

Post Arrest Diversion Program (PAD)

Special Diversion for First Time, Non-Violent, Misdemeanor Offenders

The Post-Arrest Diversion (PAD) is the most critical component of the National Demonstration Project. First and foremost, it provides the JAC with a process that is independent from the normal way an arrested juvenile enters into the system.

It is the operational component that demonstrates and scientifically documents the value of doing business differently and reforming the system. Data collection and study have been ongoing. Operational procedures were developed and constantly reviewed with national researchers. Cases, both successful and unsuccessful, are reviewed by teams to determine why some efforts succeeded and others failed.

The Post-Arrest Diversion (PAD) Program was developed to accomplish several things:

- Provide first-time minor offenders with a mechanism to stay out of the juvenile justice system and have their arrest record expunged (through Florida State Statute) upon successful completion;
- Apply best research practices at time of arrest that includes full family and child assessment and participation, school performance review, and a specialized treatment plan that relates to the juvenile's issues as opposed to the offense. This allows for the strategic and cost effective use of services and resources;
- Allows for the study of the first offender, misdemeanor population to determine risk factors for future recidivism in a population normally ignored at this point of the system;
- Allows for the extensive training of staff and utilization of special assessment instruments in an effort to develop assessment and diversion expertise in order to reduce redundancy at later points in the system.

While the PAD represents an opportunity to pilot a new way of processing arrested juveniles in a research proven and effective manner, eligibility criteria at this time is restricted to first time offenders of specially selected offenses through an agreement between the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice and the JAC.

Findings

- About two-thirds of all PAD participants exhibit elevated risk factors indicating high possibility of recidivism; one third have extremely high risk factors. Nationally, this is the group of offenders that is usually given nominal attention until children begin to re-offend.
- 81% of drug involved PAD participants (determined through assessment, not arrest offense) were also determined to be high risk.
- Family involvement is required and critical to successful completion of treatment plan (family involvement not a normal requirement of juvenile justice sanctions). Program includes first offering in Miami-Dade County of Functional Family Therapy (FFT), a national blue ribbon

program of proven success, funded for the JAC by the Youth Crime Task Force, services provided by the Children's Psychiatric Center.

- Operating since December 2000, 3,821 juveniles and their families have participated in the program.
- 73% of PAD participants successfully complete individualized treatment plan.
- Recidivism of successfully completed participants is 4%. Recidivism rate is checked every three months on all prior participants that successfully completed.