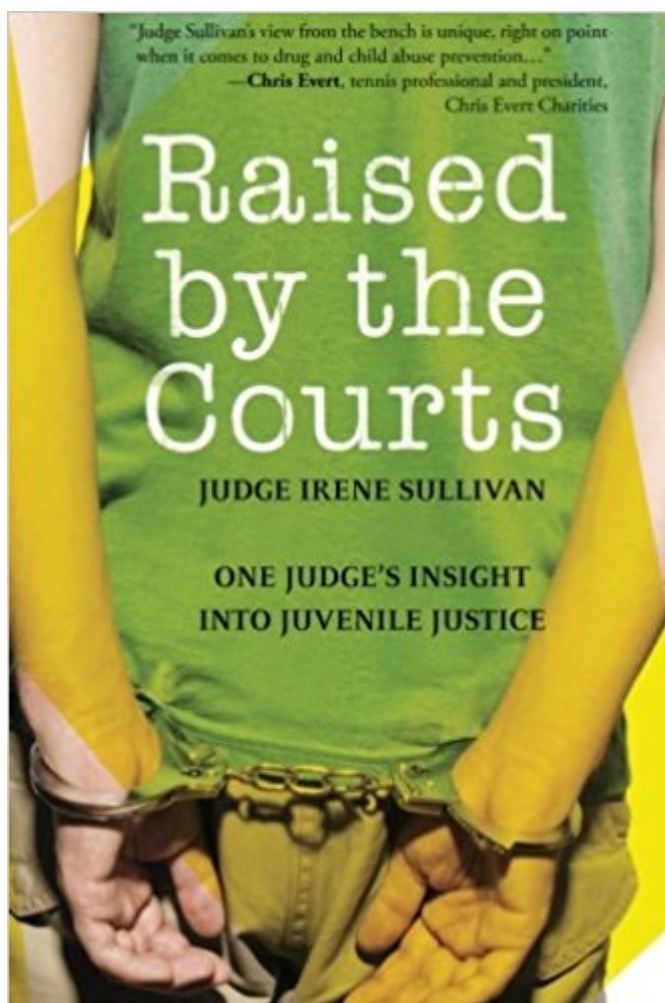


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# Raised By The Courts: One Judge's Insight Into Juvenile Justice



## Synopsis

A veteran judge shares her vision for ending the vicious cycle of child abuse and crime. When 19-year-old Leo Boatman was convicted of the brutal murders of two college students, he told the judge, "I can't offer an explanation because there is none". But Judge Irene Sullivan knew there had to be more to the story than just a senseless crime, and she was determined to discover the root cause of Boatman's behavior. Corresponding with him in prison, Judge Sullivan learned of the failures and abuses of every system Boatman had passed through, each intended to prevent such a devastating turn of events. Drawing on years of work with thousands of children, Judge Sullivan presents a plan for breaking the vicious cycle of child abuse and crime that causes such tragedies. Through eye-opening stories from both her own courtroom and the system at large, Judge Irene reveals what works for young people in jeopardy. The results are surprisingly optimistic: few would have guessed that the most successful programs are also among the most cost-effective and practical. *Raised by the Courts* will be a source of hope and clarity for those who care about ending the cycle of violent crime among the youngest and most vulnerable members of society.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Irene Sullivan is a Circuit Court Judge in the Unified Family Court, handling juvenile delinquency, dependency and domestic violence cases. She is a nationally-recognized speaker on juvenile justice and truancy matters and a consultant to the Florida government. She is a vice president of the National Truancy Prevention Association; a member of the Blueprint Commission to reform juvenile justice in Florida, and part of a statewide taskforce on Disproportionate Minority Contact.

She serves on advisory boards of Stetson University College of Law and Barry University Law School, the Juvenile Welfare Board, Ounce of Prevention for Florida, Inc., and PACE Center for Girls. She is currently working with the MacArthur Foundation in a project to improve public defender's representation of juveniles in court. The recipient of the St. Petersburg Bar Association Judicial Appreciation Award, the Ben C. Willard Award from Stetson University College of Law and the Children's Justice Award from the Salvation Army, Irene is a frequent speaker at conferences, universities and non-profit organizations. Irene has been an adjunct professor of law at Stetson University College of Law and is working to establish a juvenile justice clinic at the law school.

