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**CITIZENS' CRIME  
COMMISSION**

**AN OVERVIEW**

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U.S. Department of Justice  
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## CHAPTER ONE

### HISTORY OF THE CITIZENS' CRIME COMMISSION

The Citizens' Crime Commission Court Program, Inc. is a citizens crime fighting organization, founded in 1948 by a small group of civic leaders who had become aroused over an invasion of gangsters into Dade County, and their infiltration into legitimate business. The original leadership included the publishers of both the Miami Herald and the Miami News, the president of Florida Power and Light Company and the president of a local major department store.

The Commission is a non-political, non-partisan citizens' organization. It represents the community's interest in law enforcement and it is supported by the voluntary contributions of business firms, civic clubs and civic-minded citizens. Its objectives are to increase public respect for the law, to bring about better law enforcement and improved administration of justice, and to generally improve the quality of life in Dade County.

Policy of the Commission is set by a Board of Directors of 36 outstanding men and women, who contribute their time, efforts and finances to fighting crime. Officers, directors and employees of the Commission are prohibited from holding elective public office while serving with the Commission.

The Citizens' Crime Commission Court Program, Inc. has established an outstanding national reputation for its effectiveness in generating citizen concern and action in crime prevention. It originally proposed formation, and was the founding member, of the National Association of Citizens' Crime Commissions.

Over the more than thirty (30) years of its existence, the Commission has conducted investigations, surveys, experiments and research on practically all phases of crime and law enforcement. In recent years, the Commission has concentrated upon the Criminal Justice System, beginning with the personnel, capacities and operations of the police, followed by the needs and weaknesses of the prosecutors, courts, probation, parole, corrections and rehabilitation. Citizen involvement and education are primary concerns of the Citizens Crime Commission.

Several programs presently being funded by the Citizens' Crime Commission include the Court Program, the Juvenile: Street Law Alternative Program. Important elements of each of these programs are the citizens of Dade County who are willing to give of themselves and volunteer their time to assist the Criminal Justice System.

## HISTORY OF THE COURT PROGRAM

The Crime Commission in 1968 established a Women's Division of the Crime Commission to solicit volunteers from the community to participate in crime fighting programs. One of these programs was the "Court Watchers". The Women's Division itself later merged with the Crime Commission for closer cooperation and cohesiveness.

The first stages of setting up the program were difficult. There were four judges, one of whom refused to let us observe. We found the courtrooms noisy and, in addition, many judges and attorneys mumbled, often making it impossible to hear from behind the Bench. Lay women found it most confusing.

"What were we looking for?", was the perpetual question. "Trends and patterns" was our vague and evasive answer. But it was not long until we were beginning to grasp the enormous problems of the courtroom. Our first efforts focused on the incredible number of continuances which led to postponement of cases for months or years and resulted in witnesses moving, dying or just unable to remember the facts of the case after so long a period.

After six months of observing, we found we could serve the Court in an additional capacity. We were asked to relieve the overloaded Probation Officer of some of his duties by assuming his courtroom responsibilities, thus freeing him to spend more time in the field with probationers. This also moved us to the Probation desk in front of the Bench and, at last, we could hear and understand the proceedings.

The summer of 1969 found our women ready for vacations. We encouraged our volunteers to bring their teenage sons and daughters to fill the gap. The result of this successful endeavor lead to an expanded program each summer and ultimately to our Student Program for credit.

In 1971 the speedy trial rule went into effect, resulting in hundreds of cases being dismissed. We were forced to abandon our initial policy of working only within the system to improve it in favor of reporting to the public via the media. This action resulted in more judges and heavier schedules by all personnel until the problem was corrected.

Our goals were clarified: To inform and educate the public and to improve the Criminal Justice System through our actions as well as our words.

## WHAT THE COURT PROGRAM HAS DONE

What can we say has been accomplished over the 18 years of having Citizens' Crime Commission volunteers in the courtroom?

At first we would see much confusion over the identity of a defendant because of common names or aliases, so we backed a suggestion that the Date of Birth, Race and Sex be placed on the calendar to distinguish the defendant from all others with the same name. Also, the Speedy Trial Expiration Date was not publicly known and this therefore allowed many cases to be inadvertently dismissed because of lapse of the Speedy Trial Time. Therefore, our volunteers suggested that the Speedy Trial Date be placed on the calendar so all parties judges, State Attorneys and Defense Attorneys would be aware of the time elapsing. Both these suggestions were implemented and are now done as a matter of course.

