



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Lee County Sheriff's Office

Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County
2107 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Fort Myers, FL 33901

JAC OVERVIEW

The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County (JAC) is located in downtown Fort Myers, Florida. The JAC was founded in 2003 and is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice. The JAC co-locates various agencies, which serves to streamline the local juvenile justice system, to promote timely case processing, and to reduce the duplication of services. The JAC assists both "at risk" youth and arrested youth and their families. The physical facility and the JAC's management is funded by the Lee County Board of County Commissioners. The JAC receives no state funding, although it indirectly benefits from state resources through its co-located partners.



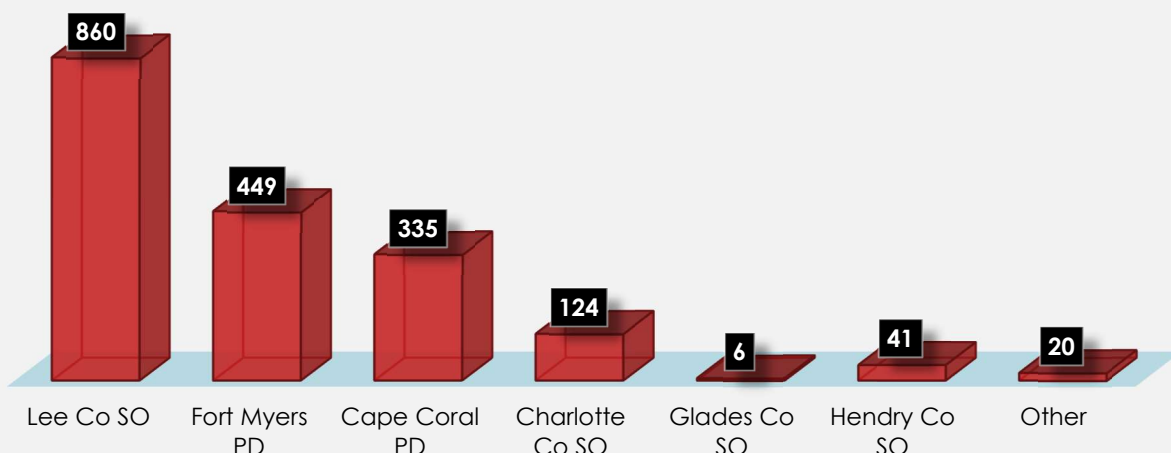
The JAC is located in downtown Fort Myers and is part of the Justice Center Complex.

BOOKING AND RECEIVING FACILITY

When a youth is arrested in Lee County, the arresting officer transports the youth to the Juvenile Booking Facility which is attached to both the JAC and to the Lee County Jail. The design of the facility allows for the sharing of the Lee County Sheriff's Office's booking staff between the juvenile booking area and the adult jail to maximize staffing resources. Arrested youth are kept separate from detained adults at all times. When an arrested youth is brought to the facility he or she has his or her fingerprints, palm prints, and a booking photo taken. Arrested youth who are charged with a felony offense also have a DNA sample taken.

*In 2025, there were **1,806** juvenile bookings at the receiving facility.*

LAW ENFORCEMENT UTILIZATION OF THE JAC (2025)



SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

When arrested youth arrive at the Juvenile Booking Facility/JAC they are screened by Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) intake staff to determine if they are eligible for secure detention. DJJ's detention risk assessment considers a youth's arrest history, the seriousness of the charges, and whether the youth is a flight risk. Based on the youth's detention risk assessment score, he or she may be taken to secure detention, placed on home detention, or directly released to his or her parent or guardian. DJJ staff also screens each arrested youth for their risk to offend again and for any substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Based on this screening, DJJ staff may recommend that the youth receive a more in-depth assessment from one of the JAC's community partners.

Youth who screen eligible for secure detention are transported to the Southwest Florida Regional Detention Center on Ortiz Avenue in Fort Myers.

PROMOTING PUBLIC SAFETY

Before the JAC opened in 2003, law enforcement officers were responsible for supervising arrested youth who were not detained until the youth could be released to the custody of his or her parents. Law enforcement officers are now able to deliver all arrested youth to the JAC and return within a few minutes to road patrol or to help safeguard the community's schools.

Department of Juvenile Justice staff at the JAC track all arrested youth who are placed on home detention and disseminate this information to local law enforcement agencies. This allows law enforcement officers to provide increased monitoring and supervision of youth who are placed on home detention.

