

# JSO's "Core Competency" – fighting and preventing crime



## From the Sheriff's Desk

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Every one of us has different opinions and different attitudes about crime and murder – and they are often based on closely held beliefs and personal experiences. Or they may be a reaction to the daily media stories.

Some people tune in, and some people tune out to this type of news. All they know is "what they feel" and the answer to the question of whether or not Jacksonville is a "safe" city is as personal and subjective as the person answering it.

As your Sheriff, I share with you a lot of data and facts about the crimes we've solved and the people we've arrested. The statistics and facts we share might not always be acceptable to you, or they can be frightening and unsettling. But, as a public official and a 32-year law enforcement professional, I am duty bound and obligated to educate you about the crime challenges we face and how this agency responds to them.

Our "core competency" is

fighting crime – and that is our top priority. We must patrol the streets and respond to citizens' calls for help in a timely manner; we solve crimes and put the criminals in jail. We provide custodial care that is restorative. We do all this by using the latest technology, trained crime analysts, and highly skilled police, corrections and civilian personnel.

Keeping pace with crime in a large city that is growing takes a lot of resources. YOU, our citizen partners, are a large part of the reason we are so successful at fighting crime. Our officers are duty-bound to enforce the law; but they also work hard to teach citizens about preventing crime and encouraging people to work with the JSO.

But, I also believe it is important that we continue to examine the social issues surrounding crime and criminal behavior. I commissioned the JCCI Study last year to examine the problem of gun violence and murder in depth. Listening to the community define the root causes of these crimes will serve us best in the long term.

The JSO added onto an already solid law enforcement infrastructure through the

creation of Operation Safe Streets and the Gun Bounty. Soon we will have addressed all JCCI recommendations directed to the JSO. It all appears to be working, and we're keeping the pressure on for people to SEE IT, SAY IT and STOP IT.

We all have the same questions when we hear about a juvenile firing a gun or a young person senselessly beating another person. What are the socioeconomic conditions that influence a young man or woman to drop out of school, sell drugs for money, buy a gun illegally, use it to rob others, and descend into a life of crime? What is it that the community, including the core family, can and should do to help prevent that situation from ever happening?

As your Sheriff, I feel compelled to explore solutions that address systemic problems that we know can lead to a life of crime. These activities may be "prevention" in its most basic form.

### Three examples immediately come to mind:

- Our new Inmate Health Initiative, which saves the taxpayer's money spent transporting and treating

inmates at the hospital unnecessarily – while creating a medical safety net so they get care whether in jail or out on the street.

- The Bright Start Dyslexia Program at PAL, which identifies children with reading and learning disabilities and intervenes with tutoring, paid for by PAL. We're preventing children who might be falling behind in school from losing hope and giving up. This is known to be a key indicator of potential criminal activity.


- Our support of the Empowered Parent program is another great example. Becoming a parent is the only job I can think of that doesn't require extensive training, a license, or a certificate to do it. And there are good, hard-working, law-abiding people who need help facing the challenges of raising a child who has become a problem: disruptive and disrespectful, getting into trouble, breaking curfew, experimenting with drugs, associating with problem kids.

Programs like this are affordable and accessible for anyone that wants to learn the skills necessary to deal with these challenges.

Soon we'll introduce the community re-entry program for violent felony offenders leaving our custody. It affords them access to the social and community services, so if they choose to become productive members of society, the tools to make it happen are within their reach. If they choose to continue to break the law, the full weight of the criminal justice system will be brought to bear, with maximum sentencing penalties handed down.

We can't cure all of society's ills; that is not the role of law enforcement. And some people will choose to break the law, and for that they will be punished. Some people learn from their mistakes and others don't. But day in and day out, our officers see the importance of intervening in a situation before it gets out of control, before someone gets hurt or possibly killed.

I plan to make sure we are always improving on our core competencies – but I also plan to take a leadership role as a catalyst for the change we want in our community. We'll support programs and initiatives that give people hope and opportunity.



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