

Juvenile Justice Terms

Adjudication: Analogous to an adult “conviction,” it is a formal finding by the juvenile court, after an adjudicatory hearing or the entering of a guilty plea/admission, that the juvenile has committed the act for which he or she is charged.

Adjudicatory Hearing: The fact-finding phase (i.e. the trial) of a juvenile case. At this hearing the judge—or in a limited number of jurisdictions, the jury—receives and weighs the evidence to determine whether the facts prove the charges alleged in the delinquency petition beyond a reasonable doubt. If the juvenile is found guilty (or involved) at the adjudicatory hearing this finding is called an “adjudication.”

Adolescent Development: The process through which biological, cognitive, emotional and social development unfolds and interacts during the second decade of life. The study of adolescent development is primarily dominated by psychology, although other disciplines such as biology and neuroscience help inform our understanding of adolescence. Increasingly, researchers study the impact of context (i.e. families, peers, schools, neighborhoods, culture) on adolescent development, and how such contexts contribute to both positive and negative outcomes. Counsel should be knowledgeable about the key aspects of adolescent development that informs specific legal questions regarding competence in legal proceedings, culpability, mitigation, and amenability to treatment and rehabilitation.

Aftercare: Services (including health, mental health, educational, vocational, family services, etc.) designed to help youth re-enter the community after placement in out-of-home facilities. Collaboration and planning for aftercare typically begins well before a youth is released to ensure the continuity of supervision and care.

Age Of Criminal Responsibility: The age at which an individual is subject to the jurisdiction of adult criminal court instead of juvenile court. In most states, the age of criminal responsibility is 17 or 18, though states also have provisions to transfer younger youth to the adult system.

Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART): Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART) is a treatment program targeted at youth with a history of serious aggression and anti-social behavior. It teaches youth techniques to control impulsiveness and anger, and to behave in a more pro-social fashion. Studies have found ART to be effective in reducing recidivism and problem behavior and increasing social skills.

Alternatives to detention: Community-based services and/or supervision provided to a juvenile in the community to avoid placement in a detention facility. See detention facility.

Arrest: Hold time in legal custody, either at the scene of a crime or as a result of investigations. Arrest also can be the result of a complaint filed by a third party, an outstanding warrant, or a revocation of probation or parole.

Assessment: Evaluation or appraisal of a candidate's suitability for placement in a specific treatment modality/setting and the relationship to custody and supervision. In mental health, an assessment refers to comprehensive information required for the diagnosis of a mental health disorder. An assessment differs from a screening, which is used to determine if an assessment is needed. See screening.

Average daily population (ADP): ADP is calculated by dividing the total number of days all placed youth spent in a program/facility by the number of days in a specified period (e.g., sum of all days in the program/facility for all youth placed during the year/number of days in the year).

Average length of stay (ALOS): Average length of stay is usually calculated on those youth who end a service/placement during the reporting period. ALOS is the sum of all the stays for those released during the period divided by the number of "releases." See length of stay.

Blended Sentencing: A sentence that falls outside of a juvenile or criminal court's normal realm of consideration. For example, in some states a criminal court may impose a juvenile disposition for certain youth tried as adults or, conversely, a juvenile court may levy an adult sentence or a combined juvenile-and-adult sentence against an offender. While a juvenile court will impose an age-appropriate placement followed by a term in adult prison, the adult sentence is on hold pending a review of the youth's progress in the juvenile system.

Case rate: Number of cases disposed per 1,000 juveniles in the population. The population base used to calculate the case rate varies. For example, the population base for the male case rate is the total number of male youth age 10 or older who are under the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts.

Child abuse: Acts that cause physical and/or emotional injury to the child (not necessarily resulting in a court finding). Types of child abuse include physical abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse.

Child neglect: Acts that include abandonment, expulsion from the home, failure to seek remedial health care or delay in seeking care, inadequate supervision, disregard for hazards in the home, or inadequate food, clothing, or shelter (not necessarily resulting in a court finding).

Commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC): CSEC describes a constellation of crimes of a sexual nature committed against youthful victims (younger than 18 years old) primarily or entirely for financial or economic reasons. These crimes include, for example, trafficking for sexual purposes, prostitution, sex tourism, mail-order-bride trade and early marriage, pornography, stripping and sexual performances.