LINKING YOUTH AND FAMILIES TO SERVICES

The JAC's main phone number at (239) 258-3450 serves as an information and referral line for parents seeking help for their youth and for others requesting information about services available for local youth and families. The JAC maintains a Community Resource Guide of youth related services that can be accessed from the JAC's website at www.sheriffleefl.org/juvenile-assessment-center/.

*24% of Florida high school students reported mental illness affects their household.**

*21% of Florida high school students reported substance abuse affects their household.**

*Source: FL Dept of Children & Families,
2025 FL Youth Substance Abuse Survey

COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

The JAC tracks trends in juvenile crime and risk factors for delinquency within the community. JAC staff work collaboratively with community partners to identify emerging trends, gaps in services, and resources for the prevention and intervention of youth crime.

*During the 24-25 school year, **263** youth were arrested at school.*

*The JAC provides free drug test kits to parents to use as a drug prevention tool. In 2025, **238** test kits were distributed.*

INFORMATION AND EDUCATION

*The JAC provided **43** tours and presentations in 2025.*

The JAC serves as a hub for information about the local juvenile justice system for parents, law enforcement officers, and community partners. Information is provided on the JAC website (www.sheriffleefl.org/juvenile-assessment-center/), which includes brochures that were developed to assist in answering some of the most frequently asked questions from parents and community partners (printed copies are available in the JAC lobby). The JAC lobby also broadcasts prevention oriented Public Service Announcements (PSA's). JAC staff provide tours of its facility, as well as conduct presentations about the local juvenile justice system to a variety of school and community groups.

PREVENTION

PREVENTION COUNSELING

Lutheran Services of Florida co-locates a counselor at the JAC who provides individual and family counseling with non-arrested youth and their families.



CINS / FINS

Lutheran Services provides a case manager at the JAC for the Child In Need of Services / Families in Need of Services program. This program works with youth who show troubling behavior including running away from home, truancy, and ungovernable behavior.

SNAP (STOP NOW AND PLAN)

Lutheran Services provides counselors at the JAC for the SNAP program. It is an evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral, and gender-based program for troubled children ages 6 to 11. It is designed for children who are engaging in aggressive, negative behavior and/or have come into disciplinary contact with authority figures at school or in the community. It helps children and their parents learn how to effectively manage their emotions and “keep problems small”.

TRUANCY INTERVENTION PROGRAM (TIP)

The Truancy Intervention Program is coordinated by JAC staff in partnership with the School District of Lee County. TIP works with families whose elementary or middle school aged youth are at risk of becoming habitually truant. TIP works with the families to improve school attendance or proceed toward judicial action.

In the 2024-25 school year, 44 youth committed crimes while they were truant from school.



TRUANCY UNGOVERNABLE RUNAWAY NETWORK (TURN)

In 2025, 197 youth participated in the TIP and TURN programs at the JAC.

TURN works with families of youth that are habitually truant, ungovernable, or runaways. TURN works with the families to improve the youth's behavior or to proceed toward judicial action. TURN is coordinated by Lutheran Services in partnership with multiple community agencies.

