



A CAMPAIGN OF THE NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE  
& DELINQUENCY PREVENTION COALITION

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## **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) Policy Recommendations**

**The Act 4 Juvenile Justice campaign of the National Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition—composed of more than 350 national, international, state and local organizations—believes that the time is right for Congress to reauthorize and strengthen the JJDP.**

Reauthorization of the JJDP is currently more than six years overdue. Congress can and should use the reauthorization of the JJDP as an opportunity to strengthen accountability for federal spending, help states protect public safety, hold delinquent youth accountable, protect our children from harm, and provide rehabilitation services to prevent future delinquency. This landmark law was last reauthorized in 2002, but few substantive changes were made at that time. Since the last major reauthorization of the JJDP nearly two decades ago, much more is known about what works and does not work to keep our communities safe and put youth on a better path.

The most recent, broadly supported, bipartisan proposal to reauthorize the JJDP introduced in 2009<sup>1</sup> includes specific new provisions to this long-standing law designed to increase evidence-based screening and assessment for children and youth who come into contact with the courts, as well as to improve family and community supports and services for mental health and behavioral health. These and other reforms contained within the law aim to reach youth and families who are isolated and disconnected from stable environments, supportive adults, and systems of care. The law also provides federal support for a comprehensive range of state and local delinquency prevention and intervention strategies, including those aimed at preventing illegal gun possession and use by youth. Moreover, the JJDP and its reauthorization legislation support OJJDP, the federal home for preventing delinquency and addressing the needs of court-involved youth.

Congress should hold hearings and pass a JJDP reauthorization bill that will:

- Extend the Jail Removal and Sight and Sound separation core protections to all youth under the age of 18 held pretrial, whether charged in juvenile or adult court.
- Codify current State flexibility for housing youth convicted in adult court in juvenile facilities rather than adult prisons by modifying the definition of “adult inmate.”

- Strengthen the Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO) core protection, which prohibits the locked detention of status offenders, by removing the valid court order (VCO) and Interstate Compact exceptions.
- Strengthen the Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) core protection by requiring States to take concrete steps to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system.
- Provide safe and humane conditions of confinement for youth in State or local custody by prohibiting use of JJDP funds for dangerous practices and encouraging States to adopt best practices and standards to eliminate dangerous practices and unnecessary isolation.
- Provide a research-based continuum of mental health and substance abuse services to meet unmet needs of court-involved youth and their families, including diversion and re-entry services.
- Assist States in compliance with the JJDP by establishing incentive grants to encourage States to adopt evidence-based and/or promising practices that improve outcomes for youth and their communities. For States that are deemed to be out of compliance with any of the core protections, Congress should require any JJDP funds withheld for non-compliance to be set aside and made available to those States as improvement grants to help them with those particular protections.
- Enhance the partnership between States and OJJDP by expanding training, technical assistance, research and evaluation. Enhance the partnership between OJJDP and Congress by encouraging transparency, timeliness, public notice, and communication.
- Incentivize juvenile justice systems to ensure that all policies, practices, and programs recognize the unique needs of girls.
- Expand family engagement in juvenile justice by creating a National Technical Assistance Center on Family Engagement to support to state and local justice and child-serving agencies and a National Family Resource Center to serve families in the justice system, as well as supporting state and regional Parental Information Resource Centers.
- Provide youth at high-risk of offending or re-offending, and their families with intensive, culturally competent and neighborhood based in-home programs designed to address the individual needs of each youth and build on strengths that keep youth safely at home, connected to their families and the community.

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<sup>1</sup> See S. 678, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2009, introduced March 24, 2009.