then, call the assigned Juvenile Probation Officer. The juvenile Probation officer will confirm that the youth is missing and ask the court to issue an Order to Take into Custody. Your child will have a court appearance within 24 hours of the time he or she is apprehended. If your child did not run away, but was gone from the home for a short period of time without permission and has returned, please call law enforcement and your Juvenile Probation Officer to update them of his or her safe return.

**Q: When the court orders that co-defendants are jointly and severally liable for restitution what does this mean? Where do I make my restitution payments?**

**A:** The court may determine that "several" co-defendants are "jointly" negligent and contributed to the damages caused. As a result, the court may order that restitution is shared between all co-defendants.



Payments of restitution and other court fees should be made payable to the Clerk of the Circuit court. Under no circumstances are DJJ employees or contracted agents authorized to accept restitution payments in any form. DO NOT GIVE RESTITUTION MONEY TO YOUR JPO.

**Q: Who should a victim contact regarding restitution?**

**A:** The Juvenile Probation Officer is responsible at the intake phase to contact the victim to gather information on loss, harm and damage in order to determine restitution amounts. This information is used to develop recommendations to the court. If restitution is ordered and the youth fails to comply with the payment of restitution, the Juvenile Probation Officer must inform the court of the non-compliance. The Juvenile Probation Officer can either file an affidavit, through the State Attorney, alleging a violation or request a Judicial Review Hearing for the purpose of determining the circumstances for the lack of restitution payments. All specific questions regarding restitution should be directed to the juvenile Probation officer or the State Attorney's Office.

**Q: How can I have my juvenile record sealed or expunged?**

**A:** The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) is the official keeper of Florida criminal history records, including those concerning juveniles. The sealing (keeping confidential) and expunction (destruction) of criminal history records is governed by chapter 943, Florida Statutes, and is administered by FDLE. While juvenile records are considered confidential they are not automatically sealed and in many instances can be accessed by the general public. For most, but not all purposes, the subject of a sealed or expunged criminal history record may lawfully deny or fail to acknowledge arrests covered by the sealing or expunction. Generally speaking, juveniles can have most misdemeanors and some felonies sealed and most misdemeanors expunged after successful completion of a diversion program that expressly authorizes expungement. Because the youth must petition the court to have records sealed or expunged and to ensure you meet qualifying criteria it is important that you seek legal counsel prior to beginning this process.

**Q: When my child fills out an application for employment or school, do they have to disclose their juvenile arrest record?**

**A:** Yes, the youth must disclose their arrest history unless the record has been sealed or expunged. According to Florida law, the youth can deny any arrest covered by the sealed or expunged record. However, sections 943.0585 and 943.059, Florida Statutes, impose certain exceptions, requiring acknowledgement of arrests when, for example, the individual seeks employment with a criminal justice agency, licensed child care facility, and other sensitive positions.

**Q: What is Redirection?**

**A:** Redirection was established by the Florida Legislature to use community-based alternatives in lieu of residential commitment for those youth that meet certain criteria. The Redirection program is offered in communities across the state in and allows the youth and family to participate in Functional Family Therapy (FFT) or Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST) instead of being placed in residential facility.

## **Residential Services**

**Q:** My child is going to a moderate-risk residential program. What does that mean?

**A:** **Depending on a youth's risk to public safety, the judge may commit the youth to a minimum-risk, low-risk, moderate-risk, high-risk or maximum-risk restrictiveness level. Programs and services at the minimum-risk level are non-residential, meaning that the youth lives at home and receives services in the community. Programs at the low-risk, moderate-risk, high-risk or maximum-risk level are residential, meaning that the youth resides at the program 24 hours per day, seven days per week, until they complete the program and are released.**

A child who goes to a moderate-risk residential program is considered more of a public safety risk than a child who goes to a low-risk program, but less of a public safety risk than a child who goes to a high-risk or maximum-risk program. Therefore, the higher the risk level of a program, the more security and supervision is necessary to ensure protection of the public. The Department determines which residential program within the court-ordered risk level would best protect the public and offer services to meet the youth's needs. Regardless of the risk level of a residential program, each child is involved in individualized treatment services. These services target the child's risk factors and needs so it's less likely that the child will re-offend when released from the program.

You can access more information on low-risk, moderate-risk, high-risk, and maximum-risk programs at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/restrictiveness.html>.

**Q: Who can I contact to find out when my child will go to a residential program?**

**A:** Each residential program is designed to provide the level of security and services needed for the youth it's intended to serve. Sometimes, a child may have to wait before there is a vacancy in a residential program that can adequately address his or her unique needs. The Department tries to minimize this waiting period as much as possible. However, if you want to find out when your child will go to a residential program, you can contact your child's Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO) and request information on the status of your child's anticipated placement.

