



Snapshot:

THE JJDPA: WHAT IS IT AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

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For more than four decades the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPa) has had a profound impact on how our youth justice systems operate. In fact, it has so deeply changed how states organize their justice systems that many reformers, unfortunately, take it for granted. Without the JJDPa, reformers would lack consistent data, a go-to federal agency, funds for community-based options and system changes, and state-level oversight bodies to monitor basic care for youth in the system. JJDPa was signed into law by President Gerald Ford on September 7, 1974, and was last reauthorized in 2002, making it more than ten years past due for reauthorization. This snapshot highlights the basics of what this law does and why it continues to be a critically important tool for helping young people and communities and furthering youth justice reform.

What Does the JJDPa Do?

At the time that the JJDPa was enacted, egregious practices were commonplace in many states, such as regularly placing children in the juvenile justice system into adult jails. Thus, the JJDPa was enacted to provide federal guidance and standards to ensure a minimum level of safety and equitable treatment for youth in every state, U.S. territory, the District of Columbia, and tribes. Here are some of the key ways that the JJDPa does this:

Protects Youth

The JJDPa established four core protections for youth:

- The deinstitutionalization of youth with status offenses (DSO) core protection provides that youth charged with offenses such as truancy and running away should not be confined in juvenile facilities or adult jails;

- The jail removal core protection provides that youth should not be placed in adult jails and lock-ups except under very limited circumstances;
- The “sight and sound” separation core protection provides that youth in adult jails or lock-ups must be sight and sound separated from adult inmates; and
- The disproportionate minority contact core protection mandates that states take measures to reduce racial and ethnic disparities at key contact points in the juvenile justice system.

Created a Federal Agency

The JJDPA established the office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention ([OJJDP](#)) – an agency that provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to states to help them comply with the core protections and other requirements of the JJDPA, as well as to develop effective youth justice programs to support youth and build healthy, safe communities. These resources include:

- provision of funding to the states through formula and discretionary grants;
- technical assistance and training to states;
- research, reports and trainings on youth justice issues and reforms; and
- the collection and analysis of statistics on youth involved with youth justice systems throughout the country.

Collects Detailed Data

OJJDP collects, and makes public, data on youth in every stage of the youth justice system throughout the country. OJJDP provides statistical analyses of this data as well as a [Statistical Briefing Book](#), which allows all users to sort the data by a variety of categories on the national and state level.

Establishes State Oversight

The JJDPA requires that governors create a State Advisory Group to provide advice on youth justice policy, monitor and support the state’s progress in addressing the JJDPA core requirements, provide input into the distribution of the state’s JJDPA funding, and develop a three-year, youth justice plan for the state.

Funds Programs

The JJDPA emphasizes that states provide funding for community-based alternatives.¹ JJDPA funds have been used by states to fund a variety of community-based programs, such as afterschool and summer delinquency prevention programs in Florida,² alternatives to detention programs in Georgia,³ and reentry programs in Illinois.⁴

What are the Funding Sources?

For more than four decades, Congress has appropriated funds for youth justice in states through two authorized funding streams in the JJDP: Title II and Title V.

Title II State Formula Grants⁵

Each state, territory and the District of Columbia are allocated funds on the basis of their proportionate population younger than age 18. The states must use at least two-thirds of their grant funds for programs operated by local public agencies, private agencies, and Native American tribal programs. States generally give funding priority to programs that support the priority needs identified in their state plans.

Title V Local Delinquency Prevention Program

Title V is still one of the only federal programs specifically developed for preventing delinquency at the local level. The state must use these dollars to fund community-based delinquency prevention activities of local jurisdictions, including any tribe that performs law enforcement functions. The localities are required to provide a 50% match.

What's Next?

The JJDP was last reauthorized by Congress in 2002. That means it does not reflect many of the important new developments in the field, including new adolescent brain science research; the cost-effectiveness and improved outcomes from trauma-informed, community-based approaches; and what we know works to address the needs of youth of color and girls. Efforts are underway to update and reauthorize the JJDP to reflect these new developments and incentivize states to enact bold, evidence-based reform efforts that have proven to be more effective.

The JJDP's funding streams have been systematically depleted for more than a decade. Since the law was last updated in 2002, federal appropriation levels have dropped by more than 80 percent. States have been forced to stretch ever-shrinking federal dollars to fund effective programs for youth and to monitor compliance with the four core protections of the JJDP. If the JJDP is not reauthorized soon, the program will likely be at risk for significant further cuts.

For More Information

[Act4JJ](#)

[S. 860 – Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2017](#)

[H.R. 1809 – Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2017](#)

[Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, as amended 2002](#)

[Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention \(OJJDP\)](#)

[OJJDP - State Contacts](#)

[OJJDP - Funding](#)

[Juvenile Justice Federal Funding Chart](#)

¹ See 42 U.S.C. 5633 (a)(9) (2002).

² Act 4 Juvenile Justice, “Profile of Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Funding: Florida,” accessed Oct. 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2ix7e1B>.

³ Act 4 Juvenile Justice, “Profile of Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Funding: Georgia,” accessed Oct. 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2gyHL3n>.

⁴ Act 4 Juvenile Justice, “Profile of Federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Funding: Illinois,” accessed Oct. 18, 2017, <http://bit.ly/2z415kf>.

⁵ U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, “OJJDP In Focus: Formula Grants Program” (Oct. 2009): 3, <http://bit.ly/2i2wTv4>.