



## Safer Streets in Florida:

### Proven interventions are saving money and cutting crime

Florida law enforcement leaders are convinced by the research and our own experiences that change in juvenile justice is necessary. It is time to stop arresting the same kids over and over again. The most important message of this brief is probably the simplest: when deciding how to invest wisely in stopping juvenile crime, use science, data collection, and accountability to guide policy. Florida has shown it can do this with its successful *Redirect* program that has already cut crime and saved the state \$5.8 million. Investing more in what really works will produce both huge savings and safer streets.

#### A dangerous path

Too many Florida juveniles are becoming chronic and/or violent adult criminals. In 2005, there were over 125,000 violent crimes committed by adults in Florida.<sup>1</sup> Fortunately, most juveniles who come before a court for a crime never come back again. However, one study of Florida juvenile delinquents who were placed in state custody found disturbing results: sixty percent of juveniles released from state incarceration in 2001-2002 were rearrested within one year.<sup>2</sup> Nothing makes juvenile crime disappear, but research from around the country, and now Florida's own data and analysis, show that for many troubled youth the risk of committing future crimes can be cut in half if they receive effective interventions.

#### ***Redirection* successfully teaches families to control their delinquent children**

Families play an influential role in their children's aggression, substance abuse, or other criminal behaviors. That influence can be either positive or negative. Many parents – who may have made many unwise decisions themselves – do not want their children to make the same mistakes repeatedly. These parents may be poorly trained, however, in how to keep their children off the streets, out of fights, and away from drugs – especially if they live in dangerous neighborhoods.

***“Redirection avoided \$5.8 million in state costs in its first two years of operation.”***

Florida's Office of Program Policy  
Analysis & Government Accountability

Florida has successfully implemented the *Redirection* effort that uses two proven family therapy interventions in place of custody in a youth facility for some troubled youth.

Effective family therapy typically begins by convincing families that change is possible. It usually involves teaching family members how to stop arguing with each other. Parents are then taught how to keep better track of their child's behavior, how to set clear limits, and how to reinforce positive behaviors. A child who has repeatedly behaved well will be rewarded with the opportunity to spend more unsupervised time with positive friends, for example.

Once parents have been given the right tools, the professionals help them practice until they are getting results on their own and their children are no longer out of control and getting into trouble. Extended family members, teachers, positive peers, and service providers may also be brought into the process. They increase the quantity and quality of positive influences in troubled teens' lives, and help strengthen the parents' ability to manage their children's behaviors. Together, this extended network helps connect the juveniles to positive environments that keep them away from drugs and crime.

The two family therapies, Functional Family Therapy (FFT) and Multisystemic Therapy (MST), have been repeatedly evaluated using randomized control trials. The body of research shows that—when properly implemented – quality family therapy interventions can reduce substance abuse and repeat crimes. FFT cut re-arrests in half in one study (26 percent vs. 50 percent) and out-of-home placements by three quarters in another study (18 percent vs. 72 percent).<sup>3</sup> One MST study followed juvenile delinquents until they were 29 years old. Individuals who had *not* received MST were 62 percent more likely to have been arrested for any offense (81 percent vs. 50 percent), and more than twice as likely to have been arrested for a violent offense (30 percent vs. 14 percent).<sup>4</sup>

## Results in Florida

By December 31, 2006, Florida’s *Redirection* program had served a total of 405 youths who were redirected from custody in a youth facility to either FFT or MST programs. In all cases, FFT or MST produced rearrest results that were at least as low as the results achieved by the more expensive option of placing similar youths in custody. Criminal arrests of youths finishing the FFT program in Broward County were cut by 45 percent compared to similar youths completing custody; and in Escambia County, their MST program cut arrests by 48 percent. Escambia also found that kids finishing MST were 64 percent less likely to be arrested for a felony. Efforts are underway to address identified areas for improvement in the programs serving other counties. For example, the therapists not following the model in Miami are gone, having been replaced by qualified personnel who will adhere to the treatment model.<sup>5</sup>

## Save Money by Cutting Crime

Prior analysis from Washington State shows that MST and FFT can reduce future crime so much they can save an average of \$18,000 to \$32,000 per delinquent.

When Florida’s Office of Program Policy Analysis &

Government Accountability reviewed the outcomes of the *Redirection* program they found that *Redirection* was already saving Florida taxpayers \$5.8 million in lower custody costs.<sup>9</sup> Once all the *Redirection* programs are performing as designed and the savings from reduced crime are also incorporated into the analysis, Florida taxpayers will have even more to celebrate.

What reduces crime saves money <sup>6</sup>	Savings and costs per participant				
	Costs avoided by crime victims <sup>7</sup>	Savings to taxpayers from crime reduction only <sup>8</sup>	Program Costs	Net savings to taxpayers	Net savings to taxpayers and victims
Functional Family Therapy (FFT)	\$19,529	\$14,617	\$2,325	\$12,292	\$31,821
Multi-Systemic Therapy (MST)	\$12,855	\$9,622	\$4,264	\$5,358	\$18,213

Source: Washington State Institute for Public Policy 10/06

*FIGHT CRIME: INVEST IN KIDS is an anti-crime organization of more than 3,500 police chiefs, sheriffs, prosecutors, state attorneys general, other law enforcement leaders and violence survivors nationwide, including 73 in Florida. Our members believe the best way to prevent crime is to give kids the right start in life.*

<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation, (2007). *Crime in the United States 2005*. Retrieved from the internet at [http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table\\_05.html](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/05cius/data/table_05.html)

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. (April, 2005). *Juvenile Recidivism in Virginia*. Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice. 3, 1-11

<sup>3</sup> Alexander, J., Pugh, C., Parsons, B., & Sexton, T. (2000). Family Functional Therapy. In D.S. Elliot (Series Ed.), *Blueprints for violence prevention: Book three*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.

<sup>4</sup> Schaeffer, C.M., & Borduin, C.M. (2005). Long-term follow-up to a randomized clinical trial of Multisystemic Therapy with serious and violent juvenile offenders. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 73*(3), 445-453

<sup>5</sup> Florida’s Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability. (February 2007). *Redirection pilots meet and exceed residential commitment outcomes: \$5.8 million saved. 07-10 1-11*.

<sup>6</sup> Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (October 2006). *Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs, and crime rates*. Olympia, WA. Washington State Institute for Public Policy retrieved from [www.wsipp.wa.gov](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov)

<sup>7</sup> This includes tangible losses due to medical costs, lost earnings etc. but also pain, suffering and reduced quality of life estimates for different crimes developed by Miller et al. for the National Institute of Justice. The intangible costs are based on jury verdicts and other measures. This attempts to take account of the reality that a rape usually causes more suffering to an individual than a burglary or robbery, even though the tangible costs may be similar. See: Miller, T.R., Cohen, M.A., & Wiersma, B. (February 1996). *Victim costs and consequences: A new look*. Washington, D.C., National Institute of Justice.

<sup>8</sup> This is based on police, court, and jail or prison costs in Washington State. Aos, S., Miller, M., & Drake, E. (October 2006). *Evidence-based public policy options to reduce future prison construction, criminal justice costs, and crime rates*. Olympia, WA. Washington State Institute for Public Policy retrieved from [www.wsipp.wa.gov](http://www.wsipp.wa.gov)

<sup>9</sup> Florida’s Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability. (February 2007). *Redirection pilots meet and exceed residential commitment outcomes: \$5.8 million saved. 07-10 1-11*.