

### **What is Diversion?**

In general, the term diversion has come to define the informational into the juvenile system to an alternative, non-judicial method of dealing with the youth and the offense.

### ***The goals of diversion are:***

- 1. To allow the youth to acknowledge responsibilities for his or her actions with appropriate consequences.**
- 2. To provide the youth and family with needed resources.**
- 3. To prevent further involvement with the juvenile justice system.**

*Although much variation exists in particular diversion programs, the following questions and answers pertain to the Diversion Program of the Licking County Juvenile Court.*

### **Who is eligible for diversion?**

Only those youth who have no prior official or unofficial records (first-time offenders) who are alleged who have committed status (unruly, truancy, or curfew violations) or misdemeanor-level offences are eligible for Diversion.

### **What to expect if you participate in Diversion.**

The youth and his or her parents or guardians are required to attend a Diversion interview. This interview consists of **four** parts:

- 1. Introduction** – The Diversion worker introduces him or herself and gets acquainted with the youth and parents. The youth parents are asked to provide information concerning the youth, family, and the alleged offense.
- 2. Review of Offence** – The diversion worker reads the youth either the complaint or the police report. At this time, the youth can admit to, or deny the offense. The youth is encouraged to tell his or her side of the story. If the youth admits to the offense, the diversion interview will continue. If the youth denies the offense, the diversion interview will end, and the report will be referred to the prosecutor for the youth to respond to the charges in court.
- 3. Assessment of Youth and Family Concerns** –if the youth admits to the offense, the diversion interview will continue, and the worker will assess the youth and family for concerns. Some areas, which are looked at, are success at school, peer relations, drug/alcohol involvement, etc. This is done in an effort to link the youth and his or her family to appropriate community resources.
- 4. Contract** – The final stage of the interview involves contracting with the youth to accept responsibility for the offense by complying with certain conditions and consequences. The contract is signed by the youth and the parent, as an agreement to complete and abide by the contract terms.

### **How long is the youth on diversion?**

The average length of diversion case is 90 days. However, much of the length of time the youth is in diversion depends on the youth and parents. The sooner the contract terms are completed, without further violation, the sooner the youth successfully completes diversion.

### **What are the terms of the contract?**

Contract terms are highly variable and depend on the offense and the youth and family needs. Some examples of term utilized in the past are community service, counseling, mediation, essays, drug/alcohol treatment, restitution, and apology letters. However, as mentioned above, terms are highly variable due to the individuality of each person and situation.

### **What if I do not want to participate in diversion?**

It is important to note that not all Courts have diversion programs. Participation in the Licking County Juvenile Court Diversion Program is a **PRIVILEGE**. However, if the youth chooses not to participate in Diversion and/or denies committing the offense, the complaint or report is then forwarded to the Prosecutor's review. The youth may be assigned a probation officer and may be subpoenaed to appear in court in his or her own defense. If the youth is found to be delinquent, the youth may face several consequences including probation, detention and foster care, return to the

family home for supervision, electronic house arrest, or commitment to the Department of Youth Services.

**Is being in Diversion like being on probation?**

Diversion and probation are commonly confused with each other. The differences between Diversion and Probation are important. On diversion, the youth is unofficially involved with the Court. There will be no official record, has been involved in a trial, appears in front of a judge as needed, and is subject to court costs and fines. On Diversion, the youth is typically involved with the Court for about 90 days. Youth on probation can remain on Probation until the age of 21. On Diversion, the youth typically remains in the home. On Probation, the youth is at risk of being placed in foster homes, detention, or an institution.