

Glossary Of Juvenile Justice Terms



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Screening Tool- An instrument that asks the juvenile brief questions regarding the need for more immediate treatment services related to mental health, substance use, and other concerns.

Skill Practice- Using tools and role-play to help the youth prepare and rehearse more positive ways to cope with everyday situations.

Shelter Care- A temporary and safe care facility, which is monitored by staff for juveniles who are presenting with needs and concerns that require removal from the community, but not necessarily the need for a secure detention facility.

Standard Conditions of Supervision- Basic rules of probation that apply to all cases under jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court.

Summary Offense- An offense, usually of a minor nature that normally carries a less serious penalty, such as fine or community service. The District Justice usually handles summary offenses but can refer the case to Juvenile Court if the youth fails to comply with the sentence.

Victim Advocate- A trained professional who supports and assists victims, witnesses and their families through the Court process by addressing questions and concerns, attending court with them and providing additional services as needed.

Victim Compensation Fund Fee- A mandatory cost against the juvenile that is imposed whenever a juvenile is adjudicated delinquent or receives a Consent Decree disposition. The fee goes towards a state fund to assist victims who have sustained a financial loss as a direct result of a crime.

Violation of Probation (VOP) – A finding in court that a juvenile under court supervision has failed to abide by the conditions of their supervision.

Waiver- Agreement to give up certain legal rights, such as the right to remain silent when youth are asked to give a statement in regards to the pending charges.

Youth Level of Service (YLS) Assessment- a risk/needs assessment and a case management tool that guides the PO in the development of an individualized case plan.

Act 198- A fee that is mandated when a juvenile is adjudicated for any drug offense, including DUI. The fee typically starts at \$100 and can increase if the juvenile's Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) is .15% or greater.

Adjudication- When a Judge or Hearing Officer makes a formal decision on a matter, such as pending legal charges or alleged safety concerns of a child.

Adjudicated Delinquent- A legal term to describe a child 10 years of age or older whom the Court has found to have committed an offense and to be in need of treatment, supervision and rehabilitation.

Adjudicated Dependent- A legal term used to describe a child who “is without proper parental care or control, education as required by law, or other care or control necessary for his or her physical, mental or emotional health or morals.”

Adjudication Hearing- A hearing conducted by either the Juvenile Court Judge or Juvenile Delinquency Hearing Officer to address any open charges.

Aftercare- A period of strict supervision and transition services to closely monitor the juvenile's adjustment back into the community following release from a residential placement.

Allegation Form- The document completed by a law enforcement officer that is necessary to allege a juvenile has committed a crime. This document is sent to Juvenile Probation to conduct an initial interview.

Assessment- A detailed evaluation that is administered by a trained professional to assist with developing a recommendation. There are a variety of issues that an assessment could focus on, such as risk to re-offend, mental health needs, need for substance abuse treatment, etc.

Balanced and Restorative Justice- The law for Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system that maintains that the Court process must provide balanced attention to the victim, the juvenile and the community and develop case plans that help the juvenile develop valued skills, allows the juvenile to make amends to victims, and keeps the community safe.

Bench Warrant- A Court Order authorizing arrest and secure detention of a juvenile.

Case (Supervision) Plan- A document developed by the Probation Officer, juvenile and his/her family, to develop goals and expectations for the juvenile and the steps to achieve them, while he/she is under supervision of the Court.

Case Summary Report- A written report provided to the Court summarizing family history/background, prior delinquent involvement, and the juvenile's compliance with Pre-Adjudication or Court ordered conditions.

Certification- The process by which a juvenile can be charged as an adult by transferring prosecution of an offense from Juvenile Court to Criminal Court.

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions (CBI)- Type of group or individual intervention tools that focus on working to solve current problems and changing unhelpful thinking and behavior.

