

UNDERSTANDING

THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT & THE PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS



THE TJJD FAMILY HANDBOOK

Important Information About My Child

Here is a handy place for you to record important information about your child so that you have it readily available. You might consider using pencil to fill out this page since some of the information may change during your child's stay in TJJD.

My Child's TJJD Identification Number:

My Child's Current Facility and Telephone Number:

My Child's Mailing Address:

Date My Child's Minimum Length of Stay Ends:

My Child's Current Caseworker:

My Child's Caseworker's Phone Number:

My Child's Parole Officer:

Important Contact Information

Orientation for Boys and Girls:
(first six weeks)

Ron Jackson State Juvenile
Correctional Complex
P.O. Box 1267
Brownwood, TX 76804
(325) 641-4200 phone
(325) 646-7704 fax

TJJJ Central Administration
Mailing Address:

Texas Juvenile Justice Department
P.O. Box 12757
Austin, TX 78711

Community Relations Manager
Release Review Panel Liaison
Sentenced Offender Information
Sex Offender Registration
TJJJ Family Liaison Coordinator
TJJJ Religious Services
Youth Grievance Coordinator

(512) 490-7090
(512) 490-7101
(512) 490-7031
(512) 490-7289
(512) 490-7662
(512) 490-7090
(512) 490-7235

TJJJ Website

www.tjjd.texas.gov

**Office of Inspector General
Incident Reporting Hotline:
(Answered 24-Hours)**

(866) 477-8354

Independent Ombudsman:

(855) 468-7330

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Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department treatment team for your child. Successful outcomes for youth placed in the juvenile justice system can be affected by the level of family involvement in their treatment and/or education. This Family Guide is intended to encourage families—including those who are reluctant, fearful, or unprepared—to become active partners in their child’s rehabilitation. The agency’s integrated treatment approach helps youth focus on developing critical supports as they plan for successful re-entry into their home communities. CoNEXTions© offers opportunities for youth to engage in positive interactions with staff, mentors, family members, and each other to build connectedness and competency. The agency believes that the integrated treatment approach, founded on evidence-based practices, is critical to producing positive outcomes for youth in our system. With these guiding principles, TJJD strives to have each person in the agency take shared ownership of the whole child from beginning to end, so youth and their families may create a foundation of trust for a healthy future.

We are confident that with your help we can get youth back on the right path to becoming successful at home, at school, and in the community.

This handbook has a lot of information. To make it easier to find answers to frequent questions, there is a Quick Answer section that gives simple explanations to some of the more complicated subjects. There is a list to of places to get help in the front pages of this handbook.

Who goes to TJJD

Unfortunately, there is no simple way to explain why children decide to commit offenses that result in their coming to TJJD. Through the years, TJJD employees have worked with youth who come from many different backgrounds and who have committed a wide variety of crimes. TJJD staff members are not here to judge, blame, or punish you or your child. We are here to be a partner with you. We hope to help your child accept responsibility for his or her crime and to teach him or her better behavior in order to stay out of trouble.

Getting sent to TJJD is serious. Only about three out of every 100 youth who get in trouble with the law in Texas each year go to TJJD – youth who are the most chronic offenders or who have committed the most severe offenses. While TJJD is serious, your child is not in the adult correctional system. Instead, the juvenile court decided to give your child another chance through TJJD. We work hard because we don’t want your child to end up in adult prison.

While in TJJD

While in TJJD, your child will get an integrated treatment approach that focuses on positive youth development and the social bonds that are critical to long-term success. Your child may get treatment that may shed light on what has happened in the past, but TJJD is really about tomorrow and making positive changes so mistakes or bad choices are not repeated. In fact, the very first day youth arrive at TJJD, staff is already making plans to help them go home. Our biggest hope is that your child will leave TJJD better able to manage behavior and deal with negative influences and circumstances that we all, to some degree, must face in life.

While in TJJD, in addition to treatment, your child will have a chance to earn a GED, a high school diploma or, in some cases, college credit. He or she might have the opportunity to earn a vocational or professional certification. TJJD provides independent living courses and community service opportunities. Again, TJJD is focused on the future. No one wins if your child doesn't succeed. We want your child to leave TJJD and be successful in a law-abiding way. When that happens we all benefit.