Conditions Of Confinement: The quality of living in a particular juvenile detention or secure confinement facility, determined by its physical environment (cleanliness, temperature, light, plumbing, etc.), safety (the absence or prevalence of assaults, sexual abuse, and harmful practices, such as use of excessive force or isolation), and access to health care, education, programming, and visitation.

Confinement: This stage of the delinquency process refers to locking up youth who have been adjudicated delinquent in a secure juvenile facility.

Commitment: A court order giving guardianship of a juvenile to the state department of juvenile justice or corrections. The facility in which a juvenile may be placed may be publicly or privately operated and may range from a secure correctional placement to a nonsecure or staff-secure facility, group home, foster care, or day treatment setting.

Community Assessment Center (CAC): An integrated case management system that provides youth with a single 24-hour centralized point of intake and assessment to ensure the provision of appropriate and unduplicated treatment services. CACs use a collaborative approach that leads to more integrated and effective cross-system services for juveniles and their families. CACs are designed to positively influence the lives of youth and divert them from a path of serious, violent, and chronic delinquency.

Community service: Work performed by for the benefit of the community. It is justified in a restorative justice perspective as a method of addressing the harm experienced by communities when a crime occurs. However, it can be used instead for retributive purposes or as a means of rehabilitation. What distinguishes its use as a restorative response is the attention given to identifying the harm suffered by the community as a result of crime, and the effort to ensure that the community service contributes to repairing that particular harm.

Correctional facility: Any public or private residential facility with construction fixtures or staffing models designed to physically restrict the movements and activities of juveniles or other individuals that is used for the placement, after adjudication and disposition, of any juvenile who has been adjudicated as having committed an offense, or of any other individual convicted of a criminal offense. For pre-adjudication placement, see Detention and Detention Facility.

Court referral: A complaint or petition filed with the juvenile court.

Cultural competency: The ability of service agencies to understand the world view of clients of different cultures and adapt practices to ensure their effectiveness.

Decision Points in the Juvenile Justice System: Examples of key decision points in juvenile justice include:

- arrest
- Juvenile court intake
- Pretrial detention
- Disposition or sentencing
- Probation
- Placement in a juvenile corrections assessment center
- Community reentry

Deep End: The dispositional and post-dispositional part of the juvenile justice system or a focus on youth placed out-of-home or in correctional facilities at the point of disposition.

Delinquency: An act committed by a juvenile that would be criminal if committed by an adult. The juvenile court has jurisdiction over delinquent acts. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order.

Detention: Usually refers to the placement of a youth in a secure facility under court authority at some point between the time of referral to court intake and case disposition. Detention prior to case disposition is known as pre-dispositional detention. At times there is a need for detention after sentencing, known as post-dispositional detention. The reasons for post-dispositional detention generally include awaiting placement, short-term sentencing to detention, or being a danger to self or others.

Detention facility: A secure pre-dispositional/post-dispositional public or private facility (local or regional) with construction fixtures or staffing models designed to physically restrict the movements and activities of juveniles or other individuals that is used for the placement, after adjudication and disposition, of any juvenile who has been adjudicated as having committed an offense, or of any other individual convicted of a criminal offense. There are generally three types of detention centers: local, regional, and state. Local facilities are owned and operated by one local political jurisdiction. Regional facilities are owned and operated jointly by more than one local political jurisdiction; these facilities are eligible to receive youth from each member jurisdiction. State facilities are owned and operated by a state agency; these facilities are eligible to receive youth from designated (or all) localities within the state.

Direct File: A prosecutor's discretion to bring charges against youth directly in adult criminal court instead of in juvenile court, without a prior certification hearing. States that permit this practice vary in what circumstances warrant it, but all consider the offender's age and history and the nature of the offense.

Disparity: Disparity simply means the state of being unequal. In the context of juvenile justice, disparity is often used to describe unequal rates of involvement in the juvenile justice system. For example, if 50 in 1,000 Black youth are admitted to secure detention in a jurisdiction and 10 in 1,000 White youth are admitted, Black youth are five times ($50/10=5$) as likely as White youth to be securely detained. There is a disparity in the rate at which Black youth are detained.