Community-Based Program- Services that meet with the juvenile and family at an outpatient site, within their home, and at school. These programs could either be court-ordered or agreed upon by the family and PO, and can be used to address many different needs, such as individual and family counseling needs, assisting the completion of community service, or providing more intensive supervision.

Community Service- The performance of unpaid work, usually in a nonprofit setting, aimed specifically at restoring the victim and community due to the harm caused by a juvenile's delinquent activity.

Consent Decree- An order of the Court which suspends the delinquency proceedings against the juvenile and places the youth under voluntary supervision in his or her own home, under terms and conditions recommended by the probation department and agreed to by all parties.

Continued Hearing or Continuance- A hearing that is postponed or rescheduled for another date.

Conflict Counsel- When a conflict of interest exists for the Public Defender in representing a juvenile (such as when two or more juveniles are charged as co-defendants), the Judge will appoint additional defense attorney(s).

Court Notice- Verbal or written information given to the people involved in a case, directing them to appear on the date and time of a hearing.

Criminogenic Needs- Factors that research shows play a significant role in a juvenile's risk to reoffend. Many times these factors are able to change with the appropriate treatment and resources, such as a juvenile with a substance use disorder participating in treatment.

De-certification- The process by which a juvenile charged as an adult can be transferred from Criminal Court to Juvenile Court for prosecution of an offense.

Detention- Temporary and safe custody of juveniles who are accused of conduct subject to the jurisdiction of the Court and require a restricted environment for their own, or the community's protection, while pending Court

disposition. Youth in detention are housed at the Chester County Youth Center.

Disposition- The outcome of the case. This could be a diversion outcome, probation, or residential placement (see definitions). The disposition outcome can change if the youth is not compliant with the terms of their case plan.

Disposition Hearing- A hearing where the Court determines what is in the best interest of the juvenile, family and community (i.e. Probation, placement, etc.) by hearing the recommendations of the Probation Officer and reviewing the case history, recent evaluations, and any other relevant information provided.

District Attorney (DA) - A lawyer who, as the prosecutor, represents the Commonwealth and speaks for the victim. A District Attorney is assigned to most cases automatically.

Diversion- When the factors in a case indicate a low risk, the juvenile may be able to avoid an adjudication of delinquency. Diversion dispositions can be informal adjustments, consent decrees or warn/counsel/close.

Docket- an official record of the youth's juvenile court involvement that includes the description of the charges, the youth's adjudication history, and the outcomes of court hearings.

Driver- This term refers to the main cause(s) of negative behavior. The YLS assessment (see definition) assists the PO to identify the driver of negative behavior in order to focus interventions to reduce the overall risk to reoffend.

Electronic Home Monitoring (EHM/GPS). A program, which is an alternative to secure detention, designed to restrict the juvenile to the home through the wearing of a device (attached to the ankle) which can pinpoint the wearer's exact location at any time.

Evening Reporting Center (ERC)- A program which takes place after school into the evening to which a juvenile may be ordered as an alternative to detention or a transition home from placement where they participate in skills building and educational activities.

Evidence-Based Probation & Programs- Programs and practices that have been heavily researched over the years and that consistently display desirable or positive outcomes.

Expungment- Elimination of all identifying information on a juvenile record. A juvenile seeking expungment must meet certain criteria and be approved by the District Attorney's Office as well as the Juvenile Court Judge.

Failure to Adjust (FTA) - When a youth in a placement facility fails to abide by the rules, regulations, and expectations of the facility and is therefore removed.

Family Involvement- The need to have caregivers and other supportive people in the juvenile's life be engaged as partners with all court officials and treatment professionals working with the juvenile by being a part of the planning process.

Felony- A legal term for the most serious offenses.

Formal Hearing- A hearing where the Court determines if the charge(s) filed are proven beyond a reasonable doubt by hearing testimony.

Graduated Responses- Incentives or sanctions used to reinforce the youth's compliance or address non-compliance with probation conditions.

