

OJJDP Priorities

The **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)** is leading efforts to transform the juvenile justice system into one that—

- Takes adolescent brain development research into account and **treats children as children**, not as adults.
- Recognizes that most **young people are better served in their own communities** and that outcomes are improved when families are involved in youth's treatment.
- **Opens up opportunities for system-involved youth** so they have the same opportunities as youth who have not had contact with the juvenile justice system.

OJJDP'S Overarching Principles

- **Center the voices of system-involved youth and families.** OJJDP is committed to engaging impacted youth and families in reforming the juvenile justice system.
- **Approach our work through a racial equity and fairness lens.** OJJDP is committed to ending the disparate treatment of youth of color in the juvenile justice system.



Vision

OJJDP envisions a nation where all children are free from crime and violence. Youth contact with the justice system should be rare, fair, and beneficial.

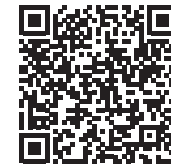
Mission

OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to youth delinquency and victimization. The Office helps states, localities, and Tribes develop effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that create safer communities and empower youth to lead productive lives.

OJJDP is a component of the Office of Justice Programs within the U.S. Department of Justice.

Facts About Youth Crime

Scan the QR code to access resources and facts about youth crime, strategies to address it, and today's juvenile justice system.



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PRIORITIES

FOR YOUTH JUSTICE



OJJDP Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

PRIORITY 1: Treat Children as Children

Children do not belong in adult courts, jails, and prisons. Research indicates that youth whose cases are prosecuted in adult criminal court are more likely to be rearrested and have higher recidivism rates than youth in the juvenile justice system.

Research also shows that the average person's brain is not fully developed until their mid-20s. Consequently, adolescents are prone to impulsive, emotional, and risk-taking behavior. These findings do not excuse youth from being held accountable for their actions. However, the U.S. Supreme Court has acknowledged the effect of adolescent brain development on culpability. Because their developing brains are more malleable than those of adults, young people are also more capable of change and rehabilitation.

Juvenile justice decisions must be informed by science and research to ensure young people are adjudicated fairly and given opportunities to learn and recover from their mistakes.



PRIORITY 2: Serve Children at Home, With Their Families, In Their Communities

Community-based programs that involve families as a critical component enhance youth outcomes, increase public safety, and strengthen neighborhoods.

State-run juvenile correctional facilities are typically the most expensive to operate but have negligible public safety benefits compared with community-based programs. They are also not equipped to address the trauma and mental health challenges that bring many young people into contact with the juvenile justice system.

Negative outcomes from youth incarceration include associating with more delinquent peers and increased criminal behavior and recidivism. Closing underutilized juvenile correctional facilities and reinvesting the savings into evidence-based programs and services will help keep young people out of the system, in school, and connected to their families. **We can hold young people accountable for their actions and still give them a chance at better outcomes.**



PRIORITY 3: Open Up Opportunities for System-Involved Youth

When youth become involved with the juvenile justice system, they typically face serious repercussions that extend beyond immediate consequences. Juvenile records can adversely affect a young person's ability to continue their education, secure housing, get a job, or join the military.

These collateral consequences can, in turn, lead to recidivism and prolonged contact with the juvenile justice system. **If the mission of the juvenile justice system is truly to rehabilitate young people and protect public safety, juvenile justice practitioners must recognize and address the barriers to success that involvement with the juvenile justice system creates for youth.**