Disposition: The juvenile equivalent of an adult sentence, disposition is a final decision as to how a juvenile's case is handled after an adjudication. Because juvenile courts expressly focus on rehabilitating children who are adjudicated as delinquent, dispositions typically include a treatment plan aimed at addressing perceived deficiencies in the child's current living environment and behavior. To determine an appropriate disposition, the judge should consider evidence about the juvenile's needs, available resources, and other relevant factors to design a plan to meet the juvenile's rehabilitation and the interests of the state. Disposition outcomes vary and may include but are not limited to, fines, restitution, community service, in-home placement under supervision or probation, and out-of-home placement in commitment facilities. See also Disposition Hearing;

Disposition Hearing: Akin to a sentencing hearing in criminal court, this hearing is held after a juvenile has been adjudicated. At the hearing, the judge decides the appropriate sanctions and treatment for an adjudicated juvenile after hearing recommendations from the prosecution, probation staff, the defense, the child's parents and/or other potential stakeholders. After considering the disposition plans and recommendations, the judge will give the court's official disposition order, (*e.g.* probation, commitment, community-based sanctions, etc.). See also Disposition; Disposition Order; Disposition Plan.

Disproportionality: refers to an unequal ratio or relation between the compositions of two populations. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) applies the term specifically to the comparison between (a) the rate at which youth in a specific racial or ethnic group appear at one decision point in the juvenile justice system versus the rate at which they appear at a prior decision point and (b) the rate at which non-Hispanic White youth appear at the same decision points.

Disproportionate Minority Confinement (DMC): The inequitable overrepresentation of youth of color in juvenile detention, youth correctional facilities, or adult jails and prisons. The term refers specifically to situations where the proportion of youth of color who are detained or confined exceeds the proportion that group represents in the general population. The term has generally been replaced by “Disproportionate Minority Contact,” defined below.

Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC): The inequitable representation of minority youth in the juvenile justice system. The term includes overrepresentation of youth of color at particular points in the system (arrest, referral to court, detention, etc.) as compared to their representation at the previous decision point, as well as the disparate and harsher treatment administered to youth of color at key decision points (i.e., length of disposition, whether to transfer a youth to adult criminal court, etc.). Through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), the federal government provides incentives for states to investigate and reduce DMC in the juvenile justice system. It should be noted, however, that some experts argue that regional and national demographic shifts make it more appropriate to refer to the phenomenon as “racial and ethnic disparities,” without reference to “minorities.” Accordingly, we use “racial and ethnic fairness” or “racial and ethnic disparities,” rather than “disproportionate minority contact,” where feasible.

Diversion: A system of procedures or programs that direct youth away from formal juvenile justice system processing entirely, as well as programs that divert youth away from secure detention in a juvenile justice facility.

Evidence based program and/or practice: Programs and practices that have been shown, through rigorous evaluation and replication, to be effective at preventing or reducing juvenile delinquency or victimization, or related risk factors. Evidence based practices may also include practices adopted by agencies, organizations or staff which are generally recognized as “best practice” based on research literature and/or the degree to which the practice is based on a clear, well-articulated theory or conceptual framework for delinquency or victimization prevention and/or intervention.

Exposure to violence: Exposure to violence includes both direct victimization (e.g., child abuse, neglect or maltreatment) and indirect victimization (e.g., witnessing domestic violence or community violence). Children may also be exposed to other forms of violence such as violence in the media, terrorism, and war.

Evening Reporting Centers: These are facilities in the community where youth report on a daily basis for a specified period of time. The staff closely supervises the youth and may provide a number of services, such as counseling, vocational training, educational programs, and substance abuse treatment.

Expunge / Expungement: Laws that allow juvenile records to be erased and destroyed once the offending youth reaches a certain age so that a juvenile record does not impede individuals from becoming productive members of society. The types of records and offenses eligible for expungement, as well the steps that one must take in order to expunge them, vary by jurisdiction.

Family functioning: Interactions with family members that involve physical, emotional, and psychological activities.

Formally Processed: Formal system processing for juveniles refers to the practice of processing youths through the traditional juvenile justice system (see “Decision Points in the Juvenile Justice System,” above) without diverting them from the system at any point.

Functional Family Therapy (FFT): Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is a family-focused evidence-based treatment program for delinquent youth at risk for placement in a juvenile facility. FFT focuses on improving family communication and supportiveness, while decreasing negative behavior patterns.[4]

Formal processing: Cases that appear on the official court calendar in response to the filing of a petition, complaint, or other legal instrument requesting the juvenile court to adjudicate a youth as a delinquent, status offender, or dependent child or to waive jurisdiction and transfer a youth to criminal court.

