

Major Provisions of Juvenile Justice Reauthorization Act of 2015

- Clarifies that an additional purpose of the existing statute is to support a continuum of programs (including delinquency prevention, intervention, mental health and substance abuse treatment) to respond to at-risk youth or juvenile offenders.
- Phases out the remaining circumstance in which youth offenders may be detained for “status” offenses—such as running away, skipping school, or underage tobacco use—that would not be crimes if committed by adults.
- Calls for the inclusion of individuals with mental health expertise on the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Delinquency Prevention.
- Encourages participating states to report additional data about the ethnicity (not just race and gender) of juveniles in confinement.
- Calls for the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to identify evidence-based and promising practices.
- Clarifies that grants to states should be allocated based on the most recently available census data.
- Promotes transparency, e.g., by requiring that a state plan be posted online within 30 days of its approval, and by requiring that OJJDP annually publicize a plan describing its programs’ goals).
- Calls for greater focus on mental health and substance abuse screening, assessment, referral and treatment of juvenile offenders.
- Caps the amount of juvenile justice funds that may be devoted to mentoring grants.
- Adds procedural safeguards to improve juvenile reentry services.
- Offers guidance to states on how to identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities among youth who come into contact with the justice system.
- Encourages states to share records relating to abused and neglected children.
- Encourages greater use of community-based alternatives to youth detention.
- Calls for the development of a uniform method of data collection to evaluate data on youth recidivism.
- Calls for training to support juvenile judges and requires that federal training/technical assistance efforts be coordinated with state and local corrections/detention personnel.
- Adds accountability and oversight provisions to which all grantees are subject, such as a limit on conference expenditures and restriction on use of grants for lobbying. Also requires the Comptroller General to evaluate OJJDP and do selected audits of grantees.
- Authorizes at least \$159 million each year to implement the bill (with a 2% increase each year for the five-year term of the reauthorization) in fiscal years 2016-2020.