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New FL study further shows benefits of juvenile civil citations over arrests



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Miami-Dade County led the state last year in sending child offenders to diversion programs rather than arresting them for misdemeanor crimes, according to a new independent study released Wednesday.

But while Miami-Dade — like Florida, on the whole — is doing better to favor juvenile civil citations, the nonpartisan “Stepping Up 2016” study found other counties, including Hillsborough, have a long way to go in making better use of the alternative, which experts praise as a more effective and beneficial option to arrest.

Across Miami-Dade, 91 percent of eligible youth were given civil citations instead of arrests, the highest in the state for 2014-15, according to the study. Miami-Dade Police had a 99 percent usage rate for citations, and the school district had a 92 percent rate.

By comparison, in countywide numbers, Monroe used civil citations over arrests 80 percent of the time in eligible cases, Broward used them 68 percent of the time and Palm Beach used them almost 59 percent of the time, the study found.

In the Tampa Bay area, Pinellas County was second-best statewide with a usage rate of 82 percent — compared to 53 percent for Pasco and Hernando counties, 32 percent for Hillsborough and 24 percent for Citrus, the study found.

The report — the second annual study of its kind by The Children’s Campaign and several other state and national advocacy groups — builds upon previous findings that juvenile civil citations are preferable because youth are less likely to re-offend and because citation programs increase public safety and save potentially millions in taxpayer money.

[Read more here.](#)