

**Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County**
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 344-5100
www.swfjac.org

November 2008

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.

CALENDAR

Juvenile Sanctions Team

November 6
12:00 p.m.
Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

November 6
1:30 p.m.
Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165

Prevention Network

November 14
1:00 p.m.
Lee County Human Services
2440 Thompson Street

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Board

November 19
1:30 p.m.
Southwest Florida Workforce
Development Board
9530 Marketplace Rd., Ste. 104



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.

Appreciating the Small Stuff - From Jail

November is here, the month that reminds us to consider what we have to be thankful for. For some youth, the appreciation of what they had is not realized until they have lost it. "Teen Ink Raw," a web site for teen writers, recently posted essays written by male juvenile offenders who have been direct filed and are now inmates at the Lee County Jail. (See the article below on direct filed youth.) The essay topic was on being homesick. Most of the youth wrote about the simple things that they took for granted and the people that they appreciate and miss now that they are incarcerated. Here is one of the essays.

*"Am I Homesick? If So, What Do I Miss?"**

"Yes, I am very homesick and I find myself missing many things. I miss my family very much. My mom, dad, sisters, grandparents, uncle, aunt...I

miss everyone in my family. I miss going to the park to hang out with family and friends. I even miss playing volleyball with my sisters!

I miss my house. I miss walking around my house by myself...not having someone walk me handcuffed the whole time. I miss looking out the windows. I miss turning the TV to what I want to watch... not what everyone else wants to watch. And, there's being able to make phone calls when I want without having to pay for them. I miss my bed, my room, my clothes, shoes... I miss my pillow and blanket. I miss my bathroom and having a bathroom door. I miss being able to leave my house when I want."

"I miss doing pretty much what I want, pretty much when I want. (Continued page 2)

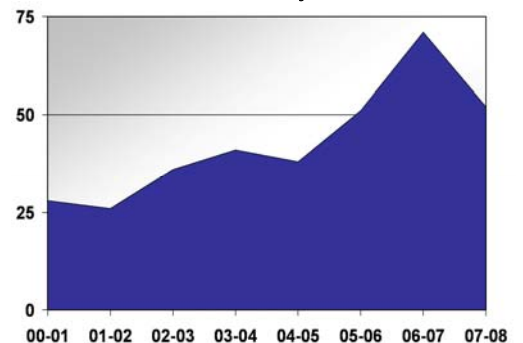


Youth in the Adult Criminal System

In a limited number of juvenile delinquency cases, the Office of the State Attorney may direct file a youth. Direct file cases are dealt with through the adult Criminal Justice System. The youth loses all benefits of the Juvenile Court and is treated as an adult. This option is typically only utilized when a youth has a substantial criminal history, is considered dangerous, and the State has determined that the youth is not likely to be rehabilitated within the juvenile system. Local youth who are subject to a direct filing are transferred from the Southwest Florida Regional Detention Center and held at the Lee

County jail. They are kept apart from the adult jail population until they reach the age of 18.

Youth Direct Filed by Fiscal Year



Source: Department of Juvenile Justice

* Reprinted with permission from Teen Ink Raw.

Appreciating the Small Stuff (cont.)

I miss looking around outside and knowing that I can go just about anywhere. I miss seeing other people, talking to other people, breathing fresh air, and hearing the sound of birds and other animals, and even the sound of cars. I even miss school and being able to learn in a real school. I miss the feeling on weekends that I got thinking "no school!"...just hang out with friends

all day with no one telling me what to do. I miss playing video games and watching movies. I miss riding a bike to the store or even to my friend's house. I miss walking around the block, playing football, baseball, and basketball."

"Yes, I miss a lot of things. I miss things that I never thought even mattered. I've learned to

be appreciative of even the smallest things. But most of all, I miss these two things...my family and FREEDOM."

Essays written by juvenile males incarcerated at the Lee County Jail can be found at www.teenink.com/raw/Nonfiction/article/57915/Essays-by-Maximum-Security-Juvenile-Offenders/.

Possible Juvenile Justice Cuts Could Have Local Impact



It seems that there are very few things that have not been affected by the economy lately, and juvenile justice in Florida is no exception. State agencies were asked to submit priorities for 10% cuts for next year's budget. Since state revenue collections have been well below what was forecast in March when this year's state budget was prepared, additional cuts could come sooner than next year. Some of the proposals to reduce state juvenile justice funding could have a local impact if implemented. The Department of Juvenile Justice's (DJJ) first two priorities for cuts are to close juvenile detention centers in St. Johns and Monroe Counties. Both centers have been under utilized. While this would not affect where local youth are detained, DJJ estimates the closures would place additional demands on the other detention centers in the state. To address this, DJJ has recommended changing the statutory criteria for

admitting youth to detention to reduce the number of youth eligible for placement into secure detention. The agency's third priority for cutting its budget is to eliminate its responsibility to supervise the misdemeanor population that is court ordered onto probation status. DJJ estimates that this would reduce probation supervision of over 22,000 misdemeanor youth statewide. It is estimated that this plan would impact the supervision of approximately 450 - 600 misdemeanor youth in Lee County annually. DJJ also proposes to eliminate 591 contracted aftercare and conditional release slots statewide. This would reduce the supervision of youth returning to the community from residential commitment programs. DJJ also has proposed to reduce 174 non-residential commitment slots. This would reduce the number of youth in programs such as marine institutes and day treatment programs. DJJ's fourth and fifth budget reduction priorities are to reduce 508 non-secure general commitment beds and 132 secure offender commitment beds. DJJ estimates the impact of these two proposals is that the waiting time for youth to get into

commitment programs would dramatically increase. Youth waiting for non-secure general offender beds would likely await placement at home under the supervision of a Juvenile Probation Officer, which would place more demands on probation officers. Youth waiting for secure offender beds would await placement at detention centers, adversely affecting the detention centers that are already operating over capacity. (The Southwest Florida Regional Detention Center in Fort Myers frequently operates over capacity and has one of the highest utilization rates in the state.) Some of DJJ's proposals would require changes in statutes. With the state's legislative session several months away, it is still early in the legislative process. A lot can happen between now and the first of May when the legislative session ends. The proposed budget cuts are just possibilities right now, but with state revenues down, it is very likely that the state will have to cut from somewhere. Some of the proposed cuts could impact local public safety and resources if implemented. State agency legislative budget requests and priorities for possible reductions are online at: <http://floridafiscalportal.state.fl.us>.