In *Raised by the Courts*, Justice Irene Sullivan incorporates nine years of experience on the bench to educate, illuminate and motivate readers toward a shift in American juvenile justice policy. In this sweeping work covering personal stories of affected youth; critical elements within the judicial, commitment and legislative systems; and a host of programs from her home state of Florida and beyond, Judge Sullivan brings a singular and galvanizing voice to a growing national tragedy. The author's argument begins with the premise that America is now known as "incarceration nation". A century of world leadership modeling humane, effective treatment for juveniles has given way to America's current and dubious distinction for locking up more youth than any other country in the world. Presenting evidence that's both practical and empirical, Judge Sullivan argues for a shift away from traditional commitment sentences and a move toward alternative programs that assist young people in learning productive life skills in positive, formative environments. Her arguments contend that early intervention, rehabilitation, and community-based programs that address high-risk families reduce incarceration, avoid recidivism and save huge sums of taxpayer money. For me, the read proved challenging - not because it was written in legalese or dry, textbook language. To the contrary, Judge Sullivan's work can be as easily understood by the layman as it is for academic, correctional, public policy and legislative experts. Instead, I found myself too closely envisioning the lives, faces and nearly unfathomable sorrows of young children whose lives are cited within the pages of her book. Having spent a few years visiting incarcerated teenagers, I've witnessed firsthand some of the oversight, abuse and hopelessness about which Judge Sullivan speaks. Criticized by detractors as "Judge Hug-a-Thug", author Irene Sullivan recounts both her successes and failures while serving on the bench. Her attempts to provide compassionate second chances have been met with mixed results; yet, a genuine interest in advocating for juvenile offenders while balancing the society's larger need for safety has taught her much and exposed her to the multifaceted elements involved in addressing, overhauling and managing a seemingly

overwhelming national scourge. Judge Sullivan's learning process has included visiting kids behind bars, intervening to improve or close down harmful residence facilities, and connecting with juvenile justice leaders in academia and development. For a system so obviously in need of repair, Judge Irene Sullivan's work spotlights numerous enlightening programs from around the country with statistically proven merit and significant cost-saving results. She concludes her work by setting forth a list of "non-negotiable" items with which to guide and unite future juvenile justice programs and policy. *Raised by the Courts* - a worthwhile and recommended read for anyone interested in the future of America's youth and social vitality. The robust index of juvenile programs makes this work a valuable and necessary resource for every professional library where juvenile justice is of concern.

In *Raised by the Courts*, Judge Irene Sullivan gives the reader not only a chilling look at the tragic circumstances that push some youth toward delinquency, but also a hopeful description of strategies that are working to change things for the better. The author explains the inner workings of the juvenile court system and tells us of some of the unsung heroes that balance the safety of the public and the welfare of vulnerable children. While changing their names for their protection, Judge Sullivan shares the compelling life stories of several young people who have spent much of their lives appearing in court. The reader learns about the environment that contributed to their involvement with the courts and the measures taken to prevent them from coming back. The descriptions of child abuse and neglect that influenced many of the children described in the book are horrific, as are the end results in many cases, but as the author points out throughout the book, there are solutions that are working. But to put them in place, society must place the welfare of children as a higher priority.

Judge Sullivan's memoir offers an interesting insight into Pinellas County's Drug Court. I need to disclose that I'm sure that she does not remember me, but I remember her. Years ago, I represented a few, good folks who washed into her courtroom, and I remember thinking how kind she was. I still think she is very kind, which comes through in her writing. I also remember thinking that she was the right person in the right job, and I now think that she is the right person to write *"Raised By The Courts."* I am proud to own a copy wherein she inscribed, "Because you care about the children." I wish her the very best in her retirement and hope that she continues to write.

I have often wondered why so many juveniles get into trouble and if there are any programs that

work. This book answers those questions and many more. This book is a great read. You follow Judge Sullivan from the beginning of her judicial career to the end. As a very curious and highly intelligent judge she uncovers shocking flaws in the system, and changes them. She also reveals dedicated people and organizations that are changing our legal systems and communities to produce healthier children and more successful adults. You will walk away from this book with a different outlook on juveniles and criminal justice system, and a clear picture of the possibilities for improving our juvenile courts and the future of our children.

It is past time for our society to lend supports at an early age. Cuffs, ankle chains and incarceration not only ruins young lives...it costs our society unnecessary budget dollars. This book demonstrates a win-win approach. The system saves time and money, families are spared anguish, and most importantly teens get guidance so they can be productive members of our society. Sadly almost immediately after presenting this outlook for the State of Florida...budget cuts are eliminating many of the programs that would make this a reality.

Purchased this on recommendation by a friend and I must say it was pretty eye opening. If you work in the juvenile court system, if you are an attorney, a guardian ad litem, a paralegal, a social worker or anyone touched by the juvenile court system, you should read this book.

I felt like this book started out very interesting, but the more I read the less interesting it got.

Great for criminology and/or juvenile justice undergrad and law classes! Readable, compassionate and helpful regarding programs that work for needy kids.

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