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Florida Supreme Court Outlaws Indiscriminate Shackling of Juveniles
Assistant Public Defender, Juvenile Unit Director Mason Provides Court Winning Argument

Jacksonville, FL: A Florida Supreme Court Decision released Thursday (12/17) has prohibited indiscriminate shackling of juvenile offenders for court proceedings. Rob Mason, Director of the Juvenile Unit in the Office of Fourth Circuit Public Defender Matt Shirk, provided the Court with the convincing oral argument in June that led to the 6-1 decision.



“The Supreme Court’s ruling is a monumental victory for Florida’s children,” said Director Mason, past chair of the Juvenile Court Rules Committee. “Children in juvenile court are entitled to due process and fair treatment, and adoption of this rule is clearly consistent with those constitutional principles.”

Mason continued, “Indiscriminate shackling is an affront to the dignity and decorum of judicial proceedings and adversely affects a child’s sense of moral and personal development. It’s gratuitously punitive, counter-therapeutic, and contrary to the rehabilitative goals of the juvenile justice system. I’m grateful that the court agreed.”

Public Defender Matt Shirk applauds Mason’s dedication and commitment to the issue and said the 6-1 ruling from the Court acknowledges that the practice of shackling all juvenile offenders, regardless of age, gender, size, past record, or the offense they’re charged with is counterproductive both in the rehabilitation of the child and on a larger scale the societal mentality.

“This is not a total ban on shackles,” said Shirk. “Rob constructed a thoroughly researched argument based on his years and expertise in working in juvenile justice. He convinced the Supreme Court Justices that shackling every child is unnecessary, and that an individualized determination needs to be made by the court as to who should be shackled. What’s important is the rehabilitation of the youthful offenders and their ability to correct their behavior, and chaining all of them up is clearly not productive to this process.”
