

**STATE ATTORNEY'S OFFICE
DIVERSION PROGRAMS**

1991-2008:

**JUVENILE DIVERSION
AND
EARLY INTERVENTION**

The Purpose of Diversion

- ◎ Between 1991 and 2008, the Office of the State Attorney maintained several diversionary programs designed to render speedy justice without involvement in the traditional court system. The goal of these programs was to provide early intervention to prevent further criminal activity.

Juvenile Diversion Programs

- Juvenile Arbitration I and II Programs
- Intensive Delinquency Diversion Service Program
- Teen Court/Truancy Teen Court Programs
- Truancy Arbitration Program
- Intervention for At-Risk Youth Program
- Juvenile Drug Court
- Help At-Risk Kids (HARK)
- Civil Citation

Juvenile Arbitration I and II

- ⦿ Program for first-time juvenile offenders charged with misdemeanors or non-violent felonies.
- ⦿ Charges were dismissed if the juvenile successfully completed the program.
- ⦿ Hearings were conducted by SAO volunteers.
- ⦿ Sanctions/services to the juvenile included
 - community service hours;
 - classes relating to the juvenile justice system, including jail tours
 - anger management classes, mental health counseling and drug evaluations;
 - essays, letters of apology; and
 - restitution
- ⦿ In 2007, 919 hearings were held and 6,392 community service hours were completed.

Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services Program

- The Intensive Delinquency Diversion Services Program was a diversion program for early offending youth were determined to be at high risk for re-offending
- Administered by the State Attorney's Office through a contract awarded by the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- Youth in the program had multiple risk factors, including family history, school-related issues, and drug abuse.
- Youth were assigned a case manager for a period of 6-9 months.
- Case managers were required to conduct several weekly visits with youth, parent and youth's school in order to address the youth's needs and to reduce the youth's risk of recidivism .
- Case managers had a maximum case-load of 20 youth.
- In 2007, 143 youth were served by this program, 838 hours of community service were completed, \$1,422.66 in restitution for victims was collected, and 14,378 visits were conducted by the case managers.
- In 2006, the recidivism rate for youth successfully completing the IDDS
- program was 17%.

Teen Court Program

- ⦿ Duval County juveniles ages 10-17
- ⦿ Typically first time misdemeanor offenses
- ⦿ Referred by SAO or by School Resource Officers
- ⦿ Admitted guilt was a prerequisite for participation
- ⦿ Court was presided over by adult judges or attorneys
- ⦿ Trained Teen Attorneys argued the facts of the case
- ⦿ A Peer Jury decides on appropriate sanctions, including:
 - Community Service
 - Peer Circle (Educational Seminars)
 - Jury Duty
- ⦿ In 2007, 253 cases were accepted into Teen Court and 4,208 community service hours were completed.

Juvenile Drug Court

- ⦿ 3 month to 12 month diversion program in which a juvenile defendant participated in drug treatment
- ⦿ The program featured counseling, frequent drug screens, and case-manager supervision
- ⦿ A key component was judicial over-sight with defendants making regular court appearances to monitor compliance.
- ⦿ Residential treatment was available if appropriate, but most defendants participated in outpatient therapy.
- ⦿ In 2007, 51 cases were accepted into the program and 32 juveniles successfully graduated.
- ⦿ For the years 2005-2007, of the 112 juveniles who successfully graduated from Drug Court, only 3.6% received a subsequent felony conviction and 25.9% received a subsequent misdemeanor conviction.

Intervention for At-Risk Youth

- ⦿ Prevention/Intervention program for youth participating in the Juvenile Arbitration and Truancy Arbitration Programs.
- ⦿ Funded by a grant awarded by the Department of Juvenile Justice.
- ⦿ Provides case management and mental health counseling to youth who are at-risk for entering the juvenile court system due to a multitude of family, school, drug and other delinquency related risk factors.

Focus On Females

- ⦿ Class geared towards female juvenile offenders and their parents. Juveniles ranged in age from 12-18 years old.
- ⦿ The class focused on the issues which affected female juveniles (i.e. theft, drugs, and fighting, and myspace.com). This class made parents and juveniles aware of how such behaviors are the root causes to criminal activity.
- ⦿ Planned Parenthood representative educated girls on how using their bodies improperly could lead to negative consequences.
- ⦿ Inmates from the Duval County Jail spoke with girls about their own struggles as a juvenile offender and how life had changed since being arrested.
- ⦿ Each perspective showed the current and future consequences crime.

School-focused efforts

- ⦿ One of the most successful examples of working with our schools was Program for At-Risk Students (PAS).
- ⦿ Served students who had serious discipline problems. The students attended juvenile delinquency hearings and discussed their behavior with juvenile judges. They also toured the local jail and interacted with juveniles incarcerated as adults. The juvenile inmates stress avoiding criminal activity and staying in school. During the program, over 5,500 at-risk juveniles participated in PAS.
- ⦿ Also, created the State Attorney School Outreach Program in 1995. Assistant State Attorney was assigned as a liaison to every middle school in Duval County. Staff regularly spoke to students, teachers, and parents throughout our judicial circuit about juvenile issues.

Truancy Teen Court Program

- ⦿ The Truancy Teen Court Program was a prevention program specifically designed to target middle school aged students who are losing interest or motivation to attend school.
- ⦿ Specially trained teenagers fulfilled the roles of jurors. The jurors question the truant in regards to their attendance and subsequently determined an appropriate sentence.
- ⦿ Court was directed by an adult community leader.
- ⦿ The Truant and his/her parent or guardian signs a contract agreeing to carry out the imposed sanctions.
- ⦿ In 2007, 60 cases were accepted into Truancy Teen Court and 322 community service hours were completed.

Truancy Arbitration Program

- ⦿ Purpose of the program was to hold parents accountable for the attendance of their children.
- ⦿ Referrals were received from Social Workers and Truant Officers of DCPS.
- ⦿ Parents received case management for approximately one full school year.
- ⦿ Hearings were scheduled for both parents and children to attend.
- ⦿ Used intervention strategies, such as counseling and tutoring.
- ⦿ If interventions and case management were unsuccessful, criminal prosecution of the parent could result, but only as a last resort.
- ⦿ Between 1995 and 2008, approx. 2,200 hearings were held.
- ⦿ 172 parents were arrested during the program.
- ⦿ The program was evaluated by the Colorado Foundation for Families and Children and found effective in reducing truancy.

Volunteers

- ⦿ In many cases, the hearings for juvenile diversion programs were conducted by specially trained community volunteers who served as mediators or hearing officers.
- ⦿ It would not have been possible for the State Attorney's Office to provide this service without the assistance of volunteers. Hearing officer is highly technical and professional position with the volunteer administering work hours, restitution, and referral service in a quasi-judicial atmosphere.
- ⦿ SAO-led diversion numbers for 2007:
 - 42 mediators in Duval provided 2,700 hours of service
- ⦿ Teen Court:
 - 18 adults provided 182 hours of service
 - 22 juveniles provided 873 hours of service
- ⦿ In addition, volunteers were used as mentors and as members of victim impact panels.
- ⦿ During this time, the State Attorney's Office had more than 150 volunteers circuit-wide.