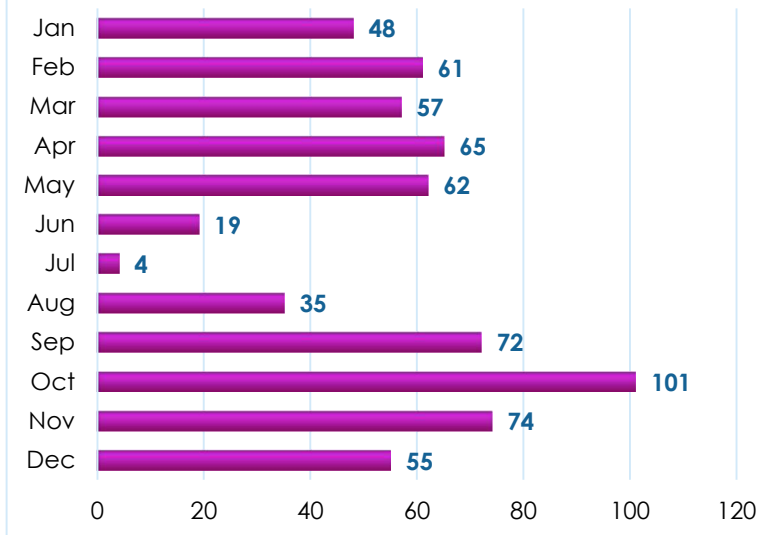
INTERVENTION

DELINQUENCY CITATION PROGRAM

The JAC operates a delinquency citation program which provides an alternative to arrest for youth who commit first time minor misdemeanor offenses. The goal of the program is to reduce recidivism and avoid formal arrest records, as authorized by Florida Statute 985.12. Law enforcement officers have the discretion to issue a delinquency citation rather than make an arrest for low level infractions such as possession of marijuana, petit theft, or disruption of a school function. There were 656 delinquency citations issued by local law enforcement in 2025.



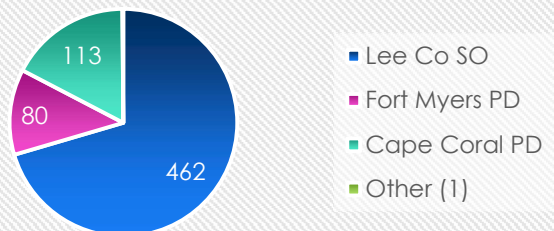
Citations Issued by Month



Youth issued a delinquency citation must meet with a member of the JAC staff within one week of the citation being issued. A drug screen may be conducted at that time. Depending on their needs, youth may be assigned to community service hours, mental health or substance abuse services, or family counseling. In 2025, JAC staff conducted **623** meetings for the program.

The delinquency citation process has many benefits for both the youth and local community. The use of citations helps to prevent a permanent arrest record for the youth, which may shape the youth's quality of life and determine individual success. It also aims to reduce recidivism, which lowers crime rates and repeat offenses.

Citations Issued by Agency



MORAL RECONATION THERAPY (MRT)

Through a partnership with the Lee County Department of Human and Veterans Services, MRT is referred out from the JAC. The MRT program works primarily with first time juvenile offenders who have committed a violent crime such as a misdemeanor battery or an aggravated battery. Youth are approved for the program by the Office of the State Attorney. MRT is an evidence-based, 12-step cognitive behavioral intervention that seeks to reduce recidivism by increasing moral reasoning. This program also provides anger management groups and parent support groups.

*In 2025, **229** youth were arrested for domestic violence.*



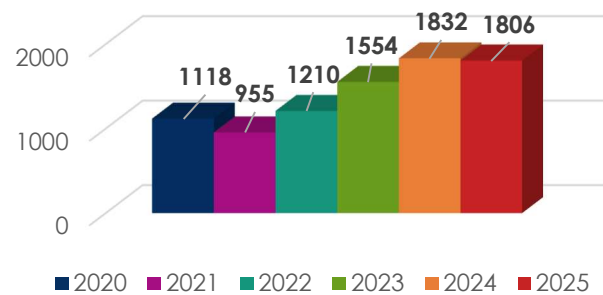
JUVENILE CRIME TRENDS in LEE COUNTY

The JAC tracks trends in juvenile offending, as well as other youth trends such as juvenile domestic violence arrests, juvenile gun offenses, school-based arrests, youth who are arrested for crimes they committed while truant from school, and youth who are arrested for failing to appear in court.

TOTAL ARRESTS

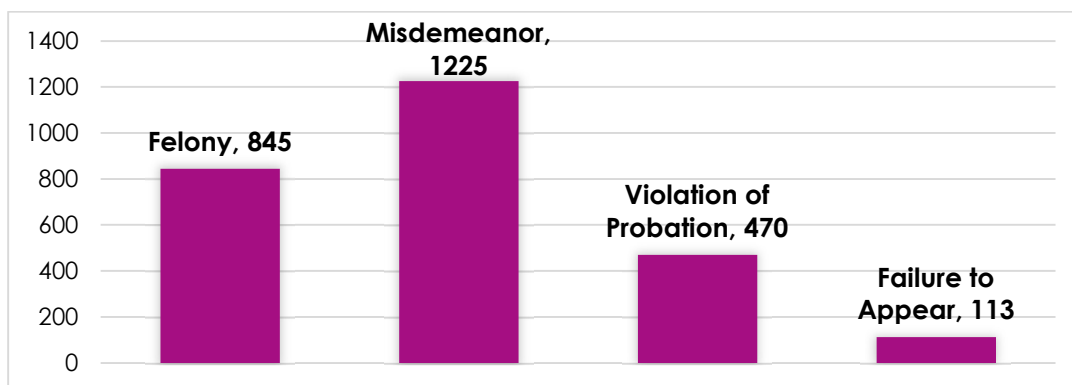
The JAC received **1,806** arrested youth in 2025. This number includes youth who were arrested more than once during the year. It also includes youth who were screened as eligible for secure detention from Charlotte, Hendry, and Glades Counties. Youth from these counties are transported to the Juvenile Assessment Center prior to being transported to the Southwest Florida Regional Detention Center in Fort Myers.

