

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

January 2016

THE FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE PARTNERS WITH FSU AND THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PALM BEACH COUNTY: LAUNCHES NEW STUDY INTO JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

~ The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice partners with FSU's College of Criminology and Criminal Justice and the School District of Palm Beach County to study the effects of a school-based intervention program~

PALM BEACH COUNTY, Fla. — In recent years, school districts across the nation have been under increasing pressure to ensure the safety of their students and protect their students' right to learn and excel in a comfortable environment. In an effort to combat threats to these fundamental principles, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice has teamed up with the Florida State University (FSU) College of Criminology and Criminal Justice, as well as the School District of Palm Beach County to expand upon a pilot study on a school-based delinquency intervention program. The intervention program aims to increase school safety while reducing delinquency referrals and improving student outcomes.

“The program is based on the idea that schools can serve as a hub for collaboration between the many agencies that serve at-risk youth,” said FSU Associate Professor and Principal Investigator Dr. Sonja Siennick. “By intervening early with these youth, we may be able to improve both their outcomes and school-wide outcomes, without resorting to removing them from mainstream school settings.”

The intervention, which includes comprehensive youth needs assessments and wraparound services, will be evaluated using an experimental design in which youth will be randomly assigned to either a treatment or a control group. It will focus on first-time youth offenders, youth on probation, and youth who are targeted for diversion from the juvenile court. The overall aim of the study is to not only reduce delinquent behaviors, but also improve attendance, grades, and suspension and expulsion rates among these students.

Through their solicitation for “Developing Knowledge About What Makes Schools Safe,” the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) is funding the three-year project. For this initiative, aimed at building knowledge for increasing school safety, the NIJ received more than 100 applications from school districts and their research

partners, giving out only 15 awards to the most relevant and rigorous studies. One of the largest of the 15 projects chosen was the School District of Palm Beach County and FSU project, which received a \$3,909,116 award.

The project, which will assess how well the intervention program is implemented as well as document barriers and facilitators to effective implementation, will continue in several Palm Beach County high schools until December 2017.

###