

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Criminal Justice Committee

BILL: SB 2128

INTRODUCER: Senator Crist

SUBJECT: Juvenile Justice

DATE: March 13, 2009

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Dugger	Cannon	CJ	Favorable
2.			CF	
3.			JA	
4.				
5.				
6.				

I. Summary:

Senate Bill 2128 makes changes to the juvenile justice chapter, along with conforming changes to a few other relevant statutes such as the “Children and Families in Need of Services” (CINS/FINS) statute and the “Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Act” in an effort to enhance services for youth in the juvenile justice system. Specifically, the bill:

- Encourages the diversion of youth 9 years of age or younger who are found by a court to pose no danger to the community and are unlikely to recidivate;
- Provides changes to the “child in need of services” definition to allow these youth to be served by the CINS/FINS network;
- Promotes the use of restorative justice practices to support victims of juvenile delinquency;
- Supports local community organizations that are aimed at reducing juvenile delinquency in the geographical areas that generate the most referrals, which may help reduce over-representation of particular groups within the juvenile justice system;
- Adds counties, municipalities and the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) to the specified entities that are encouraged to create pre-arrest or post-arrest diversion programs for youth 9 years of age or younger and youth who are first time misdemeanants;

- Requires the DJJ to validate the detention risk assessment instrument and adds two child advocates to the detention risk assessment instrument committee; and
- Expands the number of additional members that may be added to a juvenile justice circuit board from 3 to 5 to adequately reflect the community diversity on the board.

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 394.492, 984.03, 985.02, 985.03, 985.125, 985.245, and 985.664.

II. Present Situation:

Section 394.492(4), F.S., defines a “child or adolescent at risk of emotional disturbance” as a person under 18 years of age who has an increased likelihood of becoming emotionally disturbed because of certain specified risk factors. Currently, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCF) uses this definition to determine which youth to serve through the Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Act.

Sections 984.03(9), F.S., and 985.03(7), F.S., define “children in need of services,” as a youth who persistently runs away, persistently disobeys his or her parents, or is habitually truant. The definition excludes a youth who has an active referral to the DJJ for a delinquent act from being served by the CINS/FINS network, resulting in the CINS/FINS shelters being unavailable to this youth. These shelters provide short-term services such as crisis intervention, case management, counseling, clothing, food, and shelter on a 24-hour basis. (In FY 07-08, according to the DJJ, there were 578 individual youth, ages nine and younger, that generated 696 referrals to the department.)

Section 985.125, F.S., allows a law enforcement agency or a school district, in cooperation with the state attorney, to create a prearrest or postarrest diversion program. Diversion is a process designed to keep a youth from entering the juvenile justice system through the legal process. Diversion programs include community arbitration, Juvenile Alternative Services Program (JASP), teen court, civil citation, boy scouts and girl scouts, boys and girls clubs, mentoring programs, and alternative schools.

Minority over-representation exists when the number of youth detained or confined in secure detention facilities, secure correctional facilities, or jails who are members of minority groups exceeds the proportion such groups represent in the general population. According to the Juvenile Justice Blueprint Commission, “the disproportionate representation of minorities exists for both males and females in Florida’s juvenile justice system....at every point in the juvenile justice system.”¹ Continuing, “in nine of the 20 circuits, more than 40% of the youth referred...are black. In seven circuits, more than 60% of youth are black.”²

According to the DJJ, it is implementing a coordinated Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) strategy through the creation of a DMC Task Force, which will work toward ensuring equal and fair treatment for every youth, regardless of their racial or ethnic background. The DMC Task Force consists of a volunteer group of juvenile justice stakeholders that will assist the

¹ Report of the Blueprint Commission, “*Getting Smart About Juvenile Justice in Florida*,” p. 46 (2008).

² Id.

department in bringing awareness and solutions to the issue of minority overrepresentation in the juvenile justice system.

Section 985.245, F.S., requires a detention risk assessment instrument to be developed by the DJJ in agreement with representatives of various associations, including the state attorneys, public defenders, sheriffs, police chiefs, and circuit judges. All determinations and court orders regarding detention placements must be based on a risk assessment of the youth, except in the case of a youth charged with domestic violence. According to the DJJ, the current risk assessment instrument has been used since 1992, and it is in the process of being validated.