Ever since the volunteers began in court we have been aides to the Probation Department. The volunteer fills out a form when a defendant is placed on probation and in the past escorted him/her to the Probation Office, thereby replacing an officer in court and freeing him to work in the field. Today the volunteer fills out the Probation form, and the Probationer is then directed to the State Building-Intake Dept. of Parole and Probation.

Through our observations it was noted over and over that a defendant already on probation and re-arrested, was bonded out of jail before his Probation Officer was notified of his re-arrest. We worked diligently with the Parole and Probation Commission for passage of a State Law holding a defendant in jail until his Probation Officer is notified and a hearing is set.

One of the studies we made in court noted a rather large amount of cases being dismissed due to the "Information" not being filed. We presented the lengthy list to the State Attorney who took immediate action, consequently the "no information" have been reduced.

The excellent program of students volunteering in court during the summer led to the Dade County School Board establishing a high school credit program whereby 11th and 12th grade students come to the Metro Justice Building to take a law education course called the Court Observer Program. The students attend court sessions, learn about the criminal justice system and receive Social Studies elective credit. The School Board provides a teacher on special assignment for this purpose and this program is indeed unique in this country. This led to agreements with the Miami-Dade Community College and Florida International University for students to receive college credit for their participation in the Court Program.

We have continually served as a catalyst to bring the various offices of the court together to solve problems and improve lines of communication. We feel we might have had some influence in having additional judges assigned to the Criminal Court. Also, through our documented reporting of too many Police Officers absent from court, we feel we were instrumental in the establishment of the Police Liaison in the Metro Justice Building for both the Metro-Dade and the City of Miami Police Departments.

Observations by our volunteers over a long period of time disclosed serious witness failures on the part of both police and civilians.

An application was filed by the Crime Commission with the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration in July 1974, for funds to make a serious study of the Witness-Victim problem. The Commission was selected as one out of fourteen award winners among thousands of applications filed in a national competition to receive a grant, entitled "The Crime Commission of Greater Miami-Providing Justice for Victims and Witnesses", which includes the computerization of witness subpoenas.

Meanwhile, a special study of witness failures was conducted by our Volunteers over a period of months. During this study, over 900 State Witnesses were contacted by telephone and instructed to appear or not to appear in Criminal Court. The investigation disclosed a great communication void between the courts and victims and witnesses, which resulted in an excessive amount of witness failures, speedy trial violations, and numerous unnecessary dismissals and Nolle Prosses of cases, resulting from various weaknesses in the witness system.

The Court Program was instrumental in demonstrating the need for and collecting additional witness information for the State Attorney's Office. The witness calling done by volunteers saves the county money and the witness is kept informed of the status of the case in which he/she is involved. The witness pamphlet designed by this office is presently being distributed to witnesses and victims by the State Attorney's Office. This gives the witness/victim better insight into the workings of the Criminal Justice System.

In June, 1979, the Court Program was appointed by the Southeast Florida Institute of Criminal Justice to conduct court related training sessions for the police trainees attending the Institute.

Research reports are written by the volunteers and are distributed to the community to keep citizens informed about current issues in the Criminal Justice System.

The Court Program volunteers assist PBA and MADD and other concerned citizens by tracking cases through the court system. This assists the individuals with their understanding of a process that is often times foreign. The individual is informed of the status of the case as the case comes up in court. Unnecessary appearances can be prevented and questions are answered regarding proceedings, terminology and dispositions.

In May 1985, the Citizens' Crime Commission Court Program released a 403 page report entitled "MENTALLY ILL CRIMINALS IN DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA: A REPORT ON THE PROBLEM AND HOW TO DEAL WITH IT". The report detailed lack of facilities and poor coordination within the criminal justice system that have led to an arrest-release-arrest for the approx 5,000 Dade offenders who are mentally ill. On March 6, 7 & 8, 1986, the Citizens' Crime Commission Court Program with the help of Florida International University and Dade-Miami Criminal Justice Council sponsored a Problem-Solving Workshop entitled "MANAGING MENTALLY ILL OFFENDERS IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM".

The Court Program is sponsoring a pre-trial Diversion Program called the Juvenile: Street Law Alternative Program in which its first class began in April 1986. The Street Law Program is a 12-week Course which is designed to assist juveniles who have become involved with the court committing non-serious crimes. This program educated juveniles about laws which effect them, and about their rights and responsibilities under our legal system. By diverting youth from the Juvenile Court and by exposing them to the positive aspects of law and education, the Street Law Program hopes to eliminate any further contact between the child and the Juvenile Justice System.

