### COVID-19 Policy Response: Juvenile Justice

Last Updated: April 23, 2020 (new updates in orange) | Check for updates here, and check out Voices for Georgia’s Children’s COVID-19 Response Resources here.

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<tr>
<th>Potential Policy and Practice Changes</th>
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| **Expand communication methods during visitation suspension** | N/A | DJJ administrative policy | • Visitation suspended through 04/30/20.  
• Attorneys and healthcare professionals are allowed to make in-person visits.  
• Youth will only be moved for medical emergencies and judicial matters.  
• Youth are typically allowed to make free 10-minute phone calls; this has been increased to 20 minutes. Families have an option of paying for more.  
• Opportunities to FaceTime family have also been increased via the use of iPads.  
• Free postage is provided for mailing letters.  
• E-mail is allowed. | N/A |
| • Almost 1,200 youth age 13-21 are detained in 26 secure DJJ facilities in GA.  
• Ensure detained youth can communicate with family and legal counsel  
• Remove limits on number of phone calls per week  
• Suspend fees for phone calls and videoconferencing  
• Provide free postage and allow youth to send emails | DJJ administrative policy | DJJ administrative policy and court discretion/action |
| **Reduce number of youth in detention by releasing those who do not pose a threat to public safety** | N/A | DJJ administrative policy | • In cases where DJJ has sole authority, they have conducted an internal review to see who can be administratively released. Approximately 89 youth have been released and transitioned to community-based forms of intervention by DJJ.  
• For cases requiring court action, DJJ is looking at those cases but requires either the Attorney General's Office or the youth's attorney to file a motion for release. Approximately 10 youth have been released and transitioned to community-based forms of intervention by judges.  
• Some judges have used videoconferencing with DJJ to hold disposition hearings for youth who are awaiting trial and are going to enter a plea. | Los Angeles County: closed all DJJ facilities |
| • There are approximately 1,079 youth in DJJ secure facilities as of April 23  
• Use videoconferencing between courts and DJJ to determine which detained youth are awaiting trial and planning to enter a plea to expedite these cases and release youth if appropriate  
• Release youth charged with low-level behaviors (e.g., drunkenness, runaways, technical violations of probation) | DJJ administrative policy | | |

TABLE KEY:  
= in progress  
= need more information or forthcoming  
= not being implemented
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| **Provide regular health checks for** | N/A                      | DJJ administrative policy and facility practice | Dispositions can be handled via video court in these cases.  
- In some courts, youth have been released who were only awaiting disposition hearings. In the Clayton County Juvenile Court, for instance, only two youth remain in secure detention facilities.  
- Youth are being screened with temperature checks and before they enter the facility.  
- Detained youth are screened daily.  
- DJJ advised facilities to screen all visitors entering the facility.  
- DJJ advised staff to self-screen. | |
| **Provide continued mental health support** | N/A                      | DJJ administrative policy and facility practice | Off-site therapy appointments cancelled.  
- On-site mental health treatment [has continued](#). | |

- Detained youth
- Staff
- Maintenance workers and attorneys entering facilities
- Youth who are being released
- Youth entering detention

- Protect youth from further trauma; support their growth and recovery while in detention
- Use telemedicine where necessary
- Consider increasing levels of support given the [impact of the crisis on mental health](#), particularly for detained youth.
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| **Provide continued education, even if remotely** | N/A | DJJ administrative policy and facility practice | - DJJ youth receive weekly learning assignments and [more library and recreation time has been allotted](#).  
- Youth enrolled in college courses have been able to continue classes. (DJJ Communication, 04/23/20)  
- GaDOE’s Office of Teaching and Learning [offers digital learning planning resources](#).  
- GaDOE and GPB have launched the [Georgia Home Classroom initiative](#), an instructional TV broadcast (currently PK-5; middle and high school to come).  
- GaDOE has a [list of training opportunities and resources for educators](#) to learn how to teach virtually. | - NC and MA are following a similar model. |
| **Provide continued Community Services and Reentry Services to the greatest extent possible** | N/A | DJJ program practice | - Unknown. | |
| - Consider using videoconferencing to connect with youth under community supervision or those recently released  
- [Evidence-based treatment programs](#) could offer routine support for youth during the public health crisis | | |

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<td>N/A</td>
<td>DJJ administrative policy and facility practice</td>
<td>• Ongoing.</td>
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<th>Develop and communicate a COVID-19 response plan</th>
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<td>• Create, publicly release, and implement a policy vetted by public health officials&lt;br&gt;• Remove symptomatic youth from facilities immediately&lt;br&gt;• Specify how youth will receive necessary medical care, upon removal and otherwise&lt;br&gt;• Include guidance on how youth should be handled if released, including quarantine in their homes or another safe setting</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>DJJ administrative policy</td>
<td>• Ongoing.</td>
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<th>Temporarily change probation policies to reflect COVID-19 constraints</th>
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<td>• Do not penalize youth for probation violations related to COVID-19&lt;br&gt;• Conduct check-ins and counseling via remote video chat</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>DJJ administrative policy</td>
<td>• In-person probation officer visits limited; some check-ins done remotely.&lt;br&gt;• State of judicial emergency ordered courts to only perform essential functions; probation officers are generally not coming to court.</td>
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<th>Communicate clearly with families about policy changes and create a crisis intervention call line</th>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>DJJ administrative policy</td>
<td>• Parents advised to contact the secure facility with questions.</td>
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| • Provide contact information for families with questions  
• Create a crisis intervention call-line for support regarding probation and detention, and publish resources about where food, medical resources, and emergency services can be found | policy, communication, and hotline creation | - | - |

## Avoid arresting juveniles

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| • Law enforcement officers: use discretion, avoid arresting juveniles for [low level offenses](#) (e.g., theft by shoplifting), use tools other than arrest/detention  
• Direct youth home or to safe places, or issue a citation, when possible | N/A | Law enforcement agency directive and DJJ administrative policy | - Intake in DJJ is down. (DJJ Communication, 04/23/20)  
- In some courts, only youth convicted of serious violent felonies will be detained. |