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Responsible Public Policy

The Department of Youth Services (DYS) touches the lives of thousands of youth in Ohio. Beyond youth in DHS facilities and those on parole, DHS funds and supports over 610 direct service programs throughout the state offering nearly 110,000 youth (based on annual program admissions) opportunities and services to effect positive change.



Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act of 1974 has helped to improve how states and communities handle troubled youth. This Act and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) assist state and local governments in preventing and controlling juvenile delinquency and improving the juvenile justice system. DHS serves as the pass-through agency for the Title II Grant Program provided by OJJDP. In order to receive this funding, Ohio must maintain compliance with the following four core components of the Act:

- Deinstitutionalization of status offenders (DSO)
- Separation of juvenile and adult offenders
- Removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups
- Addressing disproportionate minority contact (DMC)

The DSO requirement prohibits status offenders, non-offenders or alien juveniles from being detained or confined in secure detention or secure correctional facilities. Status offenders are those juveniles who are charged with or who have committed offenses that would not be criminal if committed by an adult. An example of a status offense is school truancy. Non-offenders are those youth who are subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court because of conditions including abuse, dependency and neglect. Alien juveniles include undocumented immigrant youth.

Separation of juvenile and adults offenders prohibits delinquents, status offenders and non-offenders from being detained or confined in any institution where they might have contact with incarcerated adults. Contact includes any physical or sustained sight and/or sound contact. The intent is to prevent potential emotional or physical trauma that could occur through commingling juvenile offenders with adults. Separation promotes treatment for and rehabilitation of juveniles.

Jail removal prohibits juveniles from being detained or confined in any jail or lockup for adults. It is important to note that while many juveniles taken into police custody and referred to the juvenile court can be released to parental custody to await court action, those juveniles who have committed serious crimes and are a safety risk to the community may be placed in secure facilities pending court hearings. Per both the Act and Ohio state law, juveniles can only be taken into the secure area of an adult jail for processing purposes for up to six hours and only if the offense is a felony or misdemeanor.

DMC efforts target reducing the number of minorities that come into contact with the juvenile justice system at any point. This requires states to identify whether minority juveniles are disproportionately represented in statistics for arrest, detention, court referral, and state commitment, among others; provide a complete assessment of why DMC exists; and provide an intervention plan that seeks to reduce the number of minority juveniles in the justice system.

OJJDP requires DHS to monitor compliance with the components of the Act. The DHS compliance manager collects and verifies data and provides on-site monitoring visits of facilities that hold juveniles to ensure that the core requirements are met. Based on statewide reporting by juvenile detention centers, jails and other facilities, combined with on-site monitoring, DHS submits its annual compliance monitoring report to the OJJDP. For more information about the OJJDP or the Act, visit the Office's webpage at www.ojjdp.gov.

