

Response from Imani Drew
Candidate for State's Attorney in Kankakee County

1. If elected State's Attorney, what actions will you take to ensure that youth will receive the best options for effective treatment and, if a petition is filed, the rehabilitative benefits of juvenile court?

The youth of Kankakee County deserve a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to juvenile justice, particularly when reflecting on the considerable environmental pressures they experience. I agree that we must not only be tough on crime but smart on crime, meaning we must also put great weight on crime prevention and recidivism reduction. This is especially true for juvenile offenders.

As a new State's Attorney, I will make an initial assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the juvenile division and then make appropriate adjustments to ensure that the assistants who work in the juvenile division share and will work consistently with the office's vision of helping challenged youth while protecting public safety. I will meet regularly with the assistants to make sure the vision is carried out. The Juvenile Division of Kankakee County will continue to support and promote programs such as D.A.R.E., station adjustments, and teen court. Further, I will encourage collaboration and pooling of resources with the courts, judges, law enforcement, probation department, and social service agencies and where appropriate suggest the reallocation of funds such that the full array of sentencing options are again available in Kankakee County.

2. If elected State's Attorney, what actions will you take to uphold the JJDP and the philosophy to encourage preventative programs to deter delinquency and ensure an age-appropriate response provided with developmentally appropriate, evidence-based services and supports in facilities designed for juveniles?

The hallmark of my strategy toward upholding the concepts and mandates of JJDP would be advocacy. Illinois' current budget crisis has placed great restrictions on the County's ability to follow best practices. In pursuit of change, I will regularly meet with local and state representatives, encourage assistant state's attorneys to collaborate with and learn from similarly-populated counties which are achieving greater success on JJDP initiatives, including reduction of minority over-representation. Further, I will encourage all participants to read and be mindful of the JJDP. Finally, vigilance is key; therefore I would undertake a routine of constant review and improvement of strategy and practices and make beneficial adjustments.

3. If elected State's Attorney, would you commit to taking a leadership role to ensure that diversionary programs would be available for youth charged with minor violations?

Yes, by both collaborating with local schools and having a consistent presence of assistant state's attorneys in the schools. Further I would promote frequent best practices training for school resource officers in an attempt to shift the balance of responsibility back to adequate and effective school-based discipline rather than early entry into the criminal justice system.

4. If elected State's Attorney, how would you take a leadership role to continue the successful reduction in the use of detention and implementation of more effective programs for youth?

I will initiate at least semi-annual review of the county's programs and practices. Review, improvement, and implementation are the best ways to support best practices in detention reduction. Considering that there are many in-state models of successful alternatives to detention, those programs not currently employed in our county would be considered for implementation.

For several years now, Kankakee County probation has run an efficient and consistent home detention program. Advocacy would be necessary to find funding for evening reporting and satellite reporting services. As an example, Pembroke/Hopkins Park is a transportation-challenged rural area of Kankakee County, where many probationers are the subject of technical violations, therefore satellite reporting services for outlying areas is an innovation I will certainly pursue in my administration.

5. What is your vision for increasing community-based programming, reducing the number of youth inappropriately confined in the Department of Juvenile Justice, and improving successful outcomes for youth who are touched by the juvenile justice system?

As stated previously, Kankakee County youth deserve a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach to juvenile justice. No one entity can effectuate the goal of reducing the number of youth in juvenile detention and improving successful outcomes for youth who are touched by the juvenile justice system. It is hoped that Kankakee County will be a recipient of Redeploy Illinois funding. The County is already home to several organizations focused on the support of youth and delinquency prevention, and I will indeed work in partnership with these agencies. With Redeploy Illinois funding we can increase community based programming. Further, I will work to institute an effective re-entry program for juveniles released from DJJ.