Section 985.664, F.S., authorizes the creation of a juvenile justice circuit board in each of the 20 judicial circuits and a juvenile justice county council in each of the 67 counties. Each county council appoints representatives to serve on the circuit board. The county councils and circuit boards serve as advisors to the DJJ. Currently, the number of additional members that may be added to a juvenile justice circuit board to adequately reflect community diversity is three.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Senate Bill 2128 makes changes to the juvenile justice chapter, along with conforming changes to a few other relevant statutes such as the “Children and Families in Need of Services” (CINS/FINS) statute and the “Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Act” in an effort to enhance services for youth in the juvenile justice system. What follows is a more specific description of these changes.

Section 1.

The bill amends the definition of “child or adolescent at risk of emotional disturbance” in s. 394.492, F.S., the Comprehensive Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services Act, to include the additional risk factor of “being 9 years of age or younger at the time of referral for a delinquent act.” This change will allow those youth who qualify to receive treatment services through the community based care network.

Section 2.

The bill amends the definition of “child in need of services” in the CINS/FINS statute, s. 984.03(9), F.S., to include youth who are 9 years of age or younger who have a delinquency referral. As a result, these youth will be able to receive CINS/FINS services even though an active referral to the DJJ exists.

Section 3.

The bill creates three new subsections under s. 985.02, F.S., providing legislative intent language for the juvenile justice system. The newly created subsection (9) provides a finding that very young children need age-appropriate services to prevent future delinquent acts. It specifically encourages the diversion of youth 9 years of age or younger who are found by the court to pose no danger to the community and are unlikely to recidivate. It also requires the DJJ to cooperate with the DCF in providing the most appropriate mental health and substance abuse services to these youth. (According to the DJJ, it has been communicating with the DCF regularly about these youth who are served by both agencies. An analysis by the DJJ shows that the DCF had

contact with approximately 30 percent of the youth age 9 and younger who were referred to DJJ for a delinquent act.)

The new subsection (10) creates legislative intent language on restorative justice, emphasizing the importance of focusing on repairing the damage done to the victim by the delinquent youth, making the youth realize the harm he or she caused, and restoring the victim's loss.

The new subsection (11) creates legislative intent language to ensure the juvenile justice system does not over-represent any particular group of youth throughout the continuum of care. (Disproportionate minority contact exists when the number of youth detained or confined in secure detention facilities, secure correctional facilities, or jails who are members of minority groups exceeds the proportion such groups represent in the general population.)

Section 4.

The bill amends the definition of "child in need of services" in the delinquency statute, s. 985.03(7), F.S., just as it does in the CINS/FINS statute, s. 984.03(9), F.S. (See Section 2. above.)

Section 5.

The bill adds counties, municipalities, and the DJJ as qualified entities that may establish prearrest and postarrest diversion programs by amending s. 985.125, F.S. It also encourages the use of prearrest and postarrest diversion programs for first-time misdemeanants and youth who are 9 years of age or younger.

Section 6.

The bill amends s. 985.245, F.S., providing for a Detention Risk Assessment Instrument. It requires the DJJ to have the risk assessment instrument independently validated as well as evaluated to determine if the instrument contributes to disproportionate minority contact. Under the bill, every 7 years the DJJ must review the population, policies, and procedures affecting the use of detention. Additionally, the bill revises the reviewing committee to include 2 new representatives from child advocacy organizations appointed by the DJJ Secretary.

Section 7.

The bill amends s. 985.664, F.S., providing for juvenile justice circuit boards and juvenile justice county councils. It expands the number of additional members that may be added to the juvenile justice circuit boards from 3 to 5 to adequately reflect the community diversity on the boards.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

According to the DJJ, the bill will have no fiscal impact to the department.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

The bill contains many of the recommendations made by the Juvenile Justice Blueprint Commission in 2008.

VIII. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

None.

B. Amendments:

None.