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## Florida's Redirection Initiative: Using Evidence-Based Practices to Improve Juvenile Outcomes and Save Taxpayers Money

States spend an average of \$7.1 million a day keeping youth in residential facilities, according to estimates from a 2009 Justice Policy Institute study. These facilities are often expensive and vary greatly in quality, rehabilitative methodology and service provision. In many states, reliance on residential treatment facilities and other out of home placements have impacted juvenile justice agencies ability to support or enhance other community based alternatives.

Florida Redirection is an initiative under the [Florida Department of Juvenile Justice](#) (DJJ) which seeks to divert offenders from residential confinement to a select group of evidence-based community alternatives. Relying on three evidence-based treatment modalities, Florida Redirection has not only helped produce improved youth outcomes but over the last six years saved Florida taxpayers more than \$124 million dollars.

### Florida Redirection

Throughout the 1990s and early 2000 the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), like its counterparts in many other states, relied heavily on out of home placements for committed youth. These out-of-home placements were not only expensive but did little to impact the youth's ability to change or modify the delinquent behaviors that caused them to become system involved. A [2001 Florida Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability \(OPPAGA\) report](#) found that of the agencies 9,494 new commitments in 2000, 41 percent were for non-law violations of probation or misdemeanors. During that same year the agency set a new high-water mark, with 9,033 youth committed to residential facilities. At a cost of more than \$35,000 dollars per youth it became apparent to many that business as usual was becoming unsustainable.

In an effort to address some of the findings from the OPPAGA report, the state legislature in 2004 allocated funding to support a pilot diversion program. This initiative which would become known as Redirection, focused on working with judges and the DJJ to divert youth from out-of-home placement and into in-home therapeutic alternatives. Contracting with [Evidence Based Associates](#) (EBA), two evidence-based treatment modalities were chosen. Relying on subject matter experts, who focus on carrying out models with fidelity, EBA and DJJ were able to implement Redirection that same year. During the initiative's first full year (FY05-06) they were able to redirect 305 youth from out-of-home placement and into Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). With the average cost of Redirection falling between \$7,000-10,000 and the average out-of-home placement costing \$35,000-40,000 (per youth) the initiative saved more than \$8 million dollars in its first year.

Due in large part to its cost savings and promising early evaluation results, Florida Redirection underwent a rapid expansion in FY07-08. At present, the Redirection initiative has been expanded six times and is available in 18 of the states 20 judicial circuits. In addition to MST and FFT, the 2008 expansion also made available Brief Strategic Family Therapy for youth involved in Redirection. This modality was added to the Redirection project because of its success in engaging the Latino and African-American families of system involved youth. During FY11-12 the initiative was supported with DJJ funds and a \$9 million appropriation from the state legislature. Now that the initiative has gone statewide; Redirection's 21 service provider teams and 60 licensed therapists serve more than 1,000 at-risk youth each year. If not for Redirection, many, if not all of these youth, would have ended up in out-of-home placements or secure confinement.

## Nuts and Bolts

With an average cost that is \$27,000 less than residential treatment, Redirection provides judges and the DJJ with an alternative for at-risk youth that would normally be sent to an out-of-home placement. Most of the youth served by this project have had multiple involvements with the juvenile justice system or have failed to respond to regular DJJ supervision. As an alternative to out-of-home placement, Redirection's therapeutic methodologies are provided to youth and their family in the familiar environment of their own homes. By working with youth and families where they live, Redirection has had the secondary benefit of helping to engage resistant or reluctant families. In addition, therapeutic services are intensive and follow a rigid time frame with a great deal of managerial attention paid to quality assurance and fidelity to the therapeutic models. A brief description of each therapeutic model is provided below:

### Multisystemic Therapy (MST)

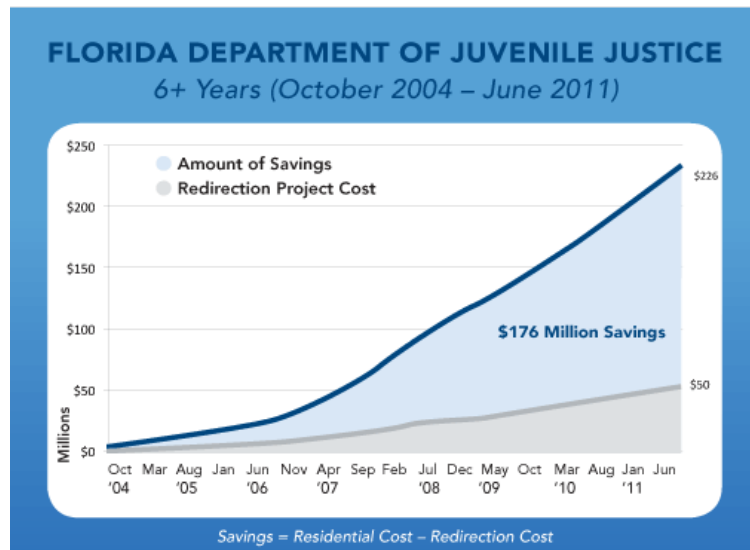
MST is an intensive family and community-based treatment program that focuses on chronically delinquent or violent youth. The modality seeks to address all environmental systems that impact a troubled youth. These systems include: their homes, schools, neighborhoods and peer groups. Designed to work with chronically delinquent and violent youth, MST seeks to make an impact on each of the systems that may support or put a youth at higher risk of delinquent behavior. MST is designed for high-risk youth 12 through 17.

