



## **Increase Residential Commitment Programs at the Department of Juvenile Justice**

The Florida Sheriffs Association strongly supports diversion programs for youth and providing second chances to first time juvenile offenders. However, many counties in Florida are experiencing a high number of auto thefts, vehicle burglaries, robberies, and car jackings being committed by a small number of repeat juvenile offenders. This summer, auto thefts in Pinellas County resulted in the death of three boys who had extensive criminal histories. In Polk County, the arrest of six teenaged boys for stolen guns and auto theft resulted in 60 charges between them. These high recidivism rates are due to juveniles who are not concerned with the consequences for the crimes committed because, in many cases, there are very limited or no consequences.

Last session, HB 7059 and SB 1670 created the designation of “Prolific Juvenile Offenders” and ensured these juveniles are held in secure detention care until their dispositions have been entered. This change in the law will keep high recidivating juveniles in either secure detention or a more structured community supervision that includes active electronic monitoring.

However, the Department of Juvenile Justice has seen a drastic reduction in its capacity to provide residential commitment programs for repeat juvenile offenders. Many times when a judge sentences a juvenile to a residential program, that juvenile must wait in secure detention until a bed is available.

Holding juveniles accountable for their crimes and preventing crimes committed by prolific juvenile offenders requires additional support to the juvenile justice system. In order to be effective, the legislation which passed last year will require additional funding support to the Department of Juvenile Justice to achieve its purpose in reducing juvenile recidivism and truly making a difference in the lives of juvenile offenders.

**Florida Sheriffs Association support increasing residential commitment programs at the Department of Juvenile Justice to help rehabilitate juvenile offenders.**