**Q: How is a residential program supposed to help my child?**

**A:** A multi-disciplinary treatment team plans and oversees your child's treatment in the residential program. Your child is a member of the treatment team, as well as program staff and other service providers involved in his or her care and treatment. The program notifies you when treatment team meetings are scheduled and encourages and values your involvement and input. Based on an assessment of your child's needs, the treatment team develops an individualized performance plan with goals for your child to complete before being released from the program. Completion of these goals increases your child's chances for success and decreases the likelihood that he or she will re-offend.

**Q: How long will my child stay in a residential program?**

**A:** The length of time a child stays in a residential program varies depending on the type of program and the child's performance in the program. A program's services are designed and delivered based on how long most youth take to successfully complete the program. However, a child's release is

based primarily on completion of his or her individualized performance plan goals. The program will be communicating with you about your child's goals and progress in the program, as well as his or her anticipated release from the program.

Information about each program, including its length of stay (the length of time it takes most youth to complete the program), is available at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>. However, if you want more information, you can contact the program directly, using the contact information provided at the website. The program's phone number is provided, as well as the Program Director's name and email address (direct link).

**Q: Where can I find information on a specific residential program?**

**A:** A written description of each program and its services, a map and directions, and information on how to contact the program are available at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>. The program's phone number is provided, as well as the Program Director's name and email address (direct link). The Program Director or another staff person at the program can provide you with additional information and answer questions you might have.

**Q: What can my child take to the residential program?**

**A:** Although a residential program provides most or all of what a child needs, each program is slightly different. Some programs may allow youth to have more personal items than others. Typically, the program includes this information in a letter sent to you shortly after your child's admission to the program. However, you can also contact the program to ask about personal items your child is permitted to have in the program. Contact information for each residential program is available at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>. The program's phone number is provided, as well as the Program Director's name and email address (direct link).

**Q: Can I visit my child while he's in the residential program?**

**A:** Each residential program has scheduled visitation days and times. The program will notify you of its visitation schedule. If you're not able to visit during the scheduled days and times, the program will try to make other arrangements for you to visit your child. Information about each program is available at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html> and may include the program's visitation schedule. If not, you can contact the program directly, using the contact information provided at the website. The program's phone number is provided, as well as the Program Director's name and email address (direct link).

**Q: Is there someone in the program I can talk to about my child?**

**A:** Your child's residential program should give you the name and phone number and/or email address of the person to contact when you need information or when you have questions or concerns about your child. But, you can also contact the Program Director whose contact information, including his or her name, phone number and email address (direct link), is accessible by clicking on the program's name at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>.

**Q: How can I be involved with my child while he's in the residential program?**

**A:** While a youth is in a residential program, the Department encourages and values the family's

involvement. A residential program has procedures for you to telephone, write, and visit your child, as well as provisions for your child to contact you. The program informs you of these procedures shortly after your child is admitted to the program (typically provided with the letter the program sends you upon your child's admission).

You can learn about your child's treatment and progress by carefully reviewing the goals (performance plan) and progress reports (performance summaries) that the program sends to you. The program will notify you when treatment team meetings are scheduled and will encourage you to give your input in person or by telephone.

Please contact the program to find out more about staying in touch with your child and becoming more involved in your child's treatment and release planning. You can access the Program Director's contact information, including his or her name, phone number, and email address (direct link) by clicking on the program's name at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>.

**Q: Will my child go to school while he's in the residential program? Will he earn credits? Who keeps track of his school records?**

**A:** All residential programs provide educational services, and your child can earn credits based on his or her performance in school. Educational records are maintained while your child is attending school in the residential program, and educational transcripts are forwarded to the home school district when your child is released from the program. If your child has already earned a high school diploma or GED, the residential program will involve your child in other constructive activities.

**Q: What types of activities will the program offer my child?**

**A:** Each residential program is designed to meet the needs of the youth it's intended to serve. Therefore, residential programs vary in some of the services and activities they provide to their youth. In addition, each youth's treatment and activities are individualized to meet his or her unique needs. Not all youth in the same program will receive the same services or be involved in the same activities. In general, residential programs provide classes, group sessions or other activities to help youth develop social and life skills, academic skills, employability skills, and prevocational or vocational skills. They provide treatment services to youth as needed, including mental health and substance abuse treatment, health services, and physical fitness. Programs also give youth opportunities to engage in recreation and leisure activities, as well as service projects that benefit the community. Depending on the program and the youth's risk to public safety, these service projects may be performed in the community or within the confines of the facility. Youth are provided opportunities, but are not required, to be involved in faith-based activities.

Information about each program, including a brief description of the services it provides to its youth, is available at <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/Residential/Facilities/index.html>. However, if you want more information, you can contact the program directly, using the contact information provided at the website. The program's phone number is provided, as well as the Program Director's name and email address (direct link).

**For more information, please refer to the DJJ website at  
<http://www.djj.state.fl.us/>**