Parents as Partners

You can help. We ask that you encourage your child to do class assignments and to participate in therapy. Writing your child as often as you can is beneficial and visiting your child is even better. We find that youth whose parents are active and involved progress through treatment and rehabilitation more successfully.

There are many youth who stay in touch with TJJD years after they leave. Some youth say, "This is the best thing that ever happened to me," because in TJJD they learn to understand the pain they have caused their victims and how to avoid making the same mistakes and bad choices.

Safety is a Must

A number of plans have been put into action to keep your child safe while in TJJD. Criminal background checks and fingerprint checks are required for all employees. There are cameras throughout our facilities to help ensure the safety of your child. And, there is a 24-hour toll-free abuse reporting hotline answered by law enforcement officers. The Office of the Independent Ombudsman was created to be your voice when you have concerns about policies or the way TJJD operates. Staff must undergo more than three times the amount of training than before (300 hours total) in order to work with your child. Even though all of this is in place, you and your child are still the best eyes and ears. Do not hesitate to call the 24-hour hotline or report to your child's caseworker any problems or concerns you are having. If you do not feel like your questions or concerns are being answered, be persistent until you are heard. We respect you for being involved while your child is in TJJD.

We understand that having your child committed to TJJD is a time of uncertainty for you. Together we can make the best of the opportunity to help your child. **Understanding: the TJJD Family Handbook**, is designed to give you important information about TJJD. We are always here to answer your questions and listen to your concerns.

Tidbits You Need To Know

Cellular Phones

TJJD youth are forbidden to have access to cellular phones. Cellular phones not issued by the State of Texas for work-related business are prohibited at facilities and programs where you are present. Providing a cellular phone to a TJJD youth is a third degree felony.

Child Support

If you have been ordered by the court to pay child support to TJJD, please send these payments to: TJJD Finance Department/Child Support, P.O. Box 12757, Austin, TX 78711.

Child Nutrition

In the operation of child nutrition programs, children are not discriminated against because of race, color, sex, national origin, age, handicap, political belief, or religion. To report discrimination, write immediately to: Director, Civil Rights Department, Texas Department of Human Services, P.O. Box 149030, Austin, TX 78714-9030, or Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.

Clothing and Dress

Each TJJD facility has a standardized clothing and dress policy. Unless otherwise instructed, all clothing and shoes will be provided by TJJD to each youth. As a result, students are not generally allowed personal clothing or jewelry. Additionally, no personal shoes will be accepted for students unless there is a written order from a doctor. In the event special shoes are needed, the facility will make every attempt to provide them. However, if the family is required to provide a specific shoe for a student, a staff member will contact the family to make arrangements.

Drug-Free Environment

TJJD maintains a drug-free environment. Drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and related paraphernalia are considered contraband. Possession of such material carries disciplinary consequences and may result in criminal charges. Anyone providing alcohol or drugs to a TJJD student is subject to prosecution for a third degree felony.

Education

All TJJD secure facilities have fully accredited schools on campus. Youth in halfway houses or contract programs typically receive educational services from the local school district. All credits students earn in TJJD will transfer to their home school districts. Report cards are issued regularly and you will receive copies of them through the mail.

Grievance System

Youth and parents have access to a grievance system to file complaints. You may report complaints to your child's case worker, the facility superintendent, the facility youth rights specialist, or you may contact TJJD central office by phone (512-490-7235) or email tjjd@tjjd.texas.gov. Report suspected criminal activity immediately to 1-866-477-8354.

Family Reunification

Research has shown that family involvement has a positive correlation with successful community re-entry. Family dynamics change when a youth is removed from the home. These changes must be addressed with the youth and family prior to his or her return. The agency has made efforts to move from family-informed care to family-involved care. The agency provides home-based services to the youth and their families living in specified communities in preparation for successful reunification. To further this goal, evidence-based Functional Family Therapy[®] began in FY 2011. Parenting with Love and Limits[®] (PLL), Nurturing Parenting Programming, Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP), and Multi-Systemic Therapy[®] are being implemented in FY 2012.

