



Juvenile Justice Laws (Recent Changes)

Juvenile Motor Vehicle Thefts

Diversion Program

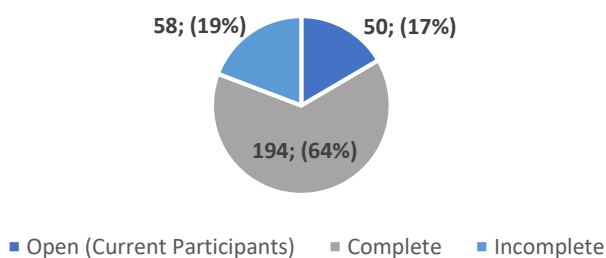
The “motor vehicle theft or misuse services program” was established by the legislature in 2019 ([PA 19-110](#), § 1). It allows a child charged with certain delinquency offenses involving a motor vehicle to [request](#) a suspension of the delinquency proceedings for up to six months, during which time the child must participate in services to address any condition or behavior directly related to the offense. If the child successfully completes the services and complies with any other conditions the court sets, the court may dismiss the suspended delinquency charges. A child is ineligible if he or she (1) was previously granted a suspended prosecution for such treatment or services or (2) is charged with a serious juvenile offense ([CGS § 46b-133j](#)).

A similar program, the “fire starting behavior treatment program,” was also established in 2019 ([PA 19-135](#)).

Diversion Program Participation

Figure 1 shows that, to date, 302 delinquency prosecutions have been suspended under the program. Of the 252 closed cases, 77% of participants successfully completed the program.

Figure 1: Program Discharge Status

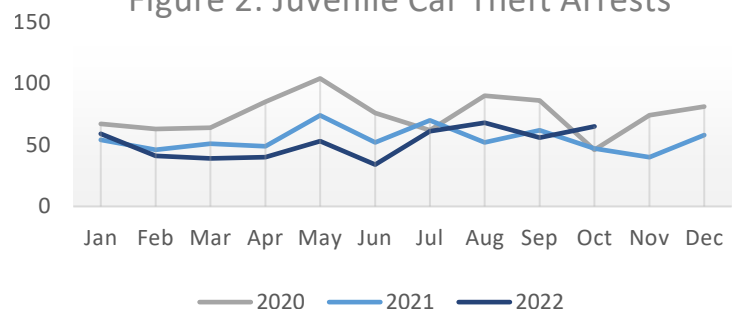


Source: Judicial Branch

Car Theft Arrests

Figure 2 shows that from January 2020 through October 2022, there has generally been a downward trend in juvenile car theft arrests, with a high of 104 arrests in May 2020 (during the COVID-19 pandemic) and a low of 34 arrests in June 2022.

Figure 2: Juvenile Car Theft Arrests



Other Changes (2020-2022)

2020 Session. There were no juvenile justice-related acts passed in 2020. (The 2020 regular legislative session was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic.)

2021 Session. In 2021, the legislature enacted laws that, among other things, did the following:

- Made it a crime for a person who is at least age 23 to entice a juvenile (under age 18) to commit a criminal act ([PA 21-33](#), § 12)
- Required the judicial branch to conduct a [feasibility study](#) on reducing child recidivism ([PA 21-33](#), § 13)
- Requires the Court Support Services Division to provide free phone services to detained juveniles ([PA 21-54](#))
- Replaced references to the term “juvenile detention center” with the term “juvenile residential center” throughout the statutes ([PA 21-104](#) (multiple sections))
- Made the following changes to the cannabis laws for anyone under age 18: (1) prohibits their arrest for possessing cannabis or cannabis products; (2) establishes a range of penalties for those who possess under five ounces (e.g., a written warning, referral to a youth services bureau or other appropriate services, or delinquency adjudication in juvenile court); and (3) requires delinquency adjudication in juvenile court for those possessing at least five ounces of cannabis plant material (or an equivalent product amount or combined amount) ([PA 21-1](#), June Special Session, § 3(b))

2022 Session. This past session, the legislature enacted laws that, among other things, did the following:

- Required a child’s arraignment for a firearms or motor vehicle offense to be scheduled for the next business day following the arrest ([PA 22-26](#), § 11)
- Made various changes to juvenile justice procedures, including (1) generally requiring an arrested child to be brought before a judge within five business days after the arrest; (2) allowing the court to order electronic monitoring if a child was charged with a second or subsequent motor vehicle or property theft offense; and (3) in certain circumstances, increasing the maximum period, from six to eight hours, that a child may be detained without a judge’s order ([PA 22-115](#), § 1)
- Expanded the “serious sexual offender” designation (i.e., a sexually related crime, the case for which is not transferred to adult court) to include homicide and certain firearm offenses, and renamed the designation “serious homicide, firearm, or sexual offender prosecution” ([PA 22-115](#), § 2)

Jurisdiction

Juvenile Court

Juvenile courts have jurisdiction over children accused of committing crimes while at least age 10 and under age 18. Children may be convicted as delinquent for violating most laws ([CGS § 46b-120](#)). ([PA 21-174](#), § 1, raised the minimum age of juvenile jurisdiction from 7 to 10.)

Adult Court

- The juvenile court must automatically transfer a delinquency case to the adult criminal court docket if the child is at least age 15 and charged with murder with special circumstances, a class A felony, or certain class B felonies (i.e., “serious juvenile offenses”) ([CGS § 46b-127](#)).
- For other felonies, the juvenile court has discretion to transfer a case to adult court where the (1) juvenile is at least age 15, (2) prosecutor makes a motion, and (3) court makes certain findings ([CGS § 46b-127](#)).
- In adult court, a child may be eligible for “youthful offender status,” which provides greater confidentiality and gives judges additional sentencing options ([CGS § 54-76b](#), et. seq).
- The adult court may return an automatically transferred juvenile case back to juvenile court if the charges are reduced to a charge that would have allowed a discretionary transfer ([PA 19-187](#)).

Services and Oversight

CSSD

Juvenile justice services (e.g., the motor vehicle theft or misuse services program) are provided by the judicial branch’s Court Support Services Division (CSSD). They were transferred from the Department of Children and Families, effective July 1, 2018 ([PA 18-31](#)).

JJPOC

The [Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee](#) (JJPOC) evaluates policies related to the juvenile justice system and makes legislative recommendations related to juvenile justice matters.

Confidentiality

Juvenile justice proceedings and records are confidential and are generally protected from public disclosure.

Learn
More

“Recent Juvenile Justice Measures,” OLR Report [2022-R-0148](#)

“Juvenile Diversionary Programs and Court Services,” OLR Report [2022-R-0038](#)

“Juvenile Delinquency Procedure,” OLR Report [2021-R-0182](#)

“Youthful Offenders,” OLR Report [2021-R-0181](#)

“Serious Juvenile Offenses,” OLR Report [2021-R-0179](#)



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