## CHAPTER--TWO

### PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The structure of the Citizens' Crime Commission Court Program has changed. On September 15, 1975, the Crime Commission in conjunction with Metropolitan Dade County Public Safety Department was awarded a Law Enforcement Assistant Administration Grant totaling over \$170,000. A portion of the grant was provided for the computerization of prosecution witness information and police scheduling information. This was done so that the prosecutors and police agencies would have instantaneous access to witness information, such as witnesses home addresses, their home telephone numbers, their places of work, and so on. In 1981, the State Attorney's Office decided to implement their own Witness Control Center with paid staff responsible for contacting all state witnesses on felony cases.

In 1968, the Citizens' Crime Commission of Greater Miami solicited volunteers from the community to participate in crime fighting programs. One of these programs became the Court Watchers Program whose name was changed simply to "Court Program" in 1984. The original Citizens' Crime Commission has been dissolved and replaced by the Court Program.

The Court Program is now funded by the Citizens' Crime Commission, a private non-profit organization of corporate and community leaders. The funding provides for the professional staff who recruit, train, coordinate and assist the volunteers. There are many ways in which volunteers may become involved to aide the criminal justice system. We are also looking into other areas in which our program can get involved.

The Court Program Volunteers monitor cases in court for such groups as Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Advocates for Victims and Parents of Murdered Children, and Battery on a Police Officer, and the Policeman's Benevolent Association.

Also with the permission, and indeed the encouragement of local criminal court judges, volunteers sit in on criminal court proceedings to track the progress and the outcome of certain cases. The professionalism and consistency with which individual volunteers have done their job has bridged the way whereby now Court Program Volunteers are permitted in judges chambers to attend plea bargaining sessions between various officers of the court.

Sometimes a volunteer will have an interest in a special area of the Criminal Justice System. This program has placed volunteers in the Domestic Intervention Program, the Pre-Trial Release Program & others.

Volunteers can also become involved in the Juvenile Justice System by contacting the Program Coordinator of the Citizens' Crime Commission Juvenile: Street Law Program.

Of course, to perform all duties outlined above, a volunteer must be thoroughly trained. In order to accomplish this, the training procedures are as follows:

First, the volunteers complete an orientation session where the Court Program and other volunteer opportunities are thoroughly explained to them. Then the volunteers are given an intensive training program to familiarize them with the structure of the court system, an overview of the Criminal Justice System and given training in reading court calendars and how to fill out the various forms necessary to act as Court Program Volunteers.

All new volunteers are then assigned to various courtrooms as court Program Volunteers in the company of an experienced volunteer. The new volunteers will remain with an experienced volunteer for several weeks. After this time, the new volunteer will be allowed to go to court alone and his/her calendar will be reviewed by the staff. At this point the volunteer may make the decision whether to remain as a Court Program Volunteer or to participate in another one of the volunteer programs.



## CHAPTER THREE

### "THE CHOICE IS OURS"

OUR YOUTH OF TODAY ARE RECEIVING AND SENDING US SOME ALARMING MESSAGES. MESSAGES THAT SHOULD CONCERN US DEEPLY.

YOUTH TODAY ARE GROWING UP IN A SOCIETY THAT TELLS THEM IN SO MANY WORDS THAT ITS BETTER TO "DROP OUT, THAN STUCK IT OUT". THE HIGH SCHOOL DROP OUT RATE COMBINED WITH THE YOUTH GIVE UP RATE, HAS MANIFESTED ITSELF INTO AN ILLITERACY RATE OF EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS.

"WE'RE AT THE CROSSROADS OF AWARENESS", AND THE CHOICE IS OURS. IN ORDER TO MAKE ENDS MEET IN THIS HIGHLY COMPUTERIZED AND TECHNICAL SOCIETY YOU MUST HAVE EITHER A TRAINED MIND OR SKILLED HANDS. IF JOHNNY CAN'T READ HE WON'T SUCCEED. NOR, WILL JOHNNY BE ABLE TO RETAIN PRODUCTIVE PRIORITIES IN LIFE, THEREFORE FAILURE WILL EXIST OR HE WILL BE VICTIMIZED BY OUR SOCIAL PROBLEMS. SUCH AS (DRUGS, TEEN PREGNANCIES, HIGH SCHOOL DROP-OUTS AND UNEMPLOYMENT), WHICH LEADS TO CRIME.