OC Pepper Spray Notice

TJJD approves the use of Oleoresin Capsicum Spray (also known as pepper aerosol, pepper spray, or OC spray) in its secure institutional facilities. Pepper spray will be used in situations where a youth's behavior has justified force to be utilized, and then only as a last resort after verbal commands to stop the behavior is ineffective or impractical. Pepper spray may be used when it is necessary to protect a youth from self-harm, in self-defense, to protect third parties from imminent harm, to prevent imminent property damage, to prevent escape, and to compel movement of a referred youth to the security unit. Pepper spray will only be deployed by staff that is specially trained in the use of this agent and in the proper decontamination of individuals exposed to it. Please immediately notify TJJD if your child has any known respiratory problems, diseases, psychiatric conditions or other ailments that would make exposure to pepper spray dangerous. Please contact your child's facility superintendent or case manager if you have any questions or concerns about the use of pepper spray.

Medical Services

Your child will receive appropriate and timely medical services in the Texas Juvenile Justice Department residential facilities. The facilities have medical clinics on campus called infirmaries. Your child will receive a physical, dental, mental health, chemical dependency, and laboratory evaluation. Some of these evaluations will be conducted during the first week of admission. Your child will also receive necessary immunizations, including hepatitis B, and possibly a flu vaccine. Immunizations will be recorded in the state registry (IMMTRAC). Necessary medical treatment may be provided for physical problems that are identified during an evaluation. Opportunities are scheduled Monday through Friday for youth to see a nurse for any physical problems that may need treatment. The psychiatrist may prescribe medication for an emotional or mental health problem.

The law requires TJJD to notify you that, unless you deny the agency the authority to do so, it will continue to conduct these evaluations and provide this treatment for your child without further notice to you [§ 32.001 (b), Texas Family Code]. Except in emergency situations when immediate treatment is necessary, however, TJJD will always notify you and request your consent before providing medical treatment for serious conditions. Please notify the agency at: Texas Juvenile Justice Department, Health Services Department, P.O. Box 12757, Austin, TX 78711, within three (3) working days of receiving this letter if you object to TJJD providing evaluation and treatment for your child as described in this notice. Include your current address and day and nighttime telephone numbers so that a TJJD representative will be able to contact you. If you have any questions about this notification or the information contained in this notice, please contact the TJJD Health Services Department as soon as possible.

Money

Youth are not allowed to have money at a TJJD facility or program. Do not send money to your child. All TJJD halfway houses and institutions, except the Ron Jackson Orientation and Assessment Unit for boys and girls in Brownwood, Texas, provide trust fund services for youth while in the program. Boys are not at the Ron Jackson orientation unit long enough to make setting up a trust fund practical. Once boys are placed out of the orientation unit, you can begin sending money to their trust fund accounts if you wish. Since the girls' orientation unit is located at the primary TJJD facility for girls in Brownwood, they can begin receiving trust fund money right away, even while they are in orientation.

Funds sent to a youth through the mail must be sent according to the rules or they will be returned to the sender:

1. Do not send cash to youth through the mail under any circumstances. TJJD will not be responsible for cash sent through the mail that is not received.
2. TJJD will allow youth money sent through the mail only in the form of a personal check, cashier's check, or money order and only under the following

conditions:

- a. Envelopes containing funds for youth must be addressed to the facility business office for the Student Trust Fund. Other letters and mail correspondence should be addressed directly to the youth at the facility.
 - b. Any check, money order, or cashier's check must be made payable to the youth's facility. The facility director/administrator is the trustee for the student trust fund in his or her program.
 - c. To ensure prompt and accurate credit to the youth's student trust fund account, please include the youth's name and his or her TJJD number on the check.
3. Although TJJD will accept personal checks, the funds will not be available to the youth for 15 days in order to allow the check to clear the bank. If the bank where TJJD maintains funds charges TJJD for a personal check that does not clear because of insufficient funds (or any other banking problem you may have), TJJD will deduct the bank fee from the youth's trust fund account.

Smoking/Use of Tobacco

Youth are not allowed to smoke or use tobacco. All tobacco products, or items used for smoking (cigarette papers, lighters, etc.) are considered contraband.

Special Education

It is the responsibility of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to continue your child's education. During his or her stay at orientation, he or she will be given various educational assessments to determine his or her level of academic achievement. If your child is eligible for special education services, TJJD staff will contact you regarding notice and consent forms for special education.

Zero Tolerance for Sexual Abuse

The Texas Legislature has adopted a zero-tolerance policy regarding the sexual abuse, including consensual sexual contact, of a child in the custody of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Any such violation must be reported to: 1-866-477-8354. Additionally, the zero-tolerance policy is applicable as part of TJJD's efforts to comply with the Federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).