Total Youth Arrests in Lee County, 2020-2025

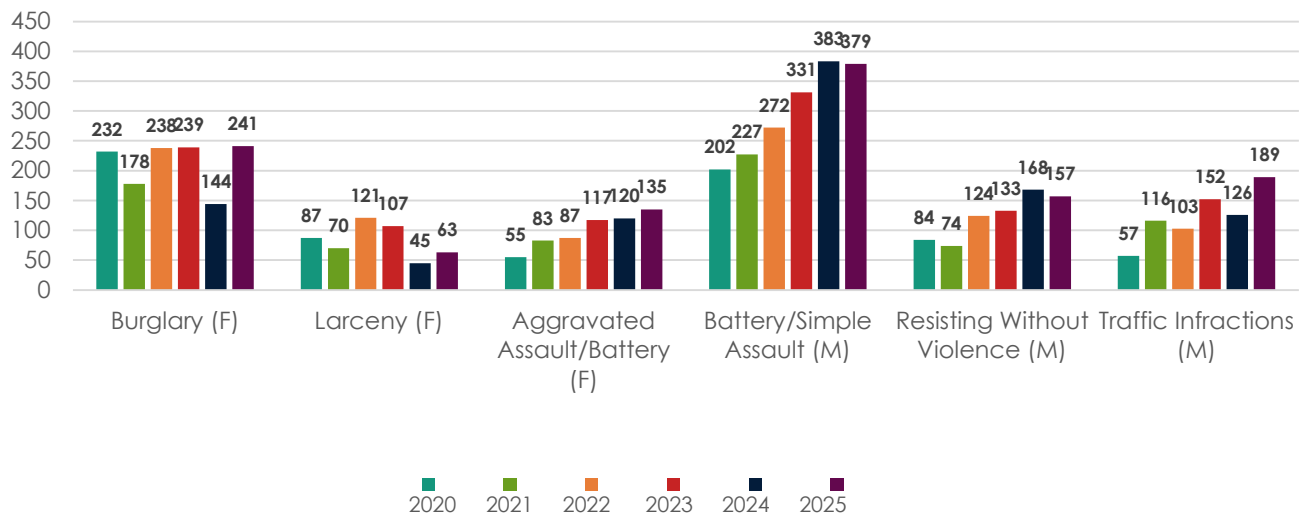


CHARGES

Of the total bookings processed in 2025, there were a total of **2,653** charges filed against arrested youth. The top Felony charge was for Burglary (241) and the top Misdemeanor charge was for Battery/Simple Assault (379).



Top Charges in Lee County, 2020-2025

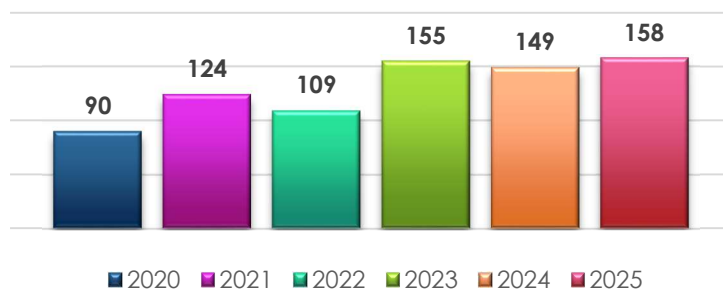


Youth drug and alcohol charges may include arrests for marijuana possession, alcohol possession, DUI or felony drug charges.

