



Leon County Teen Court
LEON COUNTY COURTHOUSE
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TALLAHASSEE, FL 32301
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THEFT AWARENESS PACKET

Attached you will find a Theft Awareness Packet. You are required to complete this packet in order to satisfy the conditions of the Teen Court Program. As you will notice, this packet is quite comprehensive; however, it is less time-consuming and certainly more convenient than attending classes.

You will be required to thoroughly read/review the entire packet and complete the Theft Awareness Post Test. Also, the (2) interviews with essays summarizing those interviews and the essay summarizing the packet must be completed by your final deadline. A failing grade will require a re-test. If you have any questions, please call me at 577-4468 or email me at pittsj@leoncountyfl.gov.

Your parents must sign at the bottom of the Theft Awareness Post Test.

Thank you!!

Jessica G-T Pitts
Case Coordinator

Facts about Retail Theft

- Parents can be held legally and financially responsible for losses, up to \$2,500.00 due to a retail theft charge committed by their minor child. Parents may also be held liable in civil court and additionally fined.
- The average value of merchandise stolen on any occasion is about \$25-\$35
- The typical grocery store operates on a profit margin of only 3-5%.
- The largest percentages of shoplifters come from the middle social and economic class.
- 80% of all shoplifters have the money with them to purchase the item(s) they stole when they got caught.
- 90% of all cases of retail theft are found guilty.
- The amount of money merchants lose each year to shoplifters and employee theft is about 15 to 25 billion dollars.
- 1/3 of all shoplifters arrested are between the ages of 25 to 50.
- 9 out of every 10 teenagers caught for retail theft are females.
- The single largest theft was 2 million dollars stolen from a Brinks Armored truck. The amount lost daily to retail theft is about 25 million.
- Shoplifting was once considered such a serious crime in America that the penalty for being found guilty was death.
- There are still countries today that will punish shoplifters by cutting off their hand.
- 40% of all arrests for retail theft are teenagers.
- A person may be legally detained for shoplifting even if they haven't left the store.
- Changing the price tag on any merchandise is considered retail theft.

Definition and History of Shoplifting in America

Shoplifting is the laymen's term for retail theft; therefore both words mean the same thing. The legal term is retail theft and we will be using this term most of the time in this packet. Retail Theft can be classified as a misdemeanor or Petit Retail Theft (if items stolen total less than \$300.00). Grand retail theft is a felony charge (stealing items totaling over \$300.00). If the charge is considered a misdemeanor, you may be given jail time and a fine. If it is considered a felony offense, you may be sent to prison and given a larger fine. If you have a history of shoplifting and have committed several misdemeanor offenses, you may be charged with felony offense even though what you stole was under \$300.00. The

courts will view you as a habitual offender and even though you stole items costing small amounts, they will treat you as a more serious (felony) offender.

Before 1946, retail stores in America were operated by a clerk. You simply told the clerk what you needed and they would get it for you; a few items were displayed. You did not have much of a selection, but you did not have to pay much. In the late 1940's, stores moved towards becoming self-service. They were bigger, you had more choices, and you probably spent more money. Shoppers now had the freedom to move about in the store and handle merchandise, so clerks could not possibly watch every customer. As a result, retail theft increased and stores lost more and more money. In the 1960's to combat the problem, stores began to install hidden cameras to observe their customers. They also hired more security personnel and used electronic devices that set off alarms at the store exits. All of these efforts to decrease retail theft cost the stores a lot of money. These additional costs to the stores are indirectly passed on to us, the customers, in higher cost of merchandise.

Despite all the preventative measures and the obvious increase in prices to the consumer, retail theft is the fastest growing and most costly crime today. Read on to find out why!

Why People Shoplift?

- ❖ It is easy.
- ❖ The store won't miss it. Anyway, they make enough profits as it is.
- ❖ Everyone else does it.
- ❖ Lack of immediate consequences. If they don't get caught the first time, they figure they won't get caught again.
- ❖ To get even with the store.
- ❖ It has become a habit.
- ❖ Irresistible urge to steal something.
- ❖ It is a challenge or a thrill.
- ❖ Peer Pressure.
- ❖ They feel they need this item and do not have the money to pay for it.
- ❖ To get something for nothing.
- ❖ To resell the merchandise for money.
- ❖ To trade merchandise for drugs.
- ❖ No reason.

