



CIVIL CITATION NETWORK

Making a Positive Change in the Right Direction

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Smart Justice for Drug, Alcohol and Other Non-Violent Misdemeanors

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Adult Civil Citation Program Executive Summary

The U.S. prison system is now the largest in the world costing taxpayers over \$32 billion annually. In Florida, taxpayers spend over \$2.3 billion a year to supervise and incarcerate offenders. Over the past several years legislators, business leaders and others have been discussing smart justice alternatives – ways to ensure public safety by intervening earlier with measured responses that correlate with the criminal activity. The concept of adult civil citation meets these criteria and should be considered as a smart justice alternative.

An alternative for the adult criminal justice system can be found in the Florida Juvenile Justice System's remarkable success over the past two years expanding Civil Citation Models. An outgrowth of this success is the development of a Statewide network of not-for-profit community-based licensed and accredited behavioral health agencies, each with 20+ years of experience that have come together to form an adult civil citation initiative targeting adults who commit a misdemeanor alcohol, drug or other non-violent misdemeanor offence to receive sanctions through an Adult Civil Citation Program in lieu of criminal arrest.

Moving this population from the current arrest model to an alternative sanctions model involving intensive intervention strategies targeting specific offences and behaviors could be the single most significant change in the criminal justice system in 30 years. A priority population will be first time drug or alcohol related offenders since most national studies indicate the preponderance of crime is related to factors tied to alcohol and drug use.

The same core principles and intervention strategies used successfully by the juvenile justice system will be modified and implemented for adults. These fundamental principles and strategies are outlined in a document developed in conjunction with the Miami-Dade County Juvenile Services Department, Tallahassee DISC Village Civil Citation Program and Associated Industries of Florida Foundation entitled, "*Getting Smart on Juvenile Crime in Florida: Reducing Juvenile arrests by 40%.*"ⁱ

The elements of an Adult Civil Citation include:

- The entire cost of the program is borne by the offender.
- Based on the offence and the circumstances surrounding the alleged violation, the law enforcement officer, at their discretion, may offer a Civil Citation in lieu of arrest.
- Law enforcement can maximize patrol officer time.
- The burden is reduced at all levels of the criminal justice system.
- Early intervention is highly effective at treating issues identified early and more cost effectively.
- An unnecessary criminal record and the related collateral damage can be eliminated to improve prospects of becoming a productive member of society.

With successful completion of a comprehensive assessment, followed by individualized and intensive education, or substance abuse, mental health, or other identified intervention including community service hours, a criminal record can be avoided. Avoidance of a criminal record is an important benefit, since an arrest record follows an individual and hinders them from employment, education, and military service opportunities for the remainder of their lives. Failure to successfully complete these requirements or a subsequent offense while participating in the alternative sanction program will result in the individual's immediate arrest and criminal prosecution.

An important element for building credibility of this model is the Eligibility Verification System (EVS); a comprehensive data collection, analysis, and evaluation system for all participating agencies. This statewide data system, www.civilcitationnetwork.com/evs, provides all participating law enforcement agencies real time information regarding an individual's eligibility to participate in the Adult Civil Citation program. This system provides a single uniform data and reporting system which tracks all key data sets including demographic, programmatic, and comparative and outcome information. The proposed statewide data system will ensure transparency and accountability.

The primary goals of a Civil Citation program are to intervene and provide the services, assistance and tools needed to extinguish criminal behavior and reduce the barriers that inhibit an individual's ability to function as a responsible and contributing member of society.

Integrated into this program are evidence and web-based intervention and educational strategies that target very specific behaviors and criminal offenses. These targeted, evidence-based strategies are developed by and The Change Companies®, an innovative leader in the clinical field, delivering eLearning resources that harness evidence-based practices with adult learning principles. These eLearning resources are part of the intervention requirements identified during the program’s assessment phase. A few intervention examples include ReTHINK Now: Responsible Choices, Chemical Education, Anger Management, and interventions that address Retail Theft, and workforce development skills. Additionally, the Adult Civil Citation program will include local capacity in each jurisdiction to track, monitor and evaluate offender compliance with program requirements as well as their individual outcomes. A quarterly report will be generated and made available to all the key stakeholders of the criminal justice system in each participating jurisdiction to assist their efforts to ensure the program is enhancing public safety and meeting its stated goals and objectives.

A unique feature of this model is that each jurisdiction can define the eligibility requirements for the program in their area. All referrals are based solely on the discretion of law enforcement and based upon the protocols established in each community by the local criminal justice professionals.

Implementing a Civil Citation program for adults and allowing for alternative sanctions will place the focus on improving outcomes of the individuals who interact with the system – injecting appropriate, research-proven methods that shift the focus from solely retribution to “correction” when public safety will actually improve and cost-savings will be realized. It is now time to apply this effective model to first time adult offenders with drug or alcohol or other non-violent misdemeanors. Reliance on non-incarceration intervention is both more effective and more cost-efficient than traditionally invasive methods and will allow Florida to redirect valuable resources from prosecuting non-violent misdemeanors to more vital and pressing public safety concerns.

ⁱ This document can be found on the Florida Juvenile Justice Association web site: www.fjja.com