DADE COUNTY JAIL POPULATION JANUARY 1, 1986.

89% BLACKS AND HISPANICS.

76% ARE FROM THE AGES OF 17-28 YEARS OF AGE.

(THIS REPRESENTS 15-18% OF THE YOUTH POPULATION IN DADE COUNTY).

75% HAVE DRUG PROBLEMS.

TEN YEARS AGO THIS SOCIETY EITHER SURRENDERED OR RETREATED IN THE BATTLE AGAINST SOCIAL PROBLEMS IN WHICH THEY HAVE NOW MANIFESTED TO EPIDEMIC PROPORTIONS. TO MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICES IN 1988, IN REFERENCE TO SOCIAL PROBLEMS, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BECOME DISENCHANTED WITH RISING TIDE OF CONSERVATISM, THAT CHALLENGES OUR PROGRESS TODAY. WE CANNOT BECOME DISILLUSIONED WITH THE FEDERAL CUT-BACK AND ROLL-BACKS OF SOCIAL PROGRAMS.

IN CONCLUSION WE WANT TO SAY THAT WE BELIEVE THAT WE ARE AT THE CROSSROAD OF AWARENESS, AND:

"THE CHOICE IS OURS"



# CITIZENS' CRIME COMMISSION COURT PROGRAM

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## OVERVIEW OF THE STREET LAW PROGRAM

### WHY LAW?

In our society law is a pervasive element. Virtually everything people do, adults and Juveniles alike, is affected by law. Yet for young people who encounter the juvenile justice system for the first time, law all too often acquires a negative connotation, which can persist throughout their lives.

These youths often get the mistaken impression that "law" means police, courts, detention and punishment. The Street Law Diversion Program helps erase that limited view by promoting the concept of law as a protective system.

In addition to learning a positive concept of law, youths who are experiencing either court contact or suspension from school need to know their legal rights and responsibilities as it pertains to their daily lives. These youths also need to learn to participate in the democratic processes which shape today's society. After all society holds all citizens responsible for knowing basic law and for abiding by it. Courts can perform a valuable service by preparing adjudicated youths for responsible adulthood. The Street Law is an important element in this process.

The diversion program's educational approach has rehabilitative value because it helps students understand our legal system while enabling them to develop personal strength to say "NO" when confronted with opportunities or invitations to break the law.

## Pg 2: Overview of Street Law Program

### Description of the Diversion Program:

The major element of the Street Law Diversion Program is a 12-week course in practical law for either pre or post adjudicated youth. The Saturday morning classes, which meet in the Metro Justice Building, consist of 15-20 students supervised by a teacher whose training is law-related. Students learn about the legal system, with emphasis on the juvenile justice system and practical law as it affects everyday life. The teacher uses a variety of teaching techniques and lessons to give the students multiple opportunities to examine their legal rights and responsibilities and to stimulate their awareness of peer group interaction. In addition to juvenile law and juvenile court procedures, the classes offer explicit coverage of school law, family law, the legal process and principal aspects of criminal law.

Parents are required to attend the first class in order to learn about the program. They are also encouraged to participate in the remaining classes. It is a common event to see mothers and fathers taking part in the class lessons along with the students.

Attendance is mandatory for enrolled youth. Three unexcused absences indicate non-compliance with the guidelines for informal supervision and may cause the absentee to be petitioned for his/her original charges.

The relevance of the law-related curriculum and the accepting atmosphere of the street law diversion classroom create a winning combination. Within the class, the students are not labeled, segregated, isolated or alienated by the teacher. For some, this is their first positive educational experience. The teaching strategies utilized in the program are activity-oriented and allow full participation by students. Commonly, students energetically undertake role-playing, presenting a mock trial or simulating a police arrest. One lesson addresses itself to "how not to go rob the grocery store when the gang want to, but you don't." Many lessons simulate situations in which delinquent behavior is likely so that the principles and methods involved in staying out of

trouble can be applied in these simulations and then re-applied in real contexts.

Another aspect of the program includes the use of community resources in the classes. Attorneys, judges, police and social workers participate in the classes as volunteers.

Even though the curriculum uses accepted methods of teaching social studies, students are not actually required to have mastered reading. Therefore, all students can comprehend the content of the lessons regardless of their reading level. Students with diverse reading abilities are at ease in these classrooms.

