



# FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE

Rick Scott, Governor

Wansley Walters, Secretary

July 28, 2011



Bradley Arnold, County Administrator  
Sumter County  
910 North Main Street  
Room 201  
Bushnell, Florida 33513

Dear Mr. Arnold:

Beginning in the State's fiscal year 2005-06, counties were tasked by the Legislature to contribute financially to the operation of state detention centers. The Legislature determined the funding for the state and the counties at an approximate 20/80 percent split, respectively, based on the utilization of detention at that time. The counties were to pay for pre-dispositional days for youth from their county while the State was responsible for the post-disposition days, fiscally constrained counties, and out-of-state youth.

Much has changed in the juvenile justice world since 2005-06. Juvenile crime has decreased significantly. Referrals to the Department and overall detention utilization are down, and most counties have experienced a reduction in detention utilization. Progressive counties like Miami-Dade have been proactive with measures to keep youth out of the system unless absolutely necessary. In addition, research now tells us that youth who enter the juvenile justice system have a greater likelihood to return in the future.

The Department is working to reduce detention stays. Just this year legislation was passed that requires all counties to have a civil citation process in place that provides first-time misdemeanants an opportunity to avoid a criminal history record upon successful completion. In addition, the agency received \$250,000 for electronic monitoring bracelets that will allow a youth to return home to await an initial court hearing instead of being placed into a detention center. To further divert youth from secure detention, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is working with the Department to pilot the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative in four Florida circuits. The Department is also beginning to provide phone call reminders to reduce the number of youth who fail to appear for court and, as a result, are ordered into secure detention.

It is critical that the counties join with the department to develop community based diversion and intervention programs. These programs will reduce the need for secure detention beds, allow the Department to downsize or close detention centers, and realize a savings to the counties due to a reduction in secure detention utilization. This fiscal year the counties collectively realized a 20% reduction in secure detention costs. Most counties will pay less this year for detention than they

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The mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice is to increase public safety by reducing juvenile delinquency through effective prevention, intervention, and treatment services that strengthen families and turn around the lives of troubled youth.

have in any prior year. As we continue to divert youth from secure detention, the Department is committed to further reductions in costs.

Many youth are detained on violations of probation, failures to appear, and other miscellaneous court orders as a result of judicial action. These stays are considered pre-dispositional and are the fiscal responsibility of the counties. In some areas, court-ordered detention accounts for up to 70 percent of a county's share of secure detention costs. A huge number of these stays may be avoided by using alternative sanctions and services.

As the Department moves to reform the juvenile justice system, it is important to include our partners in the process to develop solutions and services that will not only reduce costs but improve the lives of our children while keeping Floridians safe. If you have any questions about detention costs for your county please contact Beth Davis at [beth.davis@djj.state.fl.us](mailto:beth.davis@djj.state.fl.us) or 850-414-8818.

Sincerely,



Wansley Walters, Secretary

cc: Beth Davis, Director, Office of Program Accountability  
Julia Strange, Assistant Secretary, Detention Services  
Michael McCaffrey, Assistant Secretary, Probation and Community Intervention  
Sarraah Carroll, Florida Association of Counties  
County Attorney