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# Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act

**The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) allows the government to fund programs in states and local communities.** These programs aim to prevent young people from getting in trouble with the law and improve how the justice system interacts with youth. The most extensive JJDPA program gives states grants for certain activities related to four main requirements:

- keeping young people who break minor laws out of detention centers,
- making sure youth facilities are safe and separate from adult facilities,
- not putting young people in adult jails or lockups,
- and addressing any unfair treatment based on race or ethnicity.

The law also allows for other activities like providing help, training, demonstrations, research, and programs for runaway and homeless youth, as well as missing children.



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## Why It Matters

**The law helps improve treatment for people with disabilities,** including learning disabilities, who are involved with the juvenile justice system. It provides important legal protections for these individuals.

# Deeper Dive

**The U.S. Department of Justice provides formula grants (meaning non-competitive funds) to states.** These funds are meant to help states plan, start, run, coordinate, and assess projects that make education, training, research, prevention, diversion, treatment, and rehabilitation programs more effective in dealing with juvenile delinquency and improving the juvenile justice system.

These funds can be used for various activities, such as creating community—and home-based alternatives to putting young people in jail or institutions, offering services to juvenile offenders who are at risk of child abuse and neglect, providing education and support for young people at risk or already involved in delinquency, and ensuring that young people have proper legal representation.

These funds  
are meant to  
help projects be  
more effective.

In order to receive funding, states must follow these requirements:



## 1. Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders

A “status offender” is a young person facing charges or judged for behavior that wouldn’t be considered a crime if an adult did it. These include truancy, curfew violations, running away from home, alcohol use, and “general ungovernability.” The law says that, with a few exceptions, these young people shouldn’t be placed in secure detention facilities or correctional facilities.



## 3. Adult Jail and Lockup Removal

In most cases, states cannot put young people in adult jails or lockup facilities.



## 2. Site and Sound Separation

The law tells states to make sure that young people accused or judged for delinquent acts, those charged with status offenses, and those not involved in any offense are not kept in places where they might come into contact with adult inmates—those over 18.



## 4. Racial and Ethnic Disparities

States must work on strategies to find and reduce any differences in how the juvenile justice system treats young people of different races and ethnicities.

# Deeper Dive

Several parts of JJJPA specifically deal with matters related to people with disabilities, including the following:



**The U.S. Department of Justice is required to share a yearly report with Congress about young people taken into custody.** This report should include details about their education, like learning disabilities, poor academic performance, repeating grades, and leaving school early.



**States can use the funds they receive for projects related to juvenile delinquency and learning disabilities.** This includes creating on-the-job training programs to help community services, law enforcement, and people in juvenile justice better understand and support young individuals with learning disabilities.



Additionally, **the funds can be used for programs specifically focusing on the needs of girls in or at risk of getting into the juvenile justice system.**

This includes pregnant girls, young mothers, survivors of sexual exploitation or trafficking, girls with disabilities, and girls from diverse backgrounds, including those who are members of an Indian tribe.



Learn more about how youth with learning disabilities are affected by the juvenile justice system in NCLD's [Unlocking Futures report.](#)

## Additional Resources

- [The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974, As Amended](#)
- [Coalition for Juvenile -- Justice, Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act](#)
- [Congressional Research Service, Juvenile Justice: Legislative History and Current Legislative Issues](#)