Gang (youth gang): A youth gang is commonly thought of as a self-formed association of peers having the following characteristics: three or more members, generally ages 12 to 24; a gang name and some sense of identity, generally indicated by symbols such as clothing style, graffiti, and hand signs; some degree of permanence and organization; and an elevated level of involvement in delinquent or criminal activity.

Gender-specific services: Services designed to promote healthy attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles, and promote social competence in girls. Key program elements generally address issues in the context of relationships to peers, family, school, and community.

Graduated sanctions: A graduated sanctions system is a set of integrated intervention strategies designed to operate in unison to enhance accountability, ensure public safety, and reduce recidivism by preventing future delinquent behavior. The term *graduated sanctions* implies that the penalties for delinquent activity should move from limited interventions to more restrictive (i.e., graduated) penalties according to the severity and nature of the crime. In other words, youth who commit serious and violent offenses should receive more restrictive sentences than youth who commit less serious offenses.

Grant: An award of financial assistance the principal purpose of which is to transfer a thing of value from a federal or state agency to a recipient to carry out a public purpose of support or stimulation authorized by a law of the United States (see 31 U.S.C. 6101(3)). A grant is distinguished from a contract, which is used to acquire property or services for the Federal Government's direct benefit or use.

Intake: The screening and assessment process children who are arrested undergo prior to seeing a judge. Intake procedures vary between jurisdictions but are typically conducted by intake officers, probation staff, case and social workers, or police. At the intake screening, each youth is evaluated to determine his or her appropriateness for release or referral to a diversionary program, or whether the matter should be referred for prosecution.

Intake decision: The decision made by juvenile court intake that results in a case being handled informally (see Diversion) at the intake level or petitioned and scheduled for an adjudicatory or transfer hearing.

Intervention: Programs or services that are intended to disrupt the delinquency process and prevent a youth from penetrating further into the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile: Youth at or below the upper age of original juvenile court jurisdiction, which varies depending on the state (e.g., the age is 15 in some states and 17 in others).

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP): Congress enacted the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act (P. L. No. 93-415, 42 U.S.C. § 5601 et seq.) in 1974 and reauthorized and amended its provisions in 2018. The JJDP Act mandates that states comply with four core protections to participate in the JJDP Act's Formula Grants program. This landmark legislation established OJJDP to support local and state efforts to prevent delinquency and improve the juvenile justice system. The JJDP Core Requirements are:

- *Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)* - A status offender is a juvenile charged with or adjudicated for conduct that would not, under the law of the jurisdiction in which the offense was committed, be a crime if committed by an adult. The most common examples of status offenses are chronic or persistent truancy, running away, violating curfew laws, or possessing alcohol or tobacco. This JJDP requirement focuses on alternatives to placing juveniles into detention facilities for status offenses.
- *Adult Jail and Lock-up Removal* - This requirement focuses on removing youth from adult jails and detention facilities.
- *Sight and Sound Separation* - This requirement ensures that minors are not detained or confined in any institution where they may have contact with adult inmates.
- *Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED)* - This requirement focuses on address and reduce racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile justice system.

Length of stay: The length of time that a juvenile resides (or is enrolled) in service or placement (in days). The length of stay (LOS) is a critical ingredient in projections of juvenile custody populations. A corrections or detention population can change dramatically if a facility's LOS begins to change, even if admissions are stable. The LOS is calculated by counting the number of days from the start date to the end date and calculating each person's LOS for a given time period. LOS is usually calculated on those youth who end a service/placement during the reporting period. The LOS total is divided by the number of stays to produce the average length of stay. See Average length of stay (ALOS).

Logic model: A graphic representation that clearly lays out the logical relationships between the problem to be addressed, program activities, outputs, and outcomes.

Memorandum of understanding (MOU): An interagency agreement whose purpose is to enable all parties to facilitate the conduct of certain efforts of mutual interest. For example, an MOU between a police department and a school system would specify the types of information to be shared, state the terms of the agreement, and include the signatures of all parties to the agreement.

Mental health disorder: Any clinically significant behavioral or psychological syndrome characterized by the presence of distressing symptoms, impairment of functioning, or significantly increased risk of death, pain, disability, or loss of freedom. The concept does not include deviant behavior, disturbances that are essentially conflicts between the individual and society or expected and culturally sanctioned responses to particular events.

Mentoring: A process in which the mentor serves as a role model, trusted counselor, or teacher, who provides opportunities for development, growth, and support to less experienced individuals. In career mentoring, for example, individuals receive career-related information, encouragement, and advice.

