



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **LDF Issues Report on Pasco County Sheriff's Office Surveillance of Children**

Today, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) released a new research report, "[Digitizing the School-to-Prison Pipeline, Pasco County's At-Risk Youth Program](#)," which explains a program by the Pasco County Sheriff's Office, which categorized certain students as "destined to a life of crime," and provides recommendations to remedy the concerns outlined in the report. Pasco County is located near Tampa Bay, Florida.

The report explains how the At-Risk-Youth program relied on "dirty data" to identify youth for inclusion on secret lists, which were then utilized by police and other agencies to determine which youth would be subject to surveillance and police encounters. The report recommends prohibiting the use of school-based police surveillance technologies and eliminating federal funding for predictive policing programs. Finally, it calls for a shift away from school policing and surveillance systems towards restorative justice programs and supportive services.

"For years, the Pasco County Sheriff's office engaged in harmful surveillance of children in schools, especially Black and Brown students. Our report provides a critical look into its surveillance program and the racial biases underlying the problematic criteria used to identify which youth would be subject to this dangerous form of criminalization. The report further provides recommendations so that schools avoid criminalizing students and instead be a place where all children can thrive," said Jin Hee Lee, LDF Director of Strategic Initiatives. "There is no place for police surveillance in our schools. We must move away from policing in schools and work towards providing safe and supportive learning environments that recognizes the potential of all our youth."

The report's findings include:

- The number of students on the At-Risk Youth List from 2019-2021 ranged from 10,000 to over 17,000. Each year, 300-500 students were flagged for heightened monitoring.

- Some children in the At-Risk Youth List were extremely young. At times, it included children as young as pre-kindergarten, and the January 2020 list included three kindergartners who were labeled “At-Risk” and flagged for additional monitoring.
- In just four months between August and December 2018, law enforcement made at least 219 contacts with students who were included in the At-Risk Youth List as “critical,” “off-track,” or “at-risk.”
- The Pasco County Sheriff’s Office used data points in the creation of the At-Risk-Youth list that were highly prone to be biased against Black, Latinx, and queer children. These include various kinds of contact with the criminal legal system, educational demerits, and records of childhood trauma on file with child welfare agencies.

Read the report [here](#).

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*Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.*