

# THE JUVENILE COURT JUDGES' COMMISSION AT A GLANCE

## OVERVIEW AND TRENDS FACT SHEET

The Pennsylvania juvenile justice system is a dynamic and ever-changing institution dedicated to serving the Commonwealth's juvenile offenders, victims, communities, and families. The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC) plays a critical role in this system.

Established by the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1959 and situated within the Executive Branch, the JCJC is responsible for:

- Advising juvenile courts concerning the proper care and maintenance of delinquent and dependent children;
- Establishing standards governing the administrative practices and judicial procedures used in juvenile courts;
- Establishing personnel practices and employment standards used in juvenile probation offices;
- Collecting, compiling, and publishing juvenile court statistics; and
- Administering a grant-in-aid program to improve county juvenile probation services.

## Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Is Committed to Its Balanced and Restorative Justice Mission

In 1995, Act 33 established Balanced and Restorative Justice as the Pennsylvania juvenile justice system's mission, with community protection, accountability, and competency development as its goals.

**Community Protection:** The public has a right to be and feel safe from crime. Community protection occurs when the juvenile justice system effectively identifies, manages, and minimizes the risk of continued crime and delinquency from known juvenile offenders.

**Accountability:** Youth who commit crimes in Pennsylvania incur obligations to their victims and the communities they harm. The juvenile justice system's role is to provide opportunities for juvenile offenders to be held responsible to repair the harm caused by their delinquent behavior.

**Competency Development:** The process by which juvenile offenders acquire the knowledge and skills that make it possible for them to become productive, connected, and law-abiding members of their communities. The role of the juvenile justice system is to facilitate efforts and activities that advance youths' competencies so they are less likely to take part in anti-social delinquent behaviors.

For more information about the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission,  
please visit [www.jcjc.pa.gov](http://www.jcjc.pa.gov).



# Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System Achievements

## Fewer Youth Are Entering the Juvenile Justice System and for Less Serious Crimes

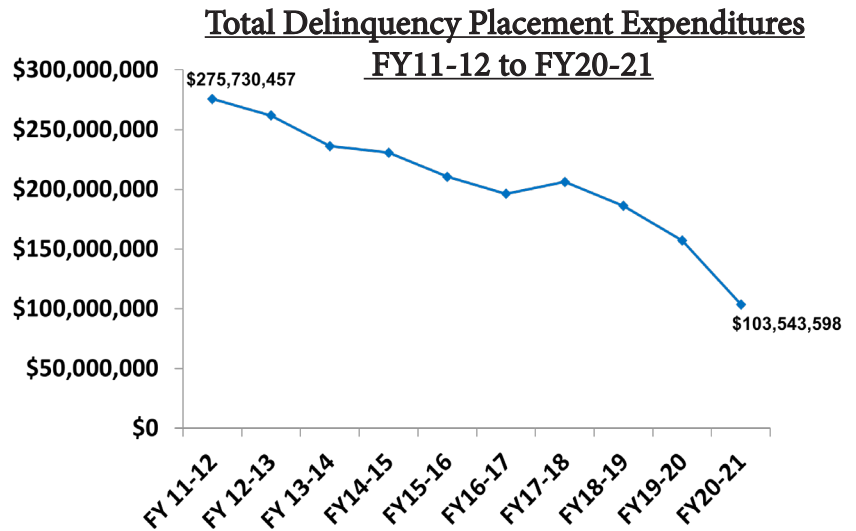
- The arrest rate for violent crime<sup>1</sup> decreased 72% over the last 10 years<sup>2</sup>.
- The number of referrals to the juvenile justice system decreased 59% over the last 10 years, with 19,806 fewer referrals in 2021 compared to 2012.

## Most Youth Who Enter the Juvenile Justice System Are Diverted<sup>3</sup> from Adjudication

- In 2021, 73% of all cases were diverted from formal court processing.
- In 2021, 86% of first-time juvenile offenders were diverted from formal court processing.

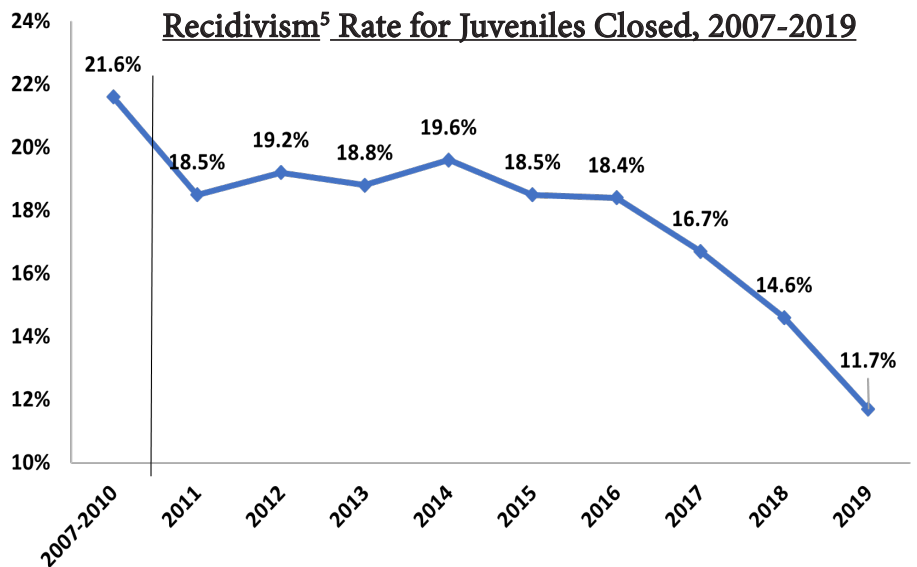
## Fewer Youth Are Placed Outside the Home, Saving Millions of Dollars

- The total amount spent on juvenile delinquency placement expenditures in FY20-21 was 62% (\$172 million) less than FY11-12.
- The total number of days of paid care in delinquency residential placement decreased 77% over the past 10 years. There were 1,052,988 fewer days of paid care in FY20-21 compared to FY11-12<sup>4</sup>.
- The use of residential placement as a disposition decreased 75% over the past 10 years.
- The use of secure detention decreased 74% over the past 10 years.



## The Majority of Youth Remain Crime-Free After Leaving the Juvenile Justice System

- In 2019, the state's two-year, post-case closure recidivism rate was 11.7%. This rate is the lowest it has been since the JCJC began tracking it and represents a 42% decrease since 2007.



<sup>1</sup> Violent crimes include: murder, nonnegligent homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.

<sup>2</sup> 2012-2021

<sup>3</sup> Diversion is a term used to describe intervention approaches that redirect youth away from formal processing in the juvenile justice system, while still holding them accountable for their actions.

<sup>4</sup> Source: Department of Human Services' Office of Children, Youth, and Families.

<sup>5</sup> Recidivism: Within two years of case closure, a subsequent adjudication of delinquency or conviction in criminal court for a felony or misdemeanor offense.

