

## **What are the definitions of some common juvenile justice terms?**

**Adjudicated delinquent:** A youth who has been found by a judge in juvenile court to have committed a violation of the criminal law, that is, a delinquent act. The judge can formally adjudicate the youth as an initial step before imposing a disposition (a sentence or punishment), or the judge can decide not to adjudicate the youth and instead impose conditions that, if met, will result in dismissal of the charges.

**Adjudicatory hearing:** The fact finding (trial) phase of a juvenile case in which a judge receives and weighs evidence before deciding whether a delinquency or status offense has been proven beyond a reasonable doubt.

**Aggravating factors:** Factors to be considered that may increase the seriousness of the offense, such as prior offenses, weapon use, heinous nature of crime, and threats to victims or witnesses.

**Arrest:** A law enforcement officer charges an offender with a criminal act or violation of law and takes the offender into custody based on probable cause.

**Conflict resolution:** Use of communication skills and creative thinking to develop voluntary solutions that are acceptable to disputants.

**Continuum of care:** A broad array of juvenile justice programs and services ranging from prevention programs for young children and youth at risk of delinquency to intervention programs serving high-risk youth in secure residential settings.

**Curfew:** A local ordinance that requires, under specific conditions and exceptions, a specific group of persons (usually juveniles under a certain age) to refrain from unsupervised activities after a designated hour within the confines of a selected area, city, or county.

**Custody; Taken into custody:** Being in the care of a criminal or juvenile justice agency or official or being taken into custody by a law enforcement officer pursuant to the laws of arrest if the juvenile were an adult and the offense is criminal in nature.

**Delinquency prevention programs:** Programs and services designed to keep at-risk youth from entering the juvenile justice system.

**Delinquent act:** Any act committed by a youth that would be a criminal violation if committed by an adult.

**Delinquent juvenile:** A youth who has been found responsible for having committed a delinquent act--the equivalent of being found guilty of a criminal offense.

**Detention:** In custody (secure, non-secure, or home confinement) while awaiting an adjudication hearing, disposition, or commitment placement.

**Detention hearing:** A judicial hearing generally required to be held within 72 hours of a youth being taken into custody, at which point the court determines whether (1) there is probable cause to believe that the youth has committed a delinquent act or a court order exists that requires the continued detention of the youth, and (2) continued detention is required pending an adjudicatory hearing.

**Disposition hearing:** The hearing in a juvenile case (like a sentencing hearing in criminal court) at which the court receives a predisposition report containing information and recommendations to help determine the appropriate sanction. These sanctions can include probation, commitment to the custody of the state's department of juvenile justice, or community-based sanctions.

**Diversion:** A process by which a youth is channeled from the juvenile justice system. Examples are Informal Adjustment, Truancy Court, etc.

**Intake:** The process used for every youth referred to juvenile court. Intake involves screening each youth to determine the appropriateness for release or referral to a diversionary program or agency for nonofficial or nonjudicial handling. This screening also identifies the presence of medical, psychiatric, psychological, substance abuse, and educational problems or other conditions that may have caused the youth to come to the attention of law enforcement or intake. Intake includes initial screening of a status offender to determine the recommended action to be taken in the best interests of the youth, the family, and the community.

**Juvenile delinquency program:** Any program or activity related to juvenile delinquency prevention, control, diversion, intervention, treatment, rehabilitation, planning, education, training, and research.

**Mediation:** A process by which a neutral third person, or mediator, encourages and facilitates the resolution of a dispute between two or more parties. It is an informal process designed to help the disputants reach a mutually acceptable and voluntary agreement. Decision making authority rests with the parties. The role of the mediator includes, but is not limited to, helping the parties identify issues, fostering joint problem solving, and exploring settlement alternatives.

**Mentoring:** Generally involves providing support and guidance to and spending time on a regular basis with a youth. Mentoring activities can include participating

in sports, playing games, shopping, taking hikes, helping with homework, and doing chores.

**Protective factors:** Factors that help to reduce the impact of risk factors in a young person's life.

**Risk factors:** Certain problem behaviors present risk factors in a young person's life that may contribute to later delinquency. A few examples include the availability of drugs and firearms in the community, family conflict, and friends who engage in problem behaviors.

**Status offenses:** Non-criminal offenses only applicable to children--for example, being truant, running away from home, possessing alcohol or cigarettes, or violating curfew.

**Truant:** A young person who is absent from school without permission or authorization.

**Victimization:** The result of a planned or accidental act that causes physical or psychological harm.

**Violent crime:** Crimes of violence include rape, robbery, assault, or murder.