



All About Florida

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Legislative action needed to end unfair billing by DJJ

Policy Objective: Legislation is needed that ends DJJ's deceptive billing practices, creates a financial review team, sets predictable billing rates and allows counties the opportunity to invest in better and more efficient housing options.

Key Points:

- Juvenile detention is a \$95 million unfunded mandate to counties.
- Florida statutes state that juvenile detention is a **joint obligation** between the state and the counties yet counties are paying \$95 million a year and the state is paying \$22 million a year on average.
- In fiscal year 2007-08 the Department of Juvenile Justice estimated counties share to be \$176 per day. However, the actual cost was \$237 per day. The same year DJJ estimated their costs to be \$221 per day but it turned out to be only \$143 per day.
- The "per diem" rate has been raised by DJJ in the middle of a fiscal year, resulting in increased costs to counties without any basis in the law, and without an increase in the state's share.
- In 2008-09, the counties cost per day increased to \$280 and DJJ's cost fell to \$138. Essentially, counties subsidized the state's share of detention by \$17.4 million last year.
- This billing practice creates instability in the county budgetary process. Counties cannot budget for a constantly changing expenditure.
- Florida should establish a **continuum of care** for at-risk youth. This continuum begins with prevention and early intervention, but communities need **local options** for judges that are **cost efficient** and more effective than secure detention.
- Florida uses secure detention as the primary method of supervising children before trial. Research demonstrates that secure detention is harmful to children, and on any given day in Florida, there are approximately 1,300 youth in detention facilities.
- Many counties already have alternatives in existence, like the civil citation program and pretrial diversion...and would expand on these community alternatives **if** the amount of money counties contribute to secure detention was reduced.

80
YEARS
1929-2009