

## **PEACH Pride Partnership**

The PEACH Pride Partnership agreement was signed July 16, 2019, with the goals of increasing graduation rates, reducing delinquent acts in school and in the community, decreasing incarceration rates, better connecting students in need with community programs and improving the response to students who represent an immediate danger to themselves or others.

Using a series of pre-defined Focused Acts, school resource officers have the tools and authority to assign an offending student to programs aimed at addressing the root cause for why the student engaged in delinquent conduct. By addressing the root cause of delinquent behavior, students will be better equipped for success and less likely to reoffend.

With these cases being handled outside the traditional Juvenile Court system, students don't acquire a juvenile record and judicial resources are freed up to focus on more dangerous offenses.

The agreement is based on a proven school-justice partnership model that has shown to be successful in increasing graduation rates and reducing juvenile crime rates. The health of communities and school systems across the nation have been improved by using such an agreement.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What are focused acts?**

- Focused acts are misdemeanor offenses identified by the partnership that typically don't result in a significant juvenile court punishment. Examples include: affray (fighting), criminal trespass, disorderly conduct, simple assault or battery, misdemeanor theft, and possession of alcohol, tobacco or misdemeanor amounts of marijuana on campus. Felony offenses, or offenses that cause harm to school staff, will still be referred to court for prosecution.

#### **What happens if a student commits a focused act?**

- If a student commits a focused act, a school resource officer may issue a notice of offense using a series of graduated responses, but only after consulting with a school administrator to ascertain the school's disciplinary response.
- A student who commits three or more focused acts during an academic year may still be referred to court for prosecution if graduated responses have been administered without success and/or aggravating circumstances exist. With each school year, every student begins with a clean slate regardless of the number of focused act offenses or referrals received from the previous school year.

#### **What types of services are available for students through this partnership?**

- Our partners offer counseling, one-day workshops on topics such as anger management, substance abuse screening and referrals to other community programs and services.

#### **Is there any cost to students or their parents?**

- While many of the services provided are offered free of charge, some do require a fee. Our goal is to use providers who accept insurance and Medicaid, or who offer services at a reduced fee.

### **What happens if a student doesn't follow through with the assigned service(s)?**

- Student offenders who fail to attend assigned workshops or service meetings will be referred to court for prosecution. If a student's failure to attend is due to a parent or guardian, a parental compliance order may be issued by the Peach County Juvenile Court. Failure to comply with a parental compliance order could result in a parent being found in contempt of court and associated consequences.

### **My child is a victim of a focused act offense. Isn't this just letting an offending student get off easy? What if I want the case to go to Juvenile Court?**

- Victims and their families always retain the right to file a complaint with the Peach County Juvenile Court, but the petitioning process will take into account whether the case has progressed through the normal partnership referral process.

### **My child has special needs. How does this agreement apply to him/her?**

- In cases involving offending students with an IEP/504 Plan/ Behavior Intervention Plan/ Behavior Contract, a school resource officer must evaluate the student's plan or contracts and determine what actions are required under those plans to remedy the student's behavior. The school may determine whether the plan or contract should be modified to address the behavior giving rise to the delinquent conduct. After meeting with a school administrator, the officer may follow the partnership agreement's graduated response ladder if the officer deems it necessary to correct the delinquent conduct.

### **Are all Peach County schools included in this agreement?**

- All Peach County middle and high schools are included in the agreement. If an elementary school student is of sufficient age to be prosecuted in Juvenile Court, the provisions of the partnership agreement will apply.

### **What if a juvenile commits a delinquent act off-campus?**

- Delinquent acts committed off-campus – excluding those that occur on a school bus – are not included in the partnership agreement. Those cases are investigated by law enforcement and may be referred to court for prosecution.

### **Where can I go for more information?**

- A copy of the agreement is available at [www.macondistrictattorney.org](http://www.macondistrictattorney.org). You can also call Amy Leigh Womack, Officer of Community Engagement for the Macon Judicial Circuit District Attorney's Office, at 478-621-6179.