Total Drug & Alcohol Charges (2020-2025)

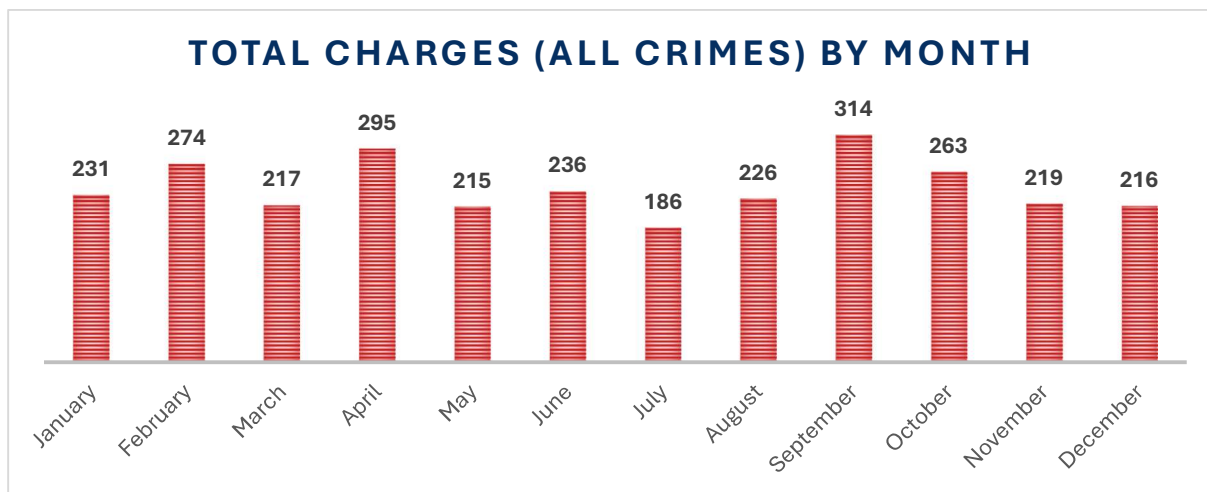
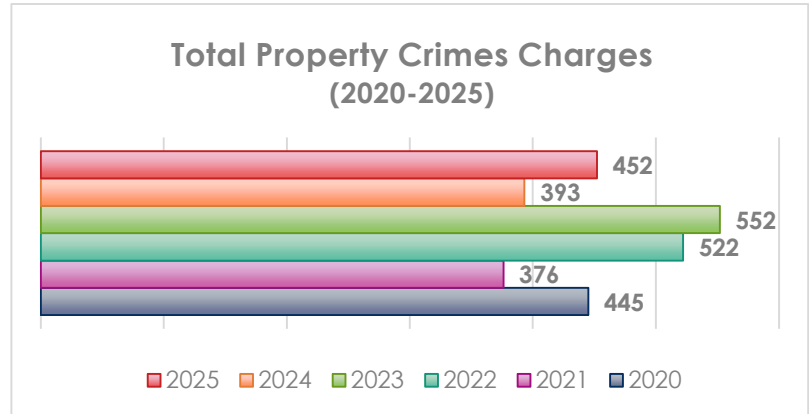


Total Violent Crimes Charges (2020-2025)



Violent crime charges among arrested youth may include charges for aggravated assault/battery, armed robbery, homicide or sex crimes.

Property crime charges among arrested youth may include charges for vehicle theft, burglary and larceny.



Every youth under the age of 18 charged with a crime is referred to the Department of Juvenile Justice. A recommendation is made to the State Attorney and the Court regarding appropriate sanctions and services for the youth. The recommendation considers risk, accountability and individual needs. Sanctions may range from a court-ordered diversion plan to probation to residential commitment. A Juvenile Probation Officer (JPO) is assigned to the youth to ensure compliance with the sanctions.

DETENTION

While awaiting court disposition arrested youth may be released to a parent or guardian (home detention), or they may be temporarily detained at a juvenile detention facility (secure detention). Youth placed on home detention will have restrictions on their

