

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

October 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.*

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.

## Early Arrest Poses Risk to Reoffend

In a law enforcement environment it is not unusual to see a lot of booking photographs of tough looking guys. That makes it all the more striking when one sees booking photographs that, in comparison, look like baby faces. These are the booking photographs of preadolescent children who have been arrested. Research indicates that children who are arrested prior to age 12 are at high risk for becoming serious and/or persistent adolescent offenders. However, studies of early onset offenders also indicate that the outcomes for this youngest group of offenders are widely dissimilar. Some childhood offenders do go on to become



habitual teen and adult offenders, while some are never arrested again. Some of the children fall somewhere in the middle of these two groups and become moderately persistent offenders or intermittent offenders. Research has distinguished differences between the children who go on to become persistent offenders and those that are not arrested during adolescence. These differences may be helpful in identifying the children that are most in need of more intensive intervention services. The children most at risk of becoming persistent offenders are more likely to have histories of truant behavior, running away from home, poor peer relationships, poor sibling relationships, to have young mothers, to come from large families, to  
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## Trick for Treating Teens

Fall is often a special time for parents and children as they make plans for Halloween costumes, pick out pumpkins, and make plans for what parties and other seasonal events they will attend. It can be a special time of year when parents enjoy healthy communication and activities with their children. (Note from the article above that involvement in family activities serves as a protective factor that helps reduce juvenile offending.) Communication between parents and their children may begin to change as children approach adolescence. Teens



typically begin to replace talking to their parents about their concerns to talking to peers about their concerns. They often begin to exclude parents in discussing their plans and activities. While this is normal from a developmental perspective as teens begin taking steps toward independence, parents should not confuse these changes as a sign that their teen no longer needs parental guidance, monitoring, and supervision. As teens mature they may be ready to have input into what rules are needed and may be given some leeway in negotiating about the consequences for breaking the rules, but they  
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## Early Arrest Poses Risk to Reoffend (cont.)

live in disadvantaged neighborhoods, and to have highly stressed parents. The children who are never arrested again as adolescents are more likely to have low ADHD symptoms, to have a negative attitude toward delinquency, to have good relationships with peers, to be involved in family activities, to live with both parents, to have low physical punishment, and to live in good quality housing. According to longitudinal studies early onset of delinquency is also one pathway toward youth violence. In addition to the risk factors above, children with early onset of arrest who are most at risk of becoming serious, violent offenders are more likely to show disruptive behavior and physical aggression from a young age. They tend to display stubborn behavior before age 12 and then progress to defiant behavior. They then progress toward avoiding authority (truancy, for example). Compared

to children who do not go on to a career of violent crime, they are more likely to have an attitude favoring delinquency and a history of school suspension. They typically exhibit a pattern of escalating violence starting in childhood through adolescence and often into adulthood. Identifying and intervening with young offenders who are most at risk for becoming persistent and/or violent offenders may help reduce youth crime and violence. However, children who have an early onset of arrest as a pathway to violent crime represent only a small portion of the youth who commit violent crimes. Most youth who commit violent crimes more often have a late onset of arrest beginning in late adolescence. These youth typically show few signs during childhood that they will become violent later on which suggests that different strategies for violence prevention may be needed with these youth.

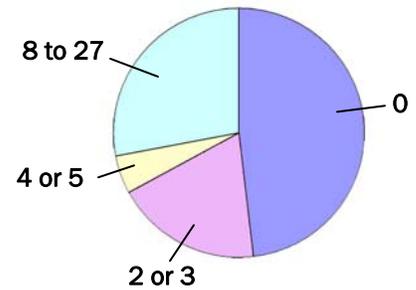
## Trick for Treating Teens (cont.)

continue to need parents to hold them accountable to the rules and to follow through consistently with consequences for breaking them. Teens may complain that their parents are “old fashioned” or “mean” (also normal so don’t take it personally), but consistent discipline provides a sense of stability in their lives and helps teens to feel loved, and cared for. Most teens will occasionally act without thinking about the consequences of their actions. Their ability to control their impulses is not fully matured yet so there are likely to be a few slip ups. Parental monitoring of teen behavior not only helps to inhibit the opportunity for delinquent activity, but also helps to protect teens from

any negative peer pressure they may be exposed to that encourages inappropriate activities. Just as parents of younger children need to plan ahead when making plans for fall activities, parents of teens need to plan ahead with their teen about their participation in fall activities. Parents should insist on the specific details about any parties or events their teen plans to attend. Who will be there? Who will chaperone? Make sure that there is a plan for transportation and an agreed upon time to be home. Make sure that drugs and alcohol are not allowed. The trick for treating teens is to stay involved, even as teens become more independent.

## Local Young Offenders

Subsequent Arrests for Young Offenders from 2008 through 2009



The JAC reviewed 64 cases of Lee County youth who were arrested in either 2008 or 2009 who were under the age of 12 at the time of their arrest.\* Since 2008 and 2009, 48% of the juveniles had no subsequent arrests; 19% had 2 or 3 arrests; 5% had 4 or 5 arrests; and 28% had between 8 and 27 arrests. Not all subsequent arrests were for additional criminal charges. In many cases the subsequent arrests were for multiple failure to appear to court charges or for violations of probation.



The JAC says “so long” this month to Captain Robyn Mitar who is retiring as of October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Good luck and best wishes to Captain Mitar in her retirement!

\*Subsequent arrests are in Lee County only. Youth who had moved out of the county were omitted.