

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

February 2015

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.

The Costs of Dropping Out of School

Not all youth who drop out of school end up in the juvenile justice system, but school dropouts represent about one out of every ten arrested youth in Lee County. Delinquency and dropping out of school share many common factors.

This subgroup of arrested youth present particular challenges within the juvenile justice system. Compared to arrested youth who have not

dropped out of school, the arrested youth who are school dropouts are about twice as likely to be in a gang, twice as likely to have a history of having a firearm charge, more than four times as likely to have been in

foster care, and more than four times as likely to have a history of having been prescribed psychotropic medications. The needs of this special population and the levels of services needed are not always available through traditional juvenile justice intervention programs. This speaks to the need for parents, those working with youth, and the community at large to understand the risk factors and costs associated with dropping out of school, as well as, the early warning signs to be able to

intervene much earlier with those youth who are at risk. A youth's decision to drop out of school is not a single event, but is often an outcome of a long process of disengagement from school. This pathway toward becoming a school dropout can start as early as preschool, such as, when a child hasn't learned the skills needed to be fully prepared for

kindergarten. The seeds for disengagement from school can begin in elementary school when a child misses a lot of days of school and falls behind his peers. The process can start when a child's parents don't convey the importance of attending school and doing one's best to learn. Other risk factors include a low socioeconomic status, low

intelligence, attention problems, learning disabilities, early conduct problems, and negative peer influences. Frequent residential moves that result in school changes also present a risk at all ages, but in particular between eighth and tenth grades. Other factors that can contribute to a youth dropping out of school are

a high level of family conflict, substance abuse, mental health problems, and becoming a teen parent. A student's school experiences also play a part. These include a dislike of school, low academic achievement, grade retention, a sense that teachers and school administrators don't care about the students, a student's inability to feel

(Continued page 2)



\$85,264,000

That is the estimated cost to the community for the Lee County students who dropped out of school in 2012-13 over their lifetimes. About 1 out of every 100 high school students in Lee County dropped out of school in the 2012-13 school-year.

The Costs of Dropping Out of School (cont.)

comfortable in a large, depersonalized school setting, and feelings of alienation or a poor sense of belonging at school. The toll in the quality of life for youth who drop out of school is significant. They are two times more likely than high school graduates to live in poverty. They are three times more likely to be unemployed than high school graduates. If they do find employment their earnings are likely to be \$10,000 lower than the earnings of a typical high school graduate. By age 45 they are likely to have worse health than a 65 year old high school graduate. They are also at higher risk of ending up in the adult criminal justice system. For the community, the costs of youth dropping out of school are

staggering in terms of lost productivity, lost wages, lost tax revenue, welfare programs, unemployment programs, and criminal justice costs. On average, each high school dropout costs the community \$292,000 over a lifetime. Communities can help address the dropout problem by supporting initiatives and policies that encourage parents to be involved in their children’s education at school and in the community. Regardless of a family’s socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, or the parents’ level of education, family engagement in their child’s education is one of the strongest predictors of a youth successfully completing high school.

By sixth grade there are specific individual indicators that are more predictive of whether a student will graduate from high school or drop out of school than general risk factors. These indicators strongly predict which students will either leave school or not graduate on time.

At Risk 6th Graders:

- Attended school less than 80% of the time;
- Received a poor grade in behavior from their teacher, or
- Received a failing grade in either math or English.

At Risk 8th Graders:

- Attended school less than 80% of the time; and
- Received a failing grade in either math or English.

At Risk 9th Graders:

- Attended school less than 70% of the time; and
- Earned fewer than 2 credits and/or was not promoted to 10th grade on time.

Being held back in ninth grade is one of the biggest risk factors for dropping out of school.

Truancy & Delinquency

During the 2013-14 school-year 220 youths in Lee County were arrested for crimes they committed while they were truant from school. So far this school-year, 128 youths have been arrested for crimes that they committed while they were truant from school.



Student’s School Engagement Checklist

- Has good classroom attendance.
- Gets to class on time.
- Works hard in class.
- Completes assignments.
- Participates in extracurricular activities.

Parent’s School Engagement Checklist

- Develops a working relationship with their child’s teachers.
- Creates a home environment that encourages learning.
- Supports their child in the learning process and monitors their progress.
- Communicates high, yet realistic, expectations for their child’s achievement.
- Participates in school events.
- Keeps up with what is happening at their child’s school.
- Encourages their child to see the relevance of school and learning in their lives and to their future goals.
- Continues staying engaged in their child’s learning from pre-school through high school.