Getting Involved

TJJD wants you to be involved with your child and the rehabilitation process. Here are some things you can do that will have a big impact.



Family Liaisons

The Texas Legislature approved funding for family liaisons at TJJD facilities. These liaisons are here to help you with questions, concerns, problems, and solutions. If you are interested in having an impact on the entire TJJD system, be sure to provide the family liaison at your child's facility with your email address so that you are periodically contacted for feedback about agency policies and input when new ideas or initiatives are being considered.

Family and Volunteer Activities

TJJD is fortunate to have thousands of caring volunteers across the state that helps youth and families with a number of things, including special family involvement activities. Take part in as many of these activities as you can. TJJD volunteers are eager to do what they can to assist you in keeping connected with your son or daughter. Your child's facility will have a community relations coordinator who manages volunteer activities on campus and who can get you in touch with the local volunteer organization.

Asking your child about something as simple as his or her daily activities and routines is a great conversation starter. Encourage him or her to make the best use of time while at TJJD. While your child may not be excited about being in TJJD, you can encourage him or her to get something positive out of it – a GED or diploma, a professional certification, even college credit hours.

Quick review — TJJD will become your child's "home away from home" for a while, which makes it all the more important for you to be involved. TJJD can provide food, shelter, healthcare, education, counseling, and treatment but, there is no replacement for the love and interest of a parent.

Common Questions Parents Ask

What does my child do while he or she is at TJJD?

Many of your child's activities will be determined by the needs identified during his or her evaluation at the Orientation and Assessment Unit. Your child will attend school year-round and will earn credits towards his or her high school diploma. If eligible, he or she may prepare for and take the GED exam. Youth may be eligible and are encouraged to take one of many classes in career and technology education, and may earn certification in a trade like welding, auto mechanics, safe food handling, computer repair, woodworking, or landscaping, to name a few examples.

Youth have the option of participating in other groups that appeal to their individual interests. Depending on the facility, these groups may include activities like guitar lessons, dance, Girl Scouts, drama, choir, building financial skills, etc. Some TJJD schools also offer eligible youth who are doing well the opportunity to participate in competitive team sports like football, baseball, basketball, soccer, and track, or to take college courses.

What happens if my child gets sick?

All youth have access to medical care. If your child doesn't feel well, he or she should request to see a nurse by submitting a sick call request into the locked box designated for that purpose. He or she will have an appointment with nursing personnel within 24 hours of the request. If your child is injured or needs to see a nurse prior to the next scheduled sick call, he or she should notify staff and a nurse will review the health concern to determine if a more immediate assessment is necessary. If an emergency occurs that cannot be handled at the campus clinic, your child will be transported to the nearest emergency room. You will be contacted as soon as possible.

While in TJJD facilities, medical care, including annual wellness checks and medications, will be provided. If your child needs follow up appointments or appointments with specialists, we will make the appointments and arrange transportation. If you have questions about your child's medical care, please contact the facility nurse manager.

Youth in secure TJJD facilities receive medical attention from onsite nurses and doctors contracted through the University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB). To ensure quality care TJJD employs a medical director and staff of health care workers who monitor youth medical Treatment. These specialists can intervene on behalf of your child. You should always expect to be contacted and informed about any

medical issues or needs involving your child.

Will you contact me if something happens to my child?

TJJD is strongly committed to having open communication with families. Our intent is to immediately contact parents in case of an emergency. An emergency may include the presence of a serious medical condition requiring hospitalization or emergency room treatment, escape, or an incident that will require a criminal investigation. It is important for you to provide a current phone number to ensure we can contact you when needed.

What personal items can my child have while at TJJD?

TJJD provides all clothing, including rain coats, winter coats, athletic clothing, etc. to your child. Students typically wear khaki pants, a T-shirt, and tennis shoes. Under certain conditions, your child may be allowed to wear non-state issued shoes. Youth are allowed books, including religious books, religious articles used in worship, family photographs, and if they demonstrate good progress in their program, they can earn the privilege of purchasing personal (non-state issued) hygiene items such as deodorant, shampoo, and bar soap.

Quick Answer: *TJJD wants you to keep in touch with your child. There is no limit on how many letters you can send. TJJD provides your child with envelopes and postage to write letters home.*

Can my child receive mail?

