

# **FACT VS. FICTION**

## **CT JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM**

### **SERIES #3 – RAISING UP OUR YOUTH**



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# Superior Court for Juvenile Matters

## Jurisdiction and Types of Referrals

- **Jurisdiction**

- The Superior Court for Juvenile Matters has jurisdiction for handling cases of children at least 7 years of age and under 18 years of age (at the time of an alleged offense).

- **Types of Referrals**

- Juveniles may be referred to Juvenile Court for **delinquency-related matters**, after having been charged with violating any federal or state law, order of the Superior Court, and for juveniles under the age of 16, any municipal or local ordinance.

# Superior Court for Juvenile Matters

## Types of Handling Decisions

### Non-Judicial Handling

*Cases handled informally by a Juvenile Probation Officer:*

- 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> time summons for minor delinquency charges.
- The child must admit responsibility for the alleged offense, and the child and their parent must agree to cooperate with the Probation Officer.
- The Probation Officer may dismiss the case; refer the child to services to address their needs; and/or place the child on supervision for up to six months.
- If a child fails to cooperate with the Non-Judicial supervision agreement, a petition may be filed on the original charge.

### Judicial Handling

*Cases handled by a Judge when:*

- A child is not willing to admit responsibility for having committed a minor offense and the child and parent refuse to cooperate with Juvenile Probation.
- More serious charges are involved.
- The child has two prior non-judicial delinquent admissions.
- The child has a prior Judicial handling or is currently on probation.

## **Based on a year-long assessment of Connecticut's juvenile justice system through the Improving Youth Outcomes (IOYouth) Initiative:**

- In 2018, **5 low-level offenses** (Breach Peace, 2nd Degree, Larceny, 6th Degree, Disorderly Conduct, Interference w/Officer/Resisting Arrest, Possession Controlled Substance or > .5 oz. of Cannabis) **represented 55% of all misdemeanor referrals to juvenile court**, and these same offenses **represented nearly 60% of all first-time misdemeanor referrals**.
- Additionally, **66% of all infraction and violation referrals** were for 3 behaviors – **simple trespass and use and possession of less than .5 ounce of cannabis or drug paraphernalia**.
- At the same time, **40% of first-time infraction referrals** and **40% of first-time misdemeanor referrals** were disposed to **non-judicial supervision**.
- Based on the research, these youth should be able to **access services** and be held **accountable through other systems** outside of the juvenile justice system, **prior to arrest** and court involvement.

# Juvenile Probation's Early Intervention Approach

- In 2013, the Judicial Branch and Department of Children and Families signed a Memorandum of Agreement aimed at addressing the needs of children 12 and under referred to Juvenile Court.
- Both agencies committed to sharing information, services, and resources and working collaboratively to address the needs of children 12 and under and their families by providing access to community-based interventions and diversion from future juvenile justice involvement.
- Gender Responsive Juvenile Probation Officers are assigned in each court location and trained to handle cases for early intervention. Officers have received extensive training in the specialized needs of girls as well as early childhood development.