



Juvenile justice system

Juvenile corrections
and parole



The Illinois juvenile justice system was created to address the unique needs of young offenders. This *Get the Facts* provides an overview of juvenile incarceration and parole, including reception, what occurs during incarceration, and release decisions.

What is the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice?

The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) operates eight juvenile correctional facilities, called Illinois Youth Centers, across the state. The agency works to treat juvenile offenders in an age-appropriate manner, provide rehabilitative treatment, hold youth accountable for their actions, and equip them with the skills needed to become productive members of society. Juveniles must be at least 13 years old before being eligible for IDJJ commitment, and they may be incarcerated in a youth center until they are 21 years old.

What happens when a juvenile begins his sentence at a youth center?

All juvenile sentences begin at a Reception & Classification Center (R&C) within one of the state's youth centers. Officials evaluate each youth's educational and mental health needs and risk level for security classification, and identify any other specific service needs during commitment and for re-entry into the community. R&C evaluation results also help determine which youth center is best suited for the youth.

What happens during incarceration?

After completing the R&C process, the youth is placed in an appropriate Illinois Youth Center. While incarcerated, juveniles receive available services specific to their needs, such as substance abuse or mental health treatment, life skills development, vocational training, and parenting classes. All youth attend school on the premises while incarcerated.

How are release decisions made?

Youth who are remanded to the custody of IDJJ receive indeterminate sentences in which no actual length of incarceration time is set by the judge. IDJJ has length-of-stay guidelines that take into account offense type, offense severity, and criminal history, among other factors. An indeterminate sentence may not extend beyond the youth's 21st birthday.



Are all incarcerated youth eventually released on parole?

Most incarcerated youth are released on parole. Juveniles who are not released on parole typically are those who were incarcerated briefly for court-ordered evaluation and then released. Youth who have reached the age of 21 and must be released from custody of IDJJ also are not released on parole. However, most youth will be released on parole from IDJJ prior to turning 21. The Prisoner Review Board makes parole decisions based on the youth's behavior while incarcerated and whether the youth is deemed rehabilitated by juvenile corrections officials. The Parole Review Board also sets parole conditions.

What does parole entail?

A paroled youth is released under the supervision of parole agents. Parole agents monitor the youth's compliance with parole conditions, which include refraining from breaking the law, staying away from drugs and alcohol, attending school or obtaining employment, and curfew restrictions. Juveniles may remain on parole until their 21st birthday. However, IDJJ may request an earlier parole discharge if they determine that the youth is rehabilitated, not a threat to public safety, and has successfully complied with the conditions of their supervised release. The average parole period for Illinois youth is 12 to 15 months.

What happens after a youth successfully completes his or her parole?

When a youth complies with all conditions of parole, IDJJ requests termination of responsibility for the juvenile and he or she will be released from custody. Once the youth is released, his or her criminal records will be sealed.

What happens when a youth violates his or her parole conditions?

The Prisoner Review Board investigates parole violations. When it is alleged that a juvenile has violated conditions of his or her parole, the board conducts a parole revocation hearing to determine whether the allegations are true. The juvenile may be accompanied by an attorney at the hearing, but the state is not required to provide an attorney. If the Prisoner Review Board determines that the youth violated parole, the board may either change parole conditions or impose additional conditions. They may also decide to revoke the youth's parole on what is called a technical violation and send him or her back to a youth center.

About *Get the Facts: Juvenile Justice System*



This *Get the Facts* series was created to answer common questions about the juvenile justice system. Other topics in this series include juvenile arrests, the pretrial process, the courts, and sentencing.



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