### Functional Family Therapy (FFT)

FFT is a short-term, high intensity therapeutic intervention program designed to work with at-risk youth and their families. With an average of 12 sessions (in home or at a clinic) spread out over a 3-4 month period, FFT uses a strength-based treatment modality to promote protective factors and address intra and extra-familial factors. Working with the youth and their families to reduce risk factors associated with delinquent behaviors, FFT also helps empower those involved to look at how their actions impact themselves and those around them.

### Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT)

BSFT is a family-based intervention designed to prevent and treat child and adolescent behavior problems. BSFT seeks to address delinquent behavior by exploring the family interactions that are directly related to the youth's symptoms. By exploring these interactions, BSFT works to address risk factors and strengthen protective factors that are associated with positive youth outcomes. BSFT is a short-term, problem-oriented intervention where typical sessions are held with the adolescent and one or more additional family members. The average length of treatment is 12 to 16 sessions over a 3 to 4-month period. For more severe cases, such as substance-abusing adolescents, the average number of sessions and length of treatment may be doubled. Treatment can take place in the office, home, or community settings.

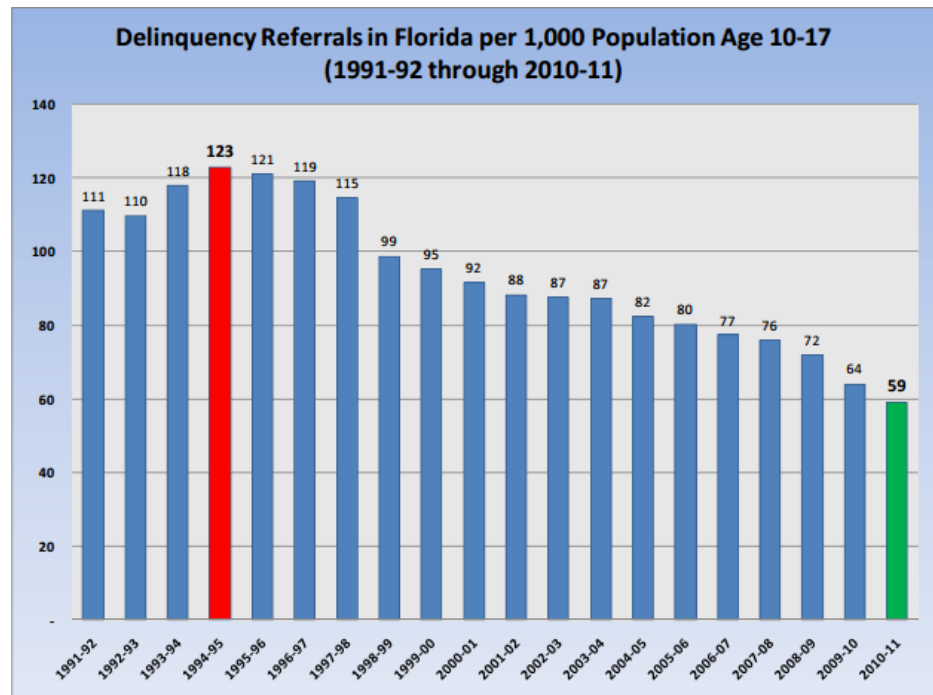


## Success

Over the last seven years Florida Redirection has gone from a small pilot program that served 154 youth in its first year to a statewide initiative that serves more than 1,000 youth per year. As part of Redirection's expansion, DJJ contracted with [Justice Research Center](#) to conduct regular outcome assessments and evaluations of the initiative. Florida Redirection has also been monitored and assessed by the Florida Office of Program Policy and Governmental Accountability. These assessments and evaluations have shown that not only does Redirection save the state considerable money, but produces improved outcomes over DJJ's traditional residential placement. According to JRC's most recent [evaluation](#), Florida Redirection:

- Avoided \$30 million in residential commitment costs in FY 10–11
- Saved Florida taxpayers more than \$124 million dollars over the last 5 years
- Lowered the rate of felony reconviction by 38 percent when compared to a matched sample of residential youth
- Lowered the rate of subsequent commitment to DJJ, adult probation and adult prison by 33 percent when compared to a matched sample of residential youth
- Lowered juvenile recidivism rates, felony re–arrest rates and misdemeanor re–arrest rates

These successes have resulted in both the pilot and expanded program receiving numerous accolades from both inside the state and from national level organizations. In 2007, Redirection won the Prudential–Davis Productivity Award for innovations in case processing, which was credited with creating \$10.2 million in cost savings. In addition, Redirection has also received national attention from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) which honored the initiative with a 2008 Science and Service Award for the successful adoption and implementation of an evidence–based program.



## Moving Forward

Building on the success of the statewide expansion, the Florida legislature has allocated an additional \$6 million to DJJ for Redirection. This money will be used to expand the number of service providers, expand the number of youth served and ensure fidelity to the three selected evidence–based programs: Multisystemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Brief Strategic Family Therapy. In addition, DJJ plans to use Redirection as an aftercare service for youth returning from residential facilities. DJJ hopes that this investment of resources will help youth with their transition back into community and back into their family structure. Overall DJJ sees redirection as part of a new paradigm within the state’s juvenile justice system. Along with programs like Redirection, initiatives like the statewide implementation of civil citations for many first time misdemeanor offenses have helped not only keep youth out of the system but helped prevent them from further penetrating state and local systems. By working with youth and families in their communities, DJJ hopes to address some of the underlying social and emotional factors that contribute to juvenile delinquency and repeated interactions with the justice system.

“The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice is committed to becoming the state’s expert in engaging with Florida’s families in order to best achieve positive outcomes for our young people. Therefore, best practices for family engagement, including Florida’s Redirection program for at–risk youth, are critical to overcoming the traumatic issues that often times lead to a young person’s risk factors.” – Secretary Wansley Walters, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

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