



Legislative Link

A legislative update provided by the United Way of Florida

Civil Citations: Helping Young People Who Make Mistakes

Under former Department of Juvenile Justice Secretary Wansley Walters and current Secretary Christy Daley, the Department of Juvenile Justice has implemented a variety of initiatives that are reframing how law enforcement and the Department interface with youth and - as a result - are preventing more crime and helping young people positively move forward with their lives. The Department [reports](#) that since 2010, arrests of juveniles statewide have decreased by an amazing 36 percent (from 121,000 to 78,000).

One of the most important initiatives employed by the Department through legislative action has been implementation of the civil citation process. Civil citation is an alternative to arrest for youth who commit first-time, non-serious delinquent acts. For youth who complete civil citation, there is no official delinquency record and future background checks reveal a "clean" record. The goals of civil citation are to divert the youth prior to arrest, hold the youth accountable for delinquent behavior, involve the parents in sanctioning the youth, and prevent the youth's further involvement in the juvenile justice system. Law enforcement officers are allowed the discretion of issuing a citation rather than a formal complaint.

The civil citation process is implemented at the local level and currently 59 counties have implemented it. Local civil citation providers oversee youth participating in the civil citation process. Youth are required to receive an assessment of needs, perform no more than 50 hours of community service, and complete various sanctions, which may include reparations and treatment services.

The Department [reports](#) that:

- civil citation youth had significantly better outcomes than youth who were eligible for civil citation, but were arrested and diverted;
- civil citation youth recidivated at a rate of four percent compared to a recidivism rate of nine percent for youth who completed diversion programs; and
- when comparing the recidivism rate for different offense categories, the youth who completed civil citation for petit theft, assault and battery, drug offenses, loitering and prowling, trespassing, obstruction of justice, and vandalism had significantly better outcomes than youth who were arrested for these offenses and completed a diversion program.

The civil citation program is so successful that in Broward County alone from 2012-2013 to 2013-2014 there were 1,229 fewer misdemeanor arrests of youth, which corresponded directly with a significant increase in the use of civil citations. In addition, the recidivism rate for youth completing the civil citation process is only four percent.

For additional information, please contact
the United Way of Florida at: (850) 488-8276.

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