Multisystemic Therapy (MST): Multisystemic Therapy (MST) is an intensive family- and community-based treatment program for violent youth or youth who are arrested repeatedly. Therapists work with the family to address all the environmental systems affecting the youth --their homes and families, schools and teachers, neighborhoods and friends.

Needs assessment: Systematic process to acquire an accurate, thorough picture of a youth's strengths and areas of vulnerability. The process is utilized to identify and prioritize treatment goals, develop a treatment plan, determine the appropriate level of supervision, and allocate funds and resources for services.

Neglect: Acts that include abandonment, expulsion from the home, failure to seek remedial health care or delay in seeking care, inadequate supervision, disregard for hazards in the home, or inadequate food, clothing, or shelter.

Outcome indicators measure the benefits or changes for individuals, the juvenile justice system, or the community as a result of the program. Outcomes may be related to behavior, attitudes, skills, knowledge, values, conditions, or other attributes. Examples include changes in the academic performance of program participants, changes in the recidivism rate of program participants, changes in client satisfaction level, changes in the conditions of confinement in detention, and changes in the county-level juvenile crime rate. There are two levels of outcomes:

- *Short-term outcomes* for direct service programs are the benefits or changes that participants experience by the time they leave or complete the program. These generally include changes in behavior, attitudes, skills, and/or knowledge. For programs designed to change the juvenile justice system, short-term outcomes include changes to the juvenile justice system that occur by the funding's end.
- *Long-term outcomes* are the ultimate outcomes desired for participants, recipients, the juvenile justice system, or the community. For direct service programs, they generally include changes in recipients' behavior, attitudes, skills, and/or knowledge. They also include changes in practice, policy, or decision-making in the juvenile justice system. They are measured within 6–12 months after a youth leaves or completes the program. They should relate back to the program's goals (e.g., reducing delinquency).

Out-of-Home Placement: A residential setting to which a court, probation department or correctional agency orders an adjudicated youth to reside. Such settings include youth prisons and other hardware secure facilities, as well as all other institutions including “staff secure” facilities, residential treatment centers, in-patient substance abuse facilities, and group homes. Most out-of-home placements are ordered by a court at disposition and all remove a child from their home and restrict the young person’s freedom to leave the facility.

Overrepresentation/Underrepresentation: The term overrepresentation relates directly to disproportionality. When one population is represented in numbers that are disproportionately high, that population is overrepresented. For example, if Black youth represent 10% of the overall youth population in a jurisdiction but 30% of youth admitted to detention in that jurisdiction, Black youth are overrepresented in detention admissions. The percentage of Black youth in detention is disproportionately high, resulting in the overrepresentation of Black youth in detention. Likewise, if Black youth represent 30% of the overall youth population but only 10% of youth admitted to detention, Black youth are underrepresented in detention admissions.

Peer Mediation: Peer mediation teaches youth alternative strategies to help resolve conflicts among their peers. Some programs teach all students in the school or program problem-solving strategies for mediating disputes.

Petitioned: If a juvenile case is petitioned, this means that an intake officer (generally part of the juvenile probation department) is formally stating the allegations against a youth and requesting that the juvenile court determine if the youth should be adjudicated delinquent.

Performance measures/performance indicators: Values used to measure program outputs or outcomes. They represent the data/information that will be collected at the program level to measure the specific outputs and outcomes a program is designed to achieve. Therefore, they must be developed for each program objective. There are two types of performance indicators:

Permanency plan: A proposal by the juvenile justice system and other youth-serving agencies to establish a permanent placement for youth in foster care. The goal of the permanency plan is to expeditiously secure a safe, permanent placement for every child in foster care, either by making it possible for children to return to their own families or by finding safe adoptive homes for them.

Positive Youth Development: A comprehensive way of thinking about the development of adolescents and the factors that facilitate their successful transition from adolescence to adulthood. The basic concepts emerged from several decades of research and practice innovation and reflect profound changes in how we think about adolescents and their development.

Post-disposition: The period following the imposition of a sanction ordered or treatment plan decided upon or initiated in a particular case by a juvenile court.

Pre-Adjudication: Prior to the adjudication phase of the juvenile justice process

Predisposition: The period after the filing of a charge and prior to a sanction ordered or treatment plan decided upon or initiated in a particular case by a juvenile court.

