

Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County
2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 258-3450
www.swfjac.org

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The JAC Perspective



The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.

Free drug testing kits are available at the JAC 24 hours a day for parents to use with their youth.

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**258-3461
or 258-3471**

when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC or to confirm that a youth is eligible for a civil citation.



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Civil Citation to Expand

The civil citation program in Florida allows law enforcement officers to issue a civil citation in lieu of making an arrest for juveniles who commit a non-serious misdemeanor crime. In Lee County youth who receive a civil citation meet with a Civil Citation Deputy at the JAC who prescribes up to 50 hours of community service and other intervention programs based upon the youth's identified needs. For example, a youth with a marijuana possession charge may be assigned to participate in a substance abuse assessment and follow through with any treatment recommended based upon the assessment.



Deputy Carolyn Woulard assigns sanctions to youth who are issued a civil citation.

The premise of the program is that juveniles sometimes make immature decisions and exercise poor judgment. Many youth are able to learn from their mistakes if given the chance. The civil citation program offers them a second chance. By diverting them from an arrest they receive swift consequences while avoiding having a juvenile arrest record which can limit them from future educational, scholarship, military, or employment opportunities. Under current Florida statute a law enforcement
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Talk to Kids About Interacting with Law Enforcement

Research on the teenage brain is clear. Reasoning ability and good judgment are not as highly developed in adolescents and young adults as was previously thought. Their emotional impulses often win out over calm, rational thought especially in emotionally charged situations. The more emotionally charged a situation is, the less likely that an adolescent will make a good, logical decision. That is one reason why it is important for parents and others working with youth to talk to them about how they should conduct themselves if stopped by a law enforcement officer.



For some youth in this emotionally charged situation the impulse is to run. Or, their impulse might be to give a false name or address. Fleeing and eluding a police officer, resisting arrest without violence, and giving a false name are some of the ways that adolescents sometimes rack up arrest charges. Adolescents may not see the situation from the law enforcement officer's perspective. It is not that they don't have the ability to see things from the perspectives of others. It's just that they may not always use this ability. Parents and others working with youth can capitalize on this ability by coaching youth on how they might
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Civil Citation to Expand (cont.)

officer is limited to issuing civil citations to first-time misdemeanor juvenile offenders. The Florida Legislature recently passed and sent to the Governor legislation that will expand the use of civil citations for up to two subsequent misdemeanor offenses. Earlier language in the civil citation bill would have mandated law enforcement to use civil citation or another alternative to arrest for all first-time

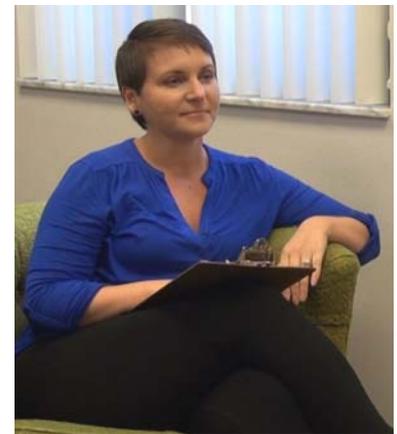
misdemeanor offenses. One justification for the mandatory use of civil citations is that civil citation programs are administered unevenly across the state. According to the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice* in the past year in Miami-Dade County 91% of youth who were eligible for a civil citation received one. In comparison, 42% of eligible youth statewide were issued a civil citation; 34% of eligible

youth in Lee County were issued a civil citation. In the final version of the civil citation expansion bill the language was changed so that law enforcement officers will still have the discretion to arrest a youth but they will be required to provide a written statement as to why the arrest is necessary. The effective date of the legislation is October 1, 2015.

Interacting with Law Enforcement (cont.)

handle a stressful situation by considering the situation from another person's point of view. For example, assist youth in considering how their behavior could be interpreted when stopped by a law enforcement officer. Help them think about the officer's perspective. Running away will arouse suspicion. Disrespect or failure to cooperate may add to the officer's perceived threat of the situation. Assist youth in understanding what responses on their part will be in their own best interest if ever in

this situation. Remind youth that if they are ever stopped by a law enforcement officer, they should always remain respectful and polite, even if they believe they are being stopped for no reason. They should always give their correct name and address. Just as youth need to learn what behavior is expected of them in many settings and social situations, they also need to learn what is expected of them if stopped by a law enforcement officer.



The JAC welcomes back Shannon Wisely of Lutheran Services of Florida. Ms. Wisely provides individual and family counseling at the JAC with non-arrested youth and their families. Families can access her services by calling Lutheran Services at (239) 278-5400 to schedule an intake appointment.

Talk to Kids about School Pranks

With the end of the school year just days away, chances are that some kids are thinking and talking about senior pranks or school pranks in general. There is no shortage of ideas on the internet and from teen focused movies. Every year it happens that a few kids try some of the pranks and we see them at the JAC with either an arrest or a civil citation.

The JAC suggests that adults make opportunities to talk to kids about school pranks with the knowledge that many of the pranks that would have been tolerated when they were a teen are now taken very seriously. When watching movies that show school pranks, talk to kids about what the consequences might be in real-life. Let them know that

there is little tolerance for school pranks and the consequences could be an arrest, thousands of dollars in restitution, community service hours, or other sanctions. Discuss with them that a false bomb threat or pulling a fire alarm as a joke, for example, are not considered pranks and will be dealt with very seriously.

* <http://www.djj.state.fl.us/research/delinquency-data/civil-citation-dashboard>