The objectives of the Street Law Diversion Program are:

- @ to build skills that will help enable students to deal adequately with daily practical law-related situations.
- @ to increase the students level of knowledge of basic legal rights as well as responsibilities.
- @ to help develop decision-making skills as they relate to law and the legal system.

There is the belief that in our society the same worthwhile goals tend to be desirable to everyone. Problems occur if inequality of opportunity makes it impossible for a person to play by the rules and still get what he or she wants. People then turn to illegitimate means to achieve culturally prescribed goals or they reject the goals and means of achieving them by retreating socially. The Street Law Diversion Program strives to extend opportunities to every student in the class to demonstrate competence.

JUVENILE STREET LAW PROGRAM

GOALS:

20 students per class  
2 classes per Saturday  
Recommended by Parents, Courts and Schools.

Characteristics:

First Offenders.  
Gang Members.  
Suspensions.

SOURCES OF SUPPORT:

Grants  
Court Fines (referred by attorneys and judges)  
Fundraising

## CLASS AGENDA AND OBJECTIVES:

### Problem Solving:

- a. To identify ways of handling problems
- b. To distinguish between problems which students can handle and problems which are beyond their control
- c. To help develop analytical skills

### Laws are Based on Values:

- a. To help students recognize that sometimes others have different values
- b. To increase the students knowledge of current laws
- c. To develop an understanding that laws are based on society's values

### Should it be a Crime:

- a. To distinguish between felony and misdemeanor offenses
- b. To analyze individual values
- c. To develop critical thinking and analytical skills

### What's a Juvenile:

- a. To define the legal meaning of juvenile
- b. Define the legal meaning of the term delinquent
- c. Enable students to determine the legal age of a juvenile in their state
- d. Define the term waiver and identify the valuables associated with its issue
- e. Enable students to differentiate between the guidelines for admission into the Juvenile Justice and Adult Justice System

### Gerry Gault Case:

- a. To increase student knowledge of their constitutional rights to due process as a juvenile
- b. To increase student knowledge of the procedure that occurs at dispositional hearings
- c. To define the terms detention home adjudicatory hearing, dispositional hearing
- d. To develop critical thinking and analytical skills

What happens if arrested as a Juvenile:

- a. To define the terms stop, frisk, search, arrest and Miranda
- b. To acquaint juveniles with their rights before and during an arrest
- c. To acquaint juveniles with the general arrest procedure
- d. To acquaint juveniles with appropriate behavior during an arrest

Mock Juvenile Hearing:

- a. To identify the roles and responsibilities of juvenile court personnel
- b. To begin to learn to analyze a problem
- c. To become familiar with the juvenile court process

Juvenile Court Observation:

- a. To acquaint youths with the process of juvenile court

Crime and Consequences:

- a. To define the term crime
- b. To identify the three categories to crime
- c. To analyze possible consequences of crime
- d. Analyze the consequences of crime for the victim and/or community (short & legal term)

Alternatives or Choices:

- a. Discuss alternatives to crime
- b. To encourage students to consider alternatives for certain actions
- c. To encourage students to consider consequences of various alternatives
- d. To enable students to clarify their own values

Mock Trial (ADULT)

- a. To increase critical analysis skills
- b. To enhance questioning skills
- c. To increase knowledge of the adult trial process and procedures
- d. To increase oral presentation skills

### What's a Family:

- a. To identify and define the meaning of the term "family"
- b. To discuss the nature of family relationships in our society
- c. To identify the laws that directly affect the family
- d. To discuss the responsibilities of various family members

### What is child Abuse and Child Neglect:

- a. To define the term Child Abuse
- b. To define the term Child Neglect
- c. To enable the student to differentiate between the terms abuse and neglect

### Juveniles Rights and Responsibilities (school law):

- a. To increase students knowledge of law concerning locker searches, suspensions and due process in school situations

### No Vehicles in the Park:

- a. To illustrate the purpose and function of a law
- b. To discover the intent of those who created a law
- c. To analyze practical applications of law
- d. To illustrate that laws may be subject to different interpretations
- e. Encourage group participation and discussion

Street Law's approach to law-related education is to provide practical information and problem-solving opportunities which develop in students the knowledge and skills necessary for survival in our law-saturated society. The curriculum includes activities such as case studies, mock trials, roleplays, small group exercises, opinion polls and visual analysis activities. For optional use, Street Law also requires the use of community resource persons (lawyer, police) and community experience (court tours, and police ride alongs). This educational methodology requires that students be active participants in



their own learning. In this way we hope to promote in students a willingness and capability to participate effectively in the legal and political system.