How Shoplifting Affects the Offender

- ✓ Court costs; anywhere from \$200.00 to \$1000.00.
- ✓ Fines; 1st offense – maximum fine is \$500.00.
- ✓ Restitution OR Civil recovery/demand; the store can require the offender or their parent or guardian to pay a minimum of \$200.00 in addition to restitution paid for unrecovered or damaged merchandise.
- ✓ Possible loss of your job.
- ✓ Loss of wages if you lose your job or if you have to take time off from your job to go to court.
- ✓ Cost of supervision while on probation; \$50.00 a month.
- ✓ Cost of taking a retail theft course; at least \$50.00.
- ✓ Completing community service hours. You do not get paid for these hours and may have to take off from your paying job to complete them.
- ✓ Criminal record. A convicted felon cannot vote, carry a gun, or run for public office.
- ✓ Attorney's fees.
- ✓ Embarrassment. Jail logs are published newspaper and online for the public to see.
- ✓ Shame of being labeled a thief.
- ✓ Loss of respect and trust of your family, friends, teachers, and employers.

How Shoplifting Affects the Consumer

- Retail theft raises the cost of living index by 5-7%.
- The retail store cannot assume the increase in security cost or loss of merchandise, they pass these costs on to the consumer, which in turn increases what you and I pay for merchandise at every store we shop.
- The State of Florida loses tax revenues that could be used to build roads, improve our schools, take care of the less fortunate.
- The cost of prosecuting the criminals (shoplifters) is paid by the taxpayer. You, your parents and anyone you know who works are paying these costs.
- The cost of housing, clothing, and feeding these criminals in jails and prisons is also paid by the taxpayers.
- Neighborhood stores close because of loss of profits due to shoplifters.

Types of Shoplifters

Professionals:

50% of all shoplifters may be considered professionals. These are people who make a living by stealing from retail stores. You may not think this affects you but as you have learned from reading this packet, the losses from any theft are passed on to the consumer. Also, professional thieves may choose to steal directly from you when they cannot steal from a store.

1st Class Thieves: Steals to resell the merchandise. This group is usually organized and has a detailed plan on how they are going to steal and who they will sell their goods to or who will be their “fence.” These people usually steal from exclusive stores, such as jewelry stores.

2nd Class Thieves: Steals for their personal needs and may sell their stolen merchandise to friends or family. If a friend or family member buys or accepts this merchandise, even if they didn't realize it was stolen, they are just as guilty as the person who stole the items.

Amateurs:

Experts: Similar to the 2nd class professional only they may feel more guilt. This type usually follows a pattern and has a plan before going into the store.

Impulsive: This thief does not have a plan to steal. They just see a golden opportunity and take advantage of it; they usually do not steal on a regular basis.

Youthful: Mostly adolescents as opposed to younger children. Approximately 10 females to 1 male shoplift.

Pathological: A Kleptomaniac. This is a person who cannot resist the impulse to steal objects that are not really needed or will not be used to sell later. The person usually has the money to pay for the item. The person usually has some type of psychological disorder and needs to seek professional help.

Indigent: This person steals to survive. The items stolen are basic needs items like food, clothing, and medicine.

Remember: Stealing makes you a thief no matter how small the item is or what your reasons are for stealing. Other people tend not to trust a thief because they are not sure if you will steal from them.

Store Manager Interview

Instructions: You must interview a store manager and submit a report on what you learned from this interview. Listed below are some questions, you could ask the store manager. You may also ask some of your own. You must write your interview up in a report. You cannot give these questions to the manager and ask them to complete and return it to you; it must be in your own words. Put your name and the date you interviewed this person on your report.

1. What is the name of the store manager you interviewed? What store do they work for? What type of store is this (ex. Department store, a grocery store)? What is their title? (These are mandatory questions that must be included in your report).
2. How often does your store catch a shoplifter either per day or per week?
3. How many would you estimate you DON'T catch?
4. How much do you estimate that it costs your store each year because of shoplifters?
5. What would you like to see happen to shoplifters?
6. How does this make you feel as a manager of a store? A consumer?
7. Do you allow shoplifters back into your store? If so, when are they allowed back?

How to Stop Shoplifting

ACCEPT HELP

1. Own up to the problem.
2. Know and understand the motivation for stealing. For instance, if it is to be accepted by certain people, maybe you need to seek another group.
3. Think about the consequences. Only a few of the consequences are discussed in this program; you can probably think of others that you or someone you know has suffered.
4. If you cannot help yourself from the impulse to steal, seek professional help as soon as possible

BEHAVE DIFFERENTLY

1. If you steal with a crowd, try shopping alone.
2. If you steal when alone, try shopping with a friend who can help you. Remember, if you steal while you are with someone they may be arrested for stealing as well, so don't put a friend in a situation like this.