Yes, your child can receive mail. GAP.380.9315 is the specific policy that details your child's rights regarding mail. TJJD staff will not read or censor your child's mail, but may inspect mail to ensure no contraband is included. There is no limit on the number of incoming letters. TJJD will give postage and stationary to all youth for three outgoing personal letters per week and unlimited necessary legal correspondence at no charge. Eligible youth may also purchase additional postage and stationary. Incoming and outgoing mail will be held no longer than 24 hours; packages will be held no longer than 48 hours except on weekends or holidays. All incoming mail may be opened and inspected for contraband in the youth's presence. All contraband that is discovered will be seized. Contraband of drugs or weapons will result in a referral to security, whereas less dangerous contraband may result in a loss of a privilege. TJJD policy defines contraband in GAP.380.9107 to include items such as drugs, alcohol, unauthorized prescription drugs or over the counter medication, drug paraphernalia, items that can be used or adapted to be used as a weapon, pictures showing sexually explicit content, gambling paraphernalia, and items that can be used to make tattoos. If you have a question about an item you would like to mail, you are welcome to call your child's caseworker.

Can I talk to my child on the phone?

Yes, the agency provides youth opportunities to call their parents, guardians, family members, and other approved responsible adults. Youth are able to make collect calls to those on their approved list. They are only allowed to make calls during times they are not already busy with activities such as school, work or group sessions. GAP.380.9313 provides additional detail.

In emergency situations, TJJD will help youth contact their family members at the cost of the agency.

If you need to contact your child by phone, call his or her caseworker or the family liaison at the institution. You may reach a voicemail message if staff members are busy assisting youth or other families, but someone will return your call and help get a message to your child in case of emergencies.

Phone calls (other than to the youth's lawyer) may be recorded and monitored for the purpose of detecting fraudulent calls or illegal activities. If a youth is found to abuse phone privileges, TJJD may restrict his or her use of the phones. Youth have access to telephones on their dorms, at their halfway houses, and in contract care programs. They are provided some free long-distance phone minutes each month to encourage family involvement in their treatment programs. Additionally, these phones are available to them without charge to contact the TJJD Abuse Hotline, which is operated by the Office of the Inspector General. All potential abuse, neglect, mistreatment, or illegal activity on TJJD property should be reported to the hotline at: 866-477-8354.

Can I visit my child?

TJJD views parental involvement as important to your child's success. All youth are allowed to spend time with their family and other individuals who have been approved for visitation. If arranged in advance, you may also use this time to talk with your child's case manager or participate in family counseling.

There are rules for visitation. The facility superintendent will give you specific information about visitation in a letter sent to your home. If you do not get a letter, please call the caseworker. Visitation may be suspended due to violation of visitation rules or if there is an emergency on the campus that requires suspension for the purpose of safety. If financial circumstances prevent a family from visiting their child, they may need to ask for help. Community relations coordinators partner with community resource councils at each facility who sponsor fund-raising drives to help with such requests. You may call the community relations manager at 512-490-7090.

Standard visitation with TJJD youth occurs on the weekends. In certain special situations, an alternate visit can be arranged. For example, if a military parent receives deployment orders he or she can visit before they leave. Stay in contact with your child's caseworker anytime you have questions or ideas. TJJD wants to be as accommodating as possible to help you stay involved with your child's treatment. It never hurts to ask questions or provide input.

How do I get in touch with my child in case of an emergency?

The first person you should try to call is your child's caseworker. If you are unable to reach the caseworker, you can also contact the facility's family liaison, chaplain, or even facility leadership such as the superintendent and assistant superintendent.

When is my child coming home?

Your child's caseworker will be able to tell you his or her minimum length of stay. This is the least amount of time your child will have to spend in TJJD. If your child is not scheduled for release when his or her minimum length of stay is completed, the case will go to the Release Review Panel as described in the "Where Will My Child Go & For How Long?" section of this book. If your child's case is at the Release Review Panel, you may contact a panel liaison at (512) 490-7101 to find out the status of his or her release.

Is information about my child confidential?

State and federal laws make most juvenile information confidential, but the rules can be complicated. As a parent, you have a lot of control over who can see your child's records. When your child turns 18, he or she gets to have the control. TJJD cannot release information about your child to the public. Sometimes, though, people who work for the courts, police departments or other law enforcement agencies, schools, and the Texas Legislature can see information about your child without your permission. If your child is a sex offender, the rules get more complicated because some sex offenders have to register on a public database. You should contact an attorney about your child's information and find out what you can do to keep it as private as possible. A lot of parents try to have their children's juvenile records sealed after they are released from TJJD. That is something your lawyer can help you do if your child is eligible.

