

Juvenile Assessment Center  
of Lee County  
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July 2014

# 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.*

This month's newsletter marks the 100th edition of "The JAC Perspective."

Free drug testing kits are available at the JAC 24 hours a day.

**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.

## Reasons for Self Injury Not All the Same

Sometimes the JAC sees youth who engage in intentional self injury (ISI). This might be a difficult subject for some, but it is one that parents and others engaged with youth should be aware of. For girls, in particular, ISI is highly correlated with delinquent behavior. (Beware when reading further. People who engage in self injurious behaviors tend to bring out in others feelings of revulsion, anger, fear, and disgust.) Because ISI is so stigmatized it is often hidden. One of the most common ISI behaviors is cutting the skin with a sharp object, but it can also include head banging, burning, bruising, scratching, biting, hair pulling, reopening wounds, swallowing or embedding objects. There has been very limited research on ISI. The earliest research on it was often done with populations in hospitals or therapeutic settings so it was mostly associated with people with severe psychiatric ill-



nesses. In the past ISI was mostly seen as an addictive behavior or as a suicidal gesture. However, more recently, when ISI was studied in the general population it was found to be more common than previously assumed. A survey of high school and university students

revealed that nearly 20% had engaged in intentional self injury at least once and about 11% had done it repeatedly. It is found across all cultures and socio economic

classes. Longitudinal studies have found that there are some self injurers who still had some serious life-long problems into adulthood, but a significant number lived to become fully functioning, successful adults. While ISI may sometimes be interpreted as a suicidal gesture, it is not always so. ISI can be a non-suicidal but maladaptive coping mechanism that is used to deal (Continued page 2)

## E-Cigarettes Banned for Minors in Florida

Electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes, were first introduced in the US in 2007. They are usually manufactured to resemble cigarettes, cigars, or pipes but some resemble pens or USB memory sticks. Instead of burning tobacco, they utilize a battery powered heating element which heats a chamber filled with a mixture of liquid nicotine and a flavoring. The liquid turns into a vapor, which is then inhaled or "vaped." E-cigarettes are available in so many candy-like flavors - mint, chocolate,

bubblegum - it is no wonder that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the number of middle school and high school students using e-cigarettes more than doubled from 2011 to 2012. The state of Florida took notice. Effective July 1 it will be illegal in Florida to sell e-cigarettes to minors and for minors to possess them. It will be a noncriminal violation for anyone under the age of 18 to possess, purchase, or misrepresent one's age to obtain e-cigarettes.

## Reasons for Self Injury Not All the Same (cont.)

with overwhelming negative emotions, much like how some people use alcohol or drugs to help cope. Some self injurers report that they use it to “self soothe” so they can deal with overwhelming feelings of anxiety or emotional pain, that it gives them a sense of control. One theory is that the self injurious behavior may trigger the release of chemicals naturally produced by the body to relieve pain. ISI may be a sign that a young person is dealing with issues of abuse, neglect, or tense and dysfunctional family relationships. It is often associated with strong feelings of loss, desertion, helplessness, rage, rejection, grief, anxiousness, guilt, shame, self loathing, or feelings of failure. In many cases the youth who exhibits ISI has not had good role models from which to learn how to cope with distress. They may have had a history of being punished for expressing strong feelings. While there isn’t much research on the treatment of ISI, there are some encouraging results showing that through cognitive therapy self

injurers can learn to identify their emotional triggers and learn to use healthier coping skills. Some young self injurers will simply outgrow the behavior. The bottom line is that ISI is a signal that there are underlying issues going on with a youth, but what those issues are, the seriousness of those issues, and the potential risk for serious injury has to be evaluated on a case by case basis.

Reasons given for their behavior by intentional self injurers (most frequent reason to least frequent reason):

- Anger
- To forget something
- Anxiety
- Suicidal thoughts
- Not sure
- To punish self
- To make others notice
- To upset others

## Civil Citation Expanded

The Lee County Sheriff’s Office has adopted a policy of issuing a civil citation in lieu of arrest to any youth in Lee County who qualifies for the civil citation program (has had no prior arrests or civil citations) and who has committed one of the following non-violent misdemeanors:

- Theft less than \$300;
- Criminal mischief with damage less than \$1,000;
- Trespassing;
- City or county ordinance;
- Disorderly conduct;
- Disruption of a school function; and
- Simple possession of alcohol (when the individual is not intoxicated).

The issuance of a civil citation to a qualifying youth for any other non-violent misdemeanor is at the discretion of the investigating deputy. Youth who participate in the civil citation program are required to complete community service hours and attend any counseling deemed appropriate by the Civil Citation Deputy stationed at the JAC.

## Capt. Ramsey Joins JAC



Welcome to Captain Shawn Ramsey who joined the JAC team in June. Captain Ramsey previously served as the South District Captain with the Lee County Sheriff’s Office.

## Prevention Counselor



The JAC welcomes Amanda Thomas with Lutheran Services of Florida. Ms. Thomas will provide counseling to youth and families at the JAC as part of the JAC’s array of prevention services.