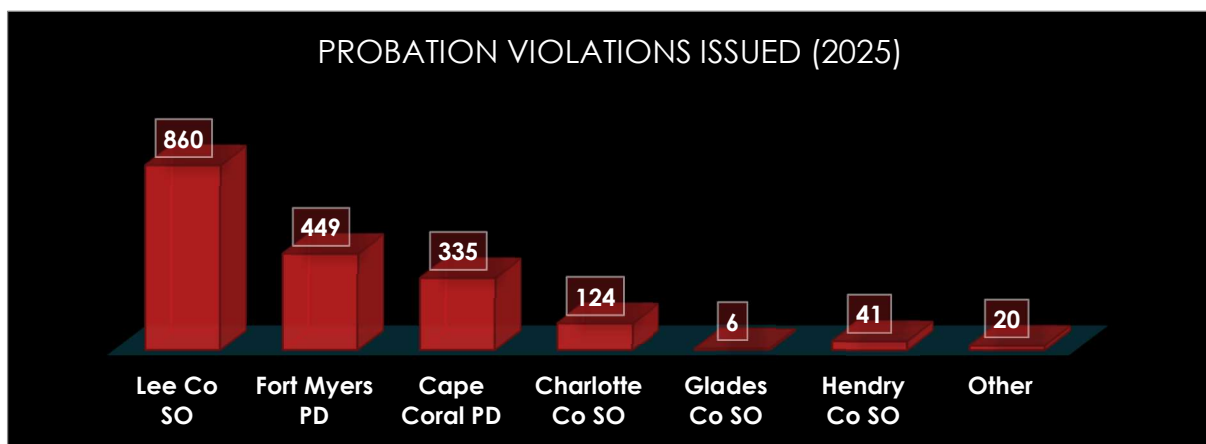
In 2025, 391 youth were placed on home detention.

In 2025, 668 youth were sent to secure detention. They are housed at the Southwest Florida Regional Detention Center in Fort Myers.

whereabouts and in some cases may be placed on electronic monitoring. Youth detained at a facility may be confined for up to 21 days, unless the youth violates court-ordered sanctions, then they may be detained longer.

PROBATION

A youth may violate the terms of their probation through technical violations – such as breaking curfew, missing appointments, or failing a drug screen – or by being arrested for a new offense. Probation violations can lead to stricter conditions, such as electronic monitoring or detention.





COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Lee County Board of County Commissioners

Provides the physical facility that houses the JAC service array.

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

Screens arrested youth for detention and mental health and/or substance abuse issues and makes recommendations to the court. Southwest Florida Regional Detention staff transport youth between the JAC and the detention center.

Lee County Sheriff's Office

Provides management for the operation and coordination among the JAC partners. Coordinates the Delinquency Citation program and the Truancy Intervention Program (TIP). Partner in the TURN Program.

Lutheran Services of Florida

Provides screening and assessments for non-arrested youth, case management, and individual and family counseling. Coordinates the TURN program. Provides the SNAP prevention program.

Lee County Department of Human and Veterans Services

Provides Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT), anger management groups, and parent support groups.

In addition to the above agencies that provide services which are physically located at the JAC, the JAC has enjoyed the partnerships and participation of many other agencies and organizations, including:

Cape Coral Police Department
Charlotte County Sheriff's Office
Children's Advocacy Center
Department of Children & Families
Elite DNA
Fort Myers Police Department
FGCU Campus Police
Florida Highway Patrol
FSW State College Campus Police
Glades County Sheriff's Office
Guardian Ad Litem
Hendry County Sheriff's Office

Lee County Clerk of Courts
Lee County Coalition for a Drug Free SWFL
Lee County Port Authority
Office of the State Attorney
PACE Center for Girls
Public Defender's Office
Punta Gorda Police Department
Sanibel Police Department
Salus Care
School District of Lee County
20th Circuit Judicial Court

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County

2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Blvd

Fort Myers, FL 33901

Phone: (239) 258-3450

Fax: (239) 258-3474

Website: www.sheriffleefl.org/juvenile-assessment-center/

Lee County Sheriff's Office Staff @ the JAC:

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Director

Sgt. Alison Cavanagh (239) 258-3467
Supervisor, Delinquency Citation Program

Deputy First Class Daiana De Souza (239) 258-3466
Coordinator, Delinquency Citation Program

Sonia Rios (239) 258-3452
Assistant, Delinquency Citation Program

Rheta Gould (239) 258-3457
Community Program Coordinator

Resources Available on the JAC Website:

Community Resource Guide

How a Case Moves Through the Courts

Juvenile Criminal Records

Know the Law: A Guide for Adolescents and their Parents

Know the Law: Consequences to Juvenile Arrest or Conviction*

Know the Law: Emancipation*

Know the Law: Marijuana Concentrates

Know the Law: Truancy*

What to Wear/Not Wear in Court

Writing a Letter of Apology

**Available in Spanish*

www.sheriffleefl.org/juvenile-assessment-center/publications