Quick Answer – *There is never a wrong question. Getting to know TJJD and your child's home campus takes time. Naturally, with any new experience, there is a lot that you will want to know. If you have a question, be sure to ask.*

DS. Determinate Sentenced Offenders Only

Youth who are committed to TJJD with determinate (or specific) sentences by the courts will ultimately transfer to the adult system – the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) – if they are unable to complete their set sentences before they turn 19. Depending on their progress in treatment, they may be able to serve the TDCJ portion of their sentences (if any) on adult parole rather than in prison. TJJD cannot send a youth directly to prison. Only a judge can order a youth be sent to prison after providing due process through a court hearing.

5. Release Review Panel

Your child's Release Review Panel (RRP) consists of three members and ensures timely releases of youth. If a child has served his or her minimum time, but is not already released on parole, the case is assigned to a review panel within 30 days. This panel determines whether release to the community is appropriate based on recent behavior and positive behavior intervention supports (PBIS), academic achievement, reading improvement and the youth's response to treatment and individual risk and protective factors that contribute to the likelihood of a youth's success once released. However, if the panel determines a particular youth could benefit from further treatment in TJJD, it can extend a youth's minimum length of stay beyond his or her initial assignment.

Thirty days before the end of a youth's minimum length of stay, the family will receive a letter from the facility about the upcoming review. Parents will also receive information on how to be included in the review process. The panel welcomes input from parents, family friends, and advocates regarding changes and improvements they have seen in the youth. You may submit information to:

Release Review Panel
P.O. Box 12757
Austin, Texas 78711
Email: release.review@tjjd.texas.gov

TJJD staff at your child's facility may submit requests for extensions of stay to the panel. Staff members requesting an extension of stay beyond your child's initial minimum length of stay must show the Release Review Panel that he or she is in need of additional treatment and that TJJD is the most suitable place to receive that treatment. If the release review panel decides to extend a youth's stay, the youth, or a parent, guardian, advocate or a volunteer working on his or her behalf may appeal the decision of the panel. The panel will then reconsider the case.

6. Phoenix Program

The Phoenix program is located at the McLennan County State Juvenile Correctional Facility in Mart, Texas. It is an independent program that is located in one building of that facility. To qualify for placement in the Phoenix program, staff must prove in a hearing that the youth committed one of the following rule violations:

- Assault Causing Moderate or Serious Bodily Injury to Another Youth
- Assault Causing Substantial Bodily Injury to Staff
- Chunking Bodily Fluids at Staff
- Fighting Causing Moderate or Serious Bodily Injury to Another Youth
- Any other major rule violation when the entire incident justifies the placement in the program and the placement is directed by the executive director or designee
- Assault causing bodily injury on three separate occasions within a 90-day period.

Definitions of these rule violations are found in TJJJ policy . Youth who commit these violations will be reviewed by a committee. The committee will decide which youth are placed in the program. Placement in the Phoenix program will result in returning to the lowest stage in CoNEXTions©. It could also mean a longer stay in TJJJ.

7. Parole

Most youth are assigned to parole upon their release from TJJJ facilities because it serves as structured transition for reintegration into the community. Usually, youth live at home while on parole and report to parole officers until they are discharged from TJJJ.

8. Discharge/Successful Completion of the TJJJ Program

It is the hope of TJJJ that each youth who is committed to the agency's temporary care will leave with a fresh outlook and a sound plan for future success. Often, success depends upon having education and career goals and following through with those plans.

Take advantage of the services TJJJ offers for youth even after they have been discharged. Educational Re-entry Liaisons, stationed throughout Texas, can help youth navigate the sometimes complicated process of applying to college or trade school, as well as help them apply for financial aid.

Summary:

Only a juvenile court can send your child to TJJJ. Sometimes the judge gives a youth a set sentence (called a determinate commitment because the judge has determined the exact amount of time a youth must spend in TJJJ and/or adult prison). Most of the time, the judge sends youth to TJJJ without saying exactly how

long he or she has to spend (called an indeterminate commitment because the amount of time is not determined).

