

Lee County Juvenile
Assessment Center
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
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April 2006

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.

JAC Targets Early Truancy Through TIP

Truancy has been clearly identified by research as one of the early warning signs of students headed toward potential delinquent behavior. For some youth, patterns of not attending school may start as early as elementary and middle school. That is where the **Truancy Intervention Program**, or TIP program, comes in. A partnership with the Lee County school district and the Lee County Sheriff's Office, the TIP's main goal is to target elementary and middle school youth with attendance problems to prevent them from becoming habitually truant. Students identified by their school social worker as having chronic non-attendance and their parents or guardians are requested to attend a TIP conference at the JAC as a last opportunity to comply with Florida's mandatory school attendance before legal action is initiated. At the TIP conference the youth and parents are informed of the importance of school attendance, the seriousness of the legal sanctions for non-attendance, and school district policies. The TIP committee also attempts to identify other factors involved and steer the family in the right direction to avoid judicial action. Families are advised of other schooling choices that they may have, such as hospital home-bound or home-school, and other community resources that may assist them.

According to Bill Naylor, TIP Program Coordinator and Director of the Lee County Juvenile Assessment Center, many parents are not aware that they



Bill Naylor, JAC Director

can potentially go to jail if they don't ensure their child attends school and are found to be guilty of educational neglect. Many of the youth that come before the TIP committee are not aware that they can be placed under the jurisdiction of the court until they are 18 years old for truancy. Sometimes parents aren't aware that they need to send a note to school with justification for every day their child is absent. It is an issue of the parent needing to communicate better with the school. Naylor recalled that one youth confided to the TIP committee that he was skipping school because he couldn't read. The committee referred him for intensive reading classes and tutoring. School attendance generally improves in 90% of the youth referred to TIP.



CALENDAR

Juvenile Sanctions Team
April 6
12:00 p.m.
Lee JAC

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council
April 10
12:00 p.m.
Lee County Justice Center
1700 Monroe St.,
Hearing Room 1, 4th Floor

**Anger Management
Parent/Adolescent Group**
Starts April 11
Lee JAC

**Substance Abuse Intervention
Parent/Adolescent Group**
Starts April 13
Lee JAC

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council
May 1
12:00 p.m.
Lee County Justice Center
1700 Monroe St.,
Hearing Room 1, 4th Floor

LCSO Youth Services Participates in Drug House Odyssey 2006

The Lee County Sheriff's Office was one of over a dozen community organizations that participated in this year's Drug House Odyssey. Held March 21-23 at the Cape Christian Fellowship in Cape Coral, the event included a series of dramatizations portraying youth making good and bad choices and the consequences of those choices. Lee County Sheriff's Office youth services deputies served as guides and participated in some of the Odyssey's dramatizations. It is estimated that 3,600 people attended over the 3-day event.



Deputy Rory VanDeusen administers a field sobriety test to a student actor during Drug House Odyssey.

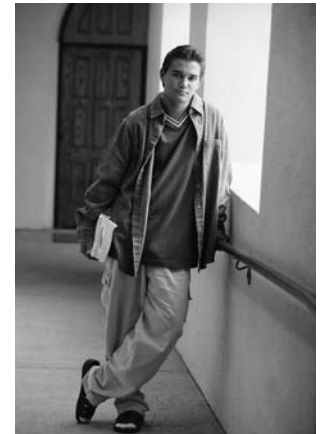
Help for Teens In Managing Anger

The next Anger Management Parent/Adolescent group begins at the JAC on April 11th. The group will meet weekly for 7 weeks at 6:00 p.m. Contact Jeff Sundberg at 344-5115 to sign up for the group or for more information.

"What's the Matter With Kids Today?"

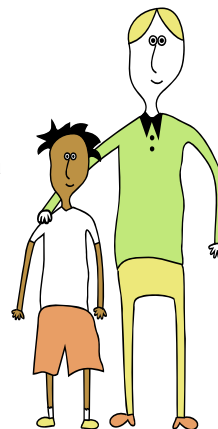
A mother came to the JAC recently with her daughter. She complained that her daughter argued with her and was often sassy. She hoped a tour of the JAC would make her daughter think twice about the choices she was making. While waiting for her daughter to finish the tour the mother noted, "Kids are so bad these days. They are so much worse today than they used to be." It's a common perception. A decade ago leading experts on juvenile crime warned of an impending juvenile crime wave. It was predicted that a generation of brutal and remorseless teens would savage the country. It didn't happen. According to the Justice

Department's *2006 National Report on Juvenile Offenders and Victims*, the rate of juvenile violent crime arrests has steadily declined since 1994, falling to a level not seen since at least the 1970's. While some youth do get into trouble, the good news is that most of today's youth are thriving. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, adolescents today are less likely to drink, smoke, do drugs, get pregnant, commit a violent crime or drop out of school than their parents' generation. In Lee County, the rate of youth referred for delinquency in 2004-05 (fiscal year) was the lowest it has been in ten years.



Resource for Parenting Teens

Research has identified proven actions that parents can take to help prevent a wide range of risky behaviors among teens. These findings have been summarized in a handbook that provides the "nuts and bolts" on parenting adolescents. From setting expectations and rules to monitoring your teen to being a good role model, the advice is simple and practical. "Navigating the Teen Years: A Parent's Handbook for Raising Healthy Teens" can be downloaded or ordered at no charge at www.theantidrug.com/news/resourcelist.aspx?id=3



The Lee County JAC 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.