

# Lake County Juvenile Court

## Judge Karen Lawson

### Intake Department / A-Ten-D Program

The Intake Department of the Court is responsible for examining and evaluating the circumstances of every case referred to the Court. There are two methods of referrals to the Court: They may come in as complaints, or as "walk-ins" i.e. persons coming to the Juvenile Court to seek help.

The first category, complaints, may come from the police departments, schools, probation officers, job and family services, other agencies, and private citizens. Upon receiving a complaint, the Intake Department inspects the affidavit to be sure that all the required information is included. The next step is to check on any previous filings on this particular child. If no previous history, Intake decides whether a hearing or an alternative program would be appropriate. If the alleged offense is serious in nature, the individual will be scheduled to appear before a Magistrate or the Judge.

Perhaps one of the most important functions that Intake fulfills is the screening and counseling accomplished through Intake Conferences. It is through this method that community and family problems are screened in order to find alternatives to court action, if possible. The procedure used for these conferences is as follows: An Intake Officer would ask that both parent (or parents, preferably) and child come to the Court for a conference; the family problems and possible alternative solutions will be discussed.

In cooperation with the school systems of Lake County, the Court has established a school truancy program. It is the Court's purpose to establish early identification of those families and children who are displaying dysfunctional behavior in regard to school attendance. The program begins with an early warning letter sent to the parents and child by the school. If the child accumulates more days of unexcused absence, the school refers the situation to the Intake Department. An Intake Officer has a conference with the child, the family and the school representative. After this conference, the Intake Officer continues to check on that child's attendance and assists with any program to provide ongoing services to the school and to the community in order to alleviate escalating problems in school attendance. In 2009, this program was expanded upon and the [A-Ten-D](#) (Aggressive Truancy Enforcement Diversionary) Program was begun.

Judge Lawson implemented the Aggressive Truancy Enforcement Diversionary (A-Ten-D) program in 2009 to encourage regular school attendance, which is important for academic success. When students are absent, they miss valuable information and lessons that are necessary to meet world class standards. Families, schools and communities must work as a team to support school attendance. The system-wide goal is to improve local school attendance at every grade level. Nothing can accomplish more positive results more quickly than the collaborative efforts of parents, schools, community and business representatives working together on the behalf of children. The A-Ten-D Program is Lake County Juvenile Court's support of this collaborative effort.

A component of the Intake screening process is the Prevention Conference. First time offenders with a minor misdemeanor are set up for these conferences. At the time of the conference, an official complaint has been filed, but has not been legally docketed through the Clerk's office.

Any one of the following dispositions may be used: 1) Admonishment and warning; 2) Family and/or individual counseling; 3) Drug and Alcohol Class; 4) Continuation for a period of time with follow up in the Intake Department; 5) Referral to the Intensive Casework Program; and, 6) Referral for official court action.

A further component to the Intake Department is two positions of Intensive Caseworker. A ten week contract is drawn up identifying problem areas and specific goals toward a solution of these problem areas. The caseworker meets with the client and family on a regular basis in order to work on problem-solving methods.

A majority of conferences have remained on an unofficial basis with the Court with no further recidivism. Our criteria for selecting candidates for alternative solutions revert to prior court history and seriousness of offense. Most juveniles who participate in these alternatives are those legally termed as unruly, those whose families have communication problems that can be solved without the aid of probation and/or detention, and those who must be served by official contact. It is Intake's goal that, through appropriate screening, we can aid the Court and the community in assessing and servicing the needs of the juvenile population.