

TO: Juvenile Welfare Board Members

FROM: James E. Mills, Executive Director *JEM*
Browning Spence, Director, Strategic and Community Planning *HBS*
Krista Winn, Director, Quality Management and Evaluation *KW*

Requested Action

The State Attorney is requesting approval for a three year research and demonstration project, "The State Attorney Safe School Initiative".

Options

1. Approve the request
2. Deny the Request
3. Any other action the Board may deem appropriate.

Recommended Action

1. Allocate \$164,578 to the State Attorney's Office of the Sixth Judicial Circuit of Florida for the State Attorney's Safe School Initiative.
2. Transfer \$164,578 from Transitional Unallocated to Research Unallocated.

Source of JWB Funds

FY 99-00 Transitional Unallocated
FY 99-00 Research Unallocated

Fiscal Impact

Transitional unallocated would be reduced by \$164,578 from \$459,488 to \$294,910. Research Unallocated would be increased from \$100,000 to \$264,578 and then reduced back to \$100,000. Funds would be budgeted in FY 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 for the second and third years of the program at \$155,000 per year.

Narrative

Each week during the school year, approximately 30 to 50 incidents are referred to the State Attorney's Office from the School District. In order to develop a profile of the youth referred, the State Attorney's Office conducted an intensive review of all the juvenile cases received during a sampling period in March 1999. Of the cases reviewed, 55% were from grades six, seven, and eight. The review revealed a number of cases that could have been diverted toward early intervention before a court referral. The review also revealed a lack of consensus in the definitions and classifications of incidents and other data issues. The intention of the proposed program is to offer additional sanctions and specific interventions prior to court involvement.

The State's Attorney's Office is proposing to establish a new unit within the Juvenile Division to serve as a prosecutor-based outreach program of early intervention. The overall goal of the initiative is to intervene earlier and reduce the number of referrals to the State Attorney's Office and the court. Another goal is to develop a new database that will conform to national standards and better describe the incidents.

Contained within the initiative will be three programs:

- The Truancy Abatement Program will be composed of the existing elementary school truancy intervention program and the truancy court conference.
- The First Stop Program is a justice education program designed for children who are identified as at risk by family, schools and other community contacts.
- The Better Choices Program is a violence reduction program that is to be located at 16 middle schools in the Pinellas County School System. An Assistant State Attorney will be assigned to teach classes, conduct conflict mediation sessions, and monitor compliance agreements for youth that have committed school-based violations. Staff from the State Attorney's Office will be trained in the conflict mediation model used within the School System. It will coordinate with the Department of Juvenile Justice Alternative Sanctions Program, and the Civil Citation Program. It will also utilize community-based resources as an alternative to more intensive prosecution options.

In addition to seeking to determine the effectiveness of a school-based early intervention program, the initiative seeks to develop base line data, and improve and standardize data collection and analysis. The research objectives include:

1. Establish a descriptive database file, organized according to national standards, which will be based upon school based incidents referred for consideration for prosecution.
2. Document the trends in the incidence of criminal activity in the sample schools.

The Program objectives include:

1. Through increased intervention from the State Attorney's Office, there will be a significant reduction in the number of youth who are sent forward for further court action.
2. For those youth involved directly with the program, there will be a significant decrease in further criminal behavior either on or off school property.
3. There will be a reduction in the number of violent and disruptive incidents recorded for the participating schools during the three-year project.
4. Participants for the First Stop Program will be tracked to determine if they commit an offense during the three-year period of the project. Information on the potential impact of the program will be collected from those clients who eventually become defendants.

Research and Evaluation staff will work with the State Attorney's Office on refining the research design and objectives. Items to be studied include:

- Types of offenses reported
- Events correlated with age, sex, ethnicity, grade
- Reporting patterns
- Relationship between forms of discipline and referral to prosecution
- Pattern of offenses over three years
- Relationship of incidents to gang or hate crime
- Case referral trends
- Repeat offenses
- Program outcomes

The project is designed to be a three-year research and demonstration program and will follow the students in grades six, seven and eight for three years. Semi-annual reports will be provided to the Board.

The State Attorney is committing \$111,967 to the project and is requesting \$164,578 from the Juvenile Welfare Board for FY 99-00. JWB funds would be used to pay for the salary and fringe of two attorneys and for a program coordinator. The State Attorney's Office will supply all necessary office space, equipment and supplies for the new unit in addition to the salary and fringe of the senior lead attorney.