Pre-Disposition Report: The assessment a local probation office submits to a judge identifying the risks, needs, and recommended disposition or treatment for a youth adjudicated delinquent. The pre-disposition report is not the final word; at the disposition hearing, the youth and his attorney may offer other evidence weighing in favor of a different result.

Prevention: Programs, research, or other initiatives to prevent or reduce the incidence of delinquent acts and directed to youth at risk of becoming delinquent to prevent them from entering the juvenile justice system or to intervene with first-time and youth charged with nonserious offenses to keep them out of the juvenile justice system. This program area excludes programs targeted at youth already adjudicated delinquent, on probation, and in corrections.

Probation: A disposition involving the supervision of a delinquent youth in the community rather than in a secure confinement facility. "Probation" is both the name of the legal status that somewhat limits the youth's freedom, and the name of the local agency providing supervision and other services. When a youth is placed on probation, s/he must comply with any conditions specified in the judge's order, including submission to routine drug tests, payment of restitution to a victim or to a crime victims' fund, participation in treatment or educational programs, and/or completion of community service.

Probation Revocation: When a youth violates the court-ordered conditions of his probation or commits another offense, the judge can revoke his probation and assign him a different disposition, such as confinement in a juvenile facility. Because a youth may be locked up when his probation is revoked, the youth is entitled to a hearing with formal due process rights (right to an attorney, right to cross-examine witnesses, etc.).

Probation Officer: An employee of the probation department who works closely with the court and is involved with a juvenile's case at various stages of the proceedings. Preliminarily, a probation officer may perform the initial intake interview to determine if a case can be diverted from the juvenile court. Subsequently, if a petition is filed, a probation officer may be responsible for supervising juveniles not held in detention. Probation officers often prepare a predisposition report for the court after a child has been adjudicated and make recommendations for disposition. If a juvenile is placed on probation at disposition, the probation officer provides supervision of the juvenile.

Probation Violation: When the court orders that a youth be placed on probation, there are often conditions attached to the probation order to which the youth must adhere. (Examples include meeting with the probation officer, complying with curfews, staying off of drugs, and attending school.) If a youth fails to meet any of these conditions, it is considered a violation and sanctions can range from counseling to confinement.

Prosecutor: A lawyer who represents the state or federal government in criminal and juvenile proceedings. In a juvenile proceeding (as in an adult criminal proceedings), the prosecutor must prove beyond a reasonable doubt that the accused youth committed the delinquent act for the youth to be adjudicated delinquent.

Public Defender: A lawyer or staff of lawyers whose duty it is to represent indigent defendants, including youth charged with delinquent acts. Typically, public defenders' offices are funded by the local, state, or federal government.

Re-Entry: The stage of the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems in which youth are being prepared for release and released from institutional confinement and rejoin the community. See also "Aftercare."

Recidivism Rate: The rate at which youth who have been previously adjudicated delinquent re-offend, as measured by subsequent arrests, prosecutions, and/or placement/incarceration. Lowered recidivism rates are often used to justify investment in certain programs and services for delinquent offenders.

Residential placement: Includes cases in which youth are placed in a residential correctional or treatment facility because they are awaiting adjudication or have been adjudicated for an offense, and cases in which youth are otherwise removed from their homes and housed out of home (e.g., child abuse, abandonment, running away). Residential placements can include secure confinement, residential treatment facilities, nonsecure confinement, group homes, foster care, shelter care, etc.

Restitution: Payments that a judge may order a youth to make either to a specific crime victim or to a crime victims' fund. Restitution is part of a youth's disposition or sentence and is generally based on the amount of harm inflicted on the victim.

Reunification: The return of a child who was placed in out of home care (i.e., foster care) by the state to the birth parents or to the original custodian from whom the child was taken.

Restorative Justice: Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm people cause by their behavior and changing their thinking to understand how what they did affected those they harmed. Unlike the adversarial court process, both the youth and those they harmed take an active role in the process, such as through dialogue between a youth and the person he or she harmed (sometimes their families are included). Youth are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions by apologizing, returning stolen money, community service, or other actions; they are often provided help to avoid further misdeeds.