You might ask, “Why would a judge not say how long my child has to be in TJJD?” This is the biggest difference between TJJD and the adult system. Remember, TJJD is about accountability, treatment, and therapy, not punishment. Because each child’s therapy experience is different, some children need more time and others need less time. In the adult system, you get a sentence and have to serve time as punishment.

In TJJD, youth come and participate in their treatment until they are done. So, instead of getting set sentences, most youth have minimum lengths of stay – the least amount of time you know for sure he or she will have to be in TJJD. This is usually about 9 to 24 months depending on his or her offense and some other factors. Hopefully, after the minimum time is over, he or she is also finished with treatment and can go home.

To make sure TJJD doesn’t keep a child longer than needed, each youth who has finished his or her minimum time, but hasn’t been released, gets to have his or her case looked at by a group called the Release Review Panel. This group looks at all of the information about your child and decides if TJJD is allowed to keep your child past the minimum time.

The only time a judge gives a youth a set sentence (the determinate commitment) is when he or she has committed a very serious offense like murder, sexual assault, armed robbery, and some other offenses.

Most of the time, these set sentences last past the time a youth can stay in TJJD, which is until they turn 19. Then, they are transferred to the adult system to finish their sentences (either on parole or in prison). TJJD cannot send your child to prison. That is something only a judge can do.

What is the CoNEXTions© Treatment Program?

CoNEXTions©, the agency’s treatment program, encourages a partnership between youth, families, and communities. Experienced, trained, and licensed staff provides treatment that is youth-centered and evidence-based. The program takes into account your child’s individual needs and strengths to help your child while in TJJD and when returning to the community. Every staff member with TJJD is committed to the CoNEXTions© program.

CoNEXTions© focuses on two questions:

- 1. What causes youth to come into the juvenile justice system? (the risk factors), and**
- 2. What keeps kids from returning to the system? (protective factors).**

The program assesses individual youth risk factors (the negative parts of their lives) and protective factors (positive parts of their lives), which are used as the foundation to design individual treatment plans so that youth can learn to reduce their risk factors and increase their protective factors. This intense and system-wide implementation of thinking skills training will decrease recidivism and crime among youth in the program.

Treatment programs are customized for each youth. They undergo group therapy, individual counseling sessions, and spend time working on lessons related to their treatment. Their progress is evaluated every 30 days.

The structured daily schedule at TJJD teaches youth, among other things, to make good use of free time. Poor use of leisure time is one factor that contributes to delinquency.

Risk factors that are addressed in the curriculum include:

- Having negative and/or dangerous attitudes, values, and beliefs**
- Not having positive role models**
- Spending time with negative or criminal people**
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs**
- Personality traits that make youth more likely to engage in criminal activity**
- Rebellious, defiant, and/or law-breaking behavior**
- Difficulties between and among family members**
- Low academic or vocational success**
- Poor use of free time**

CoNEXTions© draws elements from the following evidence-based tools, techniques, and therapies.

- PACT-Positive Achievement Change Tool**
- Cognitive Life Skills**
- Thinking for a Change/Thinking Reports**
- Skills Applications Groups**
- Motivational Interviewing**
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Strategies (PBIS)**
- Supplemental Groups for Identified Youth**
- Leisure Skills Building Groups**
- Specialized Treatment Programs**
- Educational, Vocational, and Workforce Development**

- Family Partnering & Involvement from Day 1
- Victim Impact Panels

There are four specialized treatment programs CoNEXTions© provides for youth who are identified as having a significant need in a specific area. They are:

- Capital and Serious Violent Offender Treatment Program,
- Chemical Dependency Treatment Program,
- Mental Health Treatment Program, and
- Sexual Behavior Treatment Program.

In these programs, youth receive treatment services from specially trained or licensed staff and participate in programming that is more intense and possibly longer than the general CoNEXTions© program. Specialized treatment programs receive ongoing support and staff receives specialized training to maintain the advanced skills and knowledge needed to work with special-needs populations.

Quick Answer: CoNEXTions© is the name of the TJJD treatment program. In the simplest terms, it tries to answer two questions: what is causing your child to get in trouble and what will keep him or her out of trouble? In TJJD, your child will be evaluated by people who are trained to help kids in trouble. They will work with you and other experts to answer those two questions about your child. Then, a plan to help your child can be created.

You will hear words like “risk factors” and “protective factors.” Basically, they are the negative