

OJJDP supports juvenile justice reform to better protect public safety, hold youth appropriately accountable, reduce recidivism, and treat youth fairly.

↓ Youth Justice Reform Framework

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) embraces a developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and evidence-based approach to its policies, programs, grant-making, resource allocation, training and technical assistance, and resource development. The following policy guidance documents explain the underlying principles that guide our decisionmaking and define the outcomes that we are attempting to achieve. Links to a selection of OJJDP programs and resources are also provided.

Policy Guidance

- Ending the Use of Solitary Confinement for Youth (forthcoming)
- [Girls and the Juvenile Justice System](#)
- LGBTQI-GNC Youth and the Juvenile Justice System (forthcoming)
- Reducing Out-of-Home Placements (forthcoming)
- Youth and Family Engagement (forthcoming)

Programs



↓ Our Vision

OJJDP envisions a nation where all children are healthy, educated, and free from violence. If they come into contact with the juvenile justice system, the contact should be rare, fair, and beneficial to them. In furtherance of this vision, OJJDP is committed to a strategy of comprehensive statewide reform of our nation's juvenile justice system, a reduction in out-of-home placements for youth, and the fair and objective implementation of the core protections for our children, as provided for in the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act](#), the authorizing legislation for OJJDP.

OJJDP supports reform so the juvenile justice system can more effectively protect public safety, hold youth appropriately accountable, reduce recidivism, and treat youth fairly. We embrace the use of evidence-based and evidence-informed programs, practices, and

- [Community-Based Violence Prevention](#)
- [Defending Childhood Initiative](#)
- [Mentoring Programs](#)
- [National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention](#)
- [Smart on Juvenile Justice Initiative: Strategies for Comprehensive Statewide Juvenile Justice Reform](#)
- [Supportive School Discipline Initiative](#)

Research and Data

- [Model Programs Guide](#)
- [Statistical Briefing Book](#)

Training and Technical Assistance

- [Center for Coordinated Assistance to States](#)
- [Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts](#)
- [National Mentoring Resource Center](#)
- [National Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)

Partnerships

OJJDP has prioritized the following coordinated partnerships to foster collaboration among agencies at both the federal and local levels to develop innovative strategies to reduce youth crime and violence, ensure unified federal delinquency prevention policy, and reduce duplication of efforts:

- [Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention](#)
- [Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice](#)

policies that reduce recidivism, decrease racial and ethnic disparities, address the developmental needs of youth, and improve youth outcomes. The strategic use of cross-systems integration, coordination, and delivery of services is essential for effective reform. Also, it is critical that policymakers and professionals understand how trauma impacts the lives of the children in these systems and use trauma-informed care to address their needs. Finally, these reforms must embrace the use of assessments and screenings for all youth as they enter and progress through the system.

↓ Our Commitment

In fulfilling the mandates of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, OJJDP has made significant progress in protecting youth who come in contact with the system. Recent breakthroughs in research related to neuroscience and adolescent behavioral development have enhanced our understanding of the developmental needs of youth and have informed our reform efforts.

In 2011, OJJDP commissioned the National Research Council of the National Academies of Science to review recent advances in research related to neuroscience and adolescent development, assess the new generation of reform activities occurring across the nation, and assess OJJDP's capacity to carry out its statutory mission. The resulting report, *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*, has provided OJJDP with a blueprint for reforming the nation's juvenile justice systems.

In 2013, OJJDP requested that the National Research Council provide guidance on how to implement the recommendations in its landmark report. The second report—

Implementing Juvenile Justice Reform— identifies priority areas for OJJDP, including: reform based on a developmental approach, new strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities, strategic and tactical training and technical assistance, increased research capacity, enhanced federal leadership, and increased public/private partnerships.

↓ Background

In 1974, Congress passed the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (Pub. L. No. 93-415, 42 U.S.C. § 5601 *et seq.*). The Act represents the first federal legislation to comprehensively address delinquency prevention, youthful offending, system reform, and the treatment of youth in the juvenile justice system. It authorized the creation of OJJDP and designated OJJDP to set standards and provide direct funding for state and local juvenile justice systems and to support policy and program development; research, evaluations, and data collection; training and technical assistance to the states and the field; and information dissemination on effective programs to combat delinquency.

The four core protections in the Act are described below:

- The 1974 legislation established the **deinstitutionalization of status offenders** core protection. A status offense is behavior by a youth (someone younger than 18 years old) that would not be considered a crime if an adult committed the act. Common status offenses include truancy, running away, incorrigibility, and possessing or using tobacco. Youth charged with a

status offense or youth who have not been charged with an offense cannot be held in secure detention or correctional facilities.

- The 1974 legislation also established the **separation** core requirement under which youth may not be held in facilities in which they can have contact with adults in confinement. Later amendments to the Act stipulated that youth must be out of sight and sound contact with adults in confinement.
- In the 1980 reauthorization of the Act, Congress added a third protection: **removal of youth from adult jails and lock ups**. Youth cannot be detained or confined in any adult facility, except for temporary holds of youth who have committed non-status offenses.
- In 1992, Congress added the **disproportionate minority confinement** protection that requires states to show that they are implementing system reforms to reduce the disproportionate number of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. In the 2002 reauthorization of the Act, Congress further expanded the protection to include minority youths' contact with the system.

Additionally, Congress established the OJJDP-administered Formula Grants program to provide direct funding to the states to support their delinquency prevention and system improvement efforts. Formula grant

funding is tied directly to the state's compliance with the Act's core protections.

In passing this landmark legislation and refining it over the subsequent decades, Congress recognized that the doors for youth to enter the justice system must be kept as narrow as possible, that confinement can be harmful to youth, that states must make separate accommodations for youth that keep them away from adults in confinement, and that system reform is required to address issues of fairness in treatment of youth in the system.



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