



Florida Sheriffs Association Position on Juvenile Justice

The Florida Sheriffs Association (FSA) believes investing in Florida's future means investing in Florida's youth. This is why FSA coordinates the Teen Driver Challenge, supports the Florida Sheriffs Youth Ranches and hosts training and education to combat cyber predators. FSA also strives to maintain a healthy partnership with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), which allows us to achieve better results for our state.

Juvenile Assessment Centers

There are times when law enforcement must respond to calls where the perpetrator happens to be a juvenile. Youth differ from adults when they run into trouble with the law, because youth cannot be released without consent from a parent or guardian. Law enforcement must locate the parent or guardian, which can often take hours – pulling the officer away from patrol and other necessary duties. Juvenile Assessment Centers provide law enforcement with a means to quickly release the youth to an authority, who can then assess the youth and link juveniles up with available community resources as needed. FSA supports full funding of Juvenile Assessment Centers and encourages the use of civil citation when appropriate.

Juvenile Detention

There are occasions when a youth must be detained in a secure detention facility. Such circumstances usually arise out of the violent nature of the crime committed i.e., if an at-risk victim remains in the home, or when the juvenile has a high probability of intentionally missing a court appearance. To limit the use of resources to detain dangerous youth who may serve as a threat to the community, FSA supports the use of a validated risk assessment to determine which youth should be detained.

When secure detention is ordered by the court, a youth may be sent to a secure DJJ facility or a local juvenile detention facility operated by the Sheriff's office. State law changed in 2011 allowing Sheriffs to operate such facilities if the County or Sheriff pays the full cost of detention and the facility is accredited by the Florida Corrections Accreditation Commission or the American Corrections Association, and inspected annually by the Florida Model Jail Standards Committee (FMJS). While this change originated from the high cost counties were paying for detention care, Sheriffs have the ability to provide more training to their employees and adjust staffing levels as needed. All Federal Regulations, state statutes and FMJS guidelines are followed to ensure the safe and secure detention of youth who violate the law.

FSA supports Sheriffs having the option to operate a local juvenile detention facility. The operation of a local facility must first be approved by the community and the Sheriff will be fiscally accountable to the local taxpayer.

The Florida Sheriffs Association supports investing in youth and in programs that produce greater outcomes for Florida's youth.

