

WHAT IS THE JJDPA?

Originally passed in 1974 and most recently reauthorized in 2002, the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act is a federal law that is based on a broad, bipartisan consensus that youth and families involved with the juvenile and criminal courts should be guarded by federal standards for care and custody, while the interests of community safety are also upheld.

WHY IS THE JJDPA IMPORTANT?

The JJDPA sets out federal standards for the custody and care of youth in the juvenile justice system. These standards include four core protections that help ensure the health and well-being of youth:

- **Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)** keeps status offenders (e.g. runaways, truants) out of secure facilities;
- **Adult Jail and Lockup Removal (Jail Removal)** prevents youth from being confined with adults in adult facilities;
- **Sight and Sound Separation** provides that when youth are held with adults in the same facility (as occurs in limited instances) they must be separated by both sight and sound from adult offenders;
- **Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)** mandates that states address the disproportionate contact of youth of color at key points in the juvenile justice system from arrest to detention to confinement.

In Massachusetts, the framework and funding provided by JJDPA have been critical to the Commonwealth's efforts to begin to address the stark racial disparities in the juvenile justice system.

WHY IS REAUTHORIZATION URGENT?

For the first time in over twenty years, we have a Congress that is ready and willing to strengthen, rather than weaken, the four core protections mentioned above. Currently, juvenile arrest rates are at an historic low, and the continuing success of effective juvenile crime prevention and deterrence depends on Congress strengthening these protections and providing the funding needed to fulfill such provisions to the greatest extent possible.

JJDPA reauthorized is long overdue, and action now would end the current legal limbo of our nation's juvenile justice system.

RECENT REAUTHORIZATION EFFORTS

Over the past several Congressional sessions, reauthorization bills have been introduced in both the House and the Senate that update and strengthen the JJDP. These bills have emphasized rehabilitation and access to services that have been shown to reduce recidivism through evidence-based practices.

PREVIOUS VERSIONS

- Strengthen the four core protections of JJDP.
- Create incentive grants for evidence-based prevention and intervention programs.
- Improve services and supports, including mental health and substance abuse programs.
- Encourage placement in the least restrictive setting.
- Reduce the use of restraints, isolation, and other dangerous practices.
- Forbid incarceration of all status offenders in secure detention facilities.
- Increase data tracking.
- Extend jail removal and sight and sound core protections to all pre-adjudicated youth under the age of 18, regardless of whether they are being tried as a juvenile or an adult.
- Allow states to keep youth convicted of adult crimes in juvenile facilities without facing a penalty.

ALLIANCE

Citizens for Juvenile Justice is part of a national coalition composed of juvenile justice, child welfare and youth development organizations working for a strong reauthorization. For more information about the JJDP and the alliance, please visit: act4jj.org