3. Don't wear big, baggy clothes in a store; they may assume that you are planning to steal something and they will be watching you.
4. Don't carry a big bag or purse for the same reason as in #3.

CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE

1. Realize the size of the problem and how you are a part of the problem.
2. Recognize that it is not only legally wrong to steal, it is morally wrong. This means that if you have good morals (like your parents have taught you) you won't do anything that is wrong and could hurt others or society.
3. ASSUME you will get caught and not someone else.
4. Remember, stealing makes you a thief and this label will hurt your self-esteem (how you feel about yourself).
5. If you see someone stealing, tell the store manager.

Law Enforcement Interview

Instructions: You must interview a law enforcement officer and submit a 1-2 page report on what you learned. Listed below are questions you could ask the officer. You may also ask some of your own questions. You cannot give these questions to the officer and ask them to complete it; the report must be in your own words. Put your name and the date that the interview took place.

1. What is the name and rank of the officer you interviewed? What department do they work for and in what city or town? (These are mandatory questions that must be included in your report.)
2. How many retail theft arrests do you estimate you make each month?
3. How many of these arrests are juveniles?
4. Do you arrest these shoplifters? Fingerprint them?
5. From your experience, what are some of the excuses you have heard from shoplifters?
6. Do you feel shoplifting could lead to more serious crimes? If yes, why?
7. What are the penalties for retail theft?
1st Offense

2nd Offense

3rd Offense
8. Would you like to see the penalties changed for shoplifters? If yes, how would you change them?

ESSAY OUTLINE

Instructions: Write a 1 – 2 page essay on “What you have learned from this program,” and return it to a Teen Court Staff member, who will review it and let you know if it is acceptable. Listed below are some questions you may want to answer, however, you may use your own outline. **Put your name, the date, and title of your essay on this paper. Use separate paper.**

1. How did committing this crime affect you and how you feel about yourself?
2. How did committing this crime affect how your family feels about you? Your friends?
3. What would you tell a friend if they said they wanted to shoplift?
4. What would you do if your younger brother or sister got caught for shoplifting? What advice would you give them?
5. Do you feel the punishment you received for this offense was too harsh? Too easy?
6. What would you do if you found out your child stole from a store?
7. What would you do if you were a store manager and caught someone stealing from your store?
8. What are three things you learned from completing this Retail Theft Program?
9. What is the most important thing you learned from completing this Retail Theft Program?
10. Do you think teens who shoplift should be treated differently from adults? How?

Theft Awareness Post Test

Part I. Please answer the following questions with TRUE or FALSE

Shoplifting is illegal in every state in the United States. _____

Because people steal, everyone pays higher prices. _____

A parent cannot be held legally or financially responsible for losses due to a retail theft by their child. _____

You can be arrested if you're with someone who is stealing. _____

Switching/changing a price tag is considered shoplifting. _____

Shoplifting a pack of gum is not a crime. _____

It's okay to shoplift from some stores. _____

There was a time in American history when shoplifting was considered such a serious crime that the penalty for conviction was death. _____

Shoplifting isn't that big of a deal compared to other crimes. _____

Shoplifting can become a habit. _____

I will never shoplift again _____

A person cannot be legally detained for shoplifting unless they leave the store without paying for the merchandise. _____

In Florida, the maximum penalty for a first time offense for Retail Theft is thirty days in jail and a \$250.00 fine. _____

Part II. Please answer the following questions by completing the sentences

By getting arrested for shoplifting I learned that _____

Next time I am faced with the choice to steal or not, I will _____

Part III. Circle the correct answer

1. The percentage of cases convicted in court for retail theft is about?
a) 15% b) 60% c) 90% d) none of these

2. The estimated amount merchants lose each year to consumers and employees who steal is?
a) \$10-12 million b) \$75-100 thousand c) \$15-25 billion

3. Amateur shoplifters are responsible for what portion of the total shoplifting losses?
a) about 25% b) about 50% c) about 75%

4. Stores begin increasing security personnel and using hidden cameras during the?
a) 1940's b) 1950's c) 1960's

5. The percentage of teenagers arrested for retail theft is?
a) 10% b) 90% c) 40% d) none of these

Parent Signature

Date