Home Investigation- When the Probation Officer visits the juvenile's home to complete the collection of background information necessary in order to recommend how the case should be handled.

Informal Adjustment- A type of disposition used primarily for first time offenders, which does not involve a court hearing. If the child admits the facts of the allegation, the child may be supervised for a period of time and referred for services without being adjudicated.

Initial (or Intake) Interview- When a Juvenile Probation Officer meets with the juvenile and their family to obtain a statement in regards to the offense and gather family history/background.

JCP Fee- A judicial computer system filing fee assessed when a juvenile is adjudicated or placed on a Consent Decree.

Judge- A Judge presides over the Court and determines adjudications of delinquency as well as dispositions.

Jurisdiction- A particular court's right to hear a matter when certain criteria are met. In juvenile court it would

be: the age of the child, offense committed, county of residence and location of offense.

Juvenile Act- State legislation that dictates the rules and regulations of Juvenile Court.

Juvenile Court Hearing Officer- An attorney appointed by the Court who is authorized, under the Juvenile Act, to conduct delinquency and dependency hearings. (Also referred to as a "Hearing Officer"). All decisions made by the Hearing Officer must be approved by the Juvenile Court Judge.

Juvenile Court Restitution Fund (JCR) Fee- A fee that is assessed for every juvenile case. The amount of the fee varies.

Mandated Reporter- A person required by law to report suspicions of child abuse and neglect.

Miranda Warning- A Constitutional guarantee against self-incrimination requiring that juveniles be advised that they have a right to remain silent and a right to have a lawyer present when they are taken in for questioning.

Misdemeanor- A legal term used to define an offense that is less serious than a felony offense.

Motivational Interviewing (MI)- A practice used to speak to youth in a manner that elicits the youth's goals and creates discrepancy in order to see how the youth's own behavior has a positive or negative impact on the identified goals. All POs receive on-going training and support to utilize MI in the most effective manner.

No Contact Order- A Court order that states that neither the juvenile nor the juvenile's family nor friends are permitted to have any contact with the victim(s) and/or witnesses in person, by telephone, fax, e-mail, letter, social media sites, etc.

Non-Payment- Summary Offense forwarded to Juvenile Probation from the Magisterial District Court due to either nonpayment of a fine or continued noncompliance with the District Court.

Out of Court Order - A request to the court and parties to make a change to an existing order or ask that terms be added via a new order without an actual hearing.

Pre-Adjudication Conditions- Rules imposed on all juveniles after the intake process to protect the

community and assist the PO in determining appropriate disposition.

Probation (Formal)-When a juvenile is found by the Court to be in need of treatment, supervision and rehabilitation, they are ordered to be "on probation", and to abide by the conditions imposed by the Court.

Probation Officer (PO)- Neutral Court Officer who supervises a juvenile during his or her probationary period or other Court ordered supervision and who enforces the terms and conditions imposed by the Judge and the probation department.

Public Defender- A lawyer who represents alleged/adjudicated juvenile offenders who are unable to afford a private attorney.

Residential Placement- A facility to which a juvenile may be ordered to attend, outside of their community, which provides treatment, education, and rehabilitation. Usually ordered due to the juvenile's risk to re-offend or for not following Court orders. They can include secure or specialized facilities that treat delinquency issues when a mental health diagnosis is also present.

Responsivity- Factors that the PO takes into account in order to maximize the juvenile's ability to learn from a rehabilitative intervention by tailoring it to the learning style, motivation, abilities and strengths of the juvenile.

Restitution- Any money that a juvenile offender is ordered to pay to his or her victim(s). Restitution is frequently ordered to repay victims for any out of pocket losses that occurred solely as a result of the juvenile's delinquent act(s).

Review Hearing- Hearing to review the status of a case.

School Based Probation Officer- A Juvenile Probation Officer assigned to provide court supervision to all juveniles active with the Court and who are attending a specific school that have entered a partnership with Juvenile Probation.