In 2020, the National Institute of Justice and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention introduced questions in the 2020 Juvenile Residential Facility Census (JRFC) survey to understand how facilities responded to the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19).

Overall, 1,323 facilities participated in the JRFC that year. Facility response in relation to COVID-19 questions varied by topic, but response rates were generally high, ranging from 78% to 96%. Most facilities indicated that they increased phone or video communication to ensure residents were able to contact family members and their legal counsel. Fewer than half of facilities indicated that they reduced their population by either transferring or releasing residents early. Nearly all facilities indicated they screened entrants, staff, and/or visitors for symptoms prior to entry or upon arrival to the facility.

More than three-quarters of facilities (1,037 of 1,323 facilities) indicated they had access to COVID-19 testing. Of those reporting access to testing, 61% reported testing residents who presented with COVID-19 symptoms, and less than half tested residents who were exposed to confirmed or suspected cases of COVID-19.