Risk Assessment Instrument: A tool used to assess a youth's likelihood (or risk) of future re-offending. Items on these instruments can reflect both life circumstances (e.g. history of child abuse) and personal characteristics (e.g. attitudes and past behaviors) that have been found to predict future problem behavior. Within the context of the juvenile justice system, risk assessment instruments can be used at different decision-making points (e.g. diversion, detention, or disposition). The briefer screening instruments, such as those often used to determine whether or not to detain a youth, generally consider more basic characteristics that are unchanging, such as the current alleged offense or prior arrest history. More comprehensive risk assessment instruments generally consider a broader range of risk factors, and can be used to guide treatment planning.

School-to-Prison Pipeline: A national trend wherein children and youth are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse, or neglect, and would benefit from additional services. Instead, they are isolated, punished, and pushed out. "Zero-tolerance" policies criminalize minor infractions of school rules, while cops in schools lead to students being criminalized for behavior that should be handled inside the school. Students of color are especially vulnerable to push-out trends and the discriminatory application of discipline.

Screening: A process designed to determine if informal or formal processing is warranted. In the mental health setting, screening refers to an initial look at a juvenile's mental health needs. This is contrasted with an assessment to diagnose a mental health disorder, which would occur after screening. See assessment.

Social History: A collection of records regarding the juvenile’s familial, occupational, educational, and community background—the various aspects of the juvenile’s life that may be relevant to an evaluation of the juvenile and to determine the appropriate level of services needed. In some jurisdictions, social history is a general term for any collection of such records, while in others, it is the term used for a pre-disposition report compiled by probation. *See* Pre-disposition Report.

Status offender: A juvenile charged with or adjudicated for conduct that would not, under the law of the jurisdiction in which the offense was committed, be a crime if committed by an adult. Status offenses include truancy, curfew violations, incorrigibility, running away, and underage possession and/or consumption of alcohol or tobacco.

Substance use and abuse: Use and abuse of substances including, but not limited to, illegal drugs (e.g., heroin), prescription and nonprescription drugs, and alcohol. Sometimes referred to as alcohol and other drug (AOD) use and abuse.

Supervision (youth supervision): Mechanisms for managing or overseeing the performance or activities of a person or group. In the context of juvenile justice, examples of supervision include probation, youth supervision orders, youth training centers, and aftercare services.

System-level performance measures: Indicators that provide information about the actual changes, or lack thereof, in the target system (e.g., court system, school system, or program as a whole) that are directly related to a program's goals and objectives.

Transfer: The process by which a juvenile court judge or prosecutor shifts the jurisdiction over a youth charged with a delinquent offense to adult criminal court. *See* also “Waiver of Jurisdiction.”

Trauma: Experiencing or witnessing events involving actual or threatened injury or death and the resulting symptoms that interfere with daily functioning. Traumatic events affecting youth in the juvenile justice system may include neglect, physical and sexual abuse, observing community or domestic violence, or the death of friends or relatives. Symptoms may include emotional numbing, nightmares, sleep disturbances, academic decline, aggressive and antisocial behaviors, or suicidal thoughts.

Truancy: Habitual absence from school. Because the law requires youth to attend school up to a certain age, skipping school or repeated absences violate the law. Truancy is a status offense because it only applies to minors.

Utilization rate: Used to examine the usage of a specific facility relative to its stated capacity. The utilization rate for a residential facility is calculated by summing the length of stay of all juveniles placed in the facility during the time period and dividing that figure by facility capacity (i.e., the number of beds multiplied by the number of days in a specified time period). If the facility is overcrowded, the utilization rate will be over 100 percent.

Valid court order: An order given by a juvenile court judge to a juvenile who was brought before the court and made subject to an order; and who received, before the issuance of such order, the full due process rights guaranteed to such juvenile by the Constitution of the United States. JJDPa currently allows states to detain status offenders who have violated a “valid court order” without being out-of-compliance with the deinstitutionalization of status offender requirement of the four core protections established under the Act

Waiver Of Jurisdiction: A juvenile court judge’s relinquishment (and ultimate transference) of jurisdiction over a particular youth to the adult criminal court. This waiver, permitted by many states, is generally reserved for youth of a certain age who have committed enumerated offenses. See also “Transfer.”

Youth advocacy: Activities focused on improving services for and protecting the rights of youth affected by the juvenile justice system.

Zero Tolerance: School discipline policies that mandate harsh punishments such as suspension, expulsion, and, in many instances, referral to law enforcement for rule violations. The zero-tolerance approach removes youth from classrooms and routes them into the juvenile justice system for behavioral problems that, in the past, were adequately managed by the school system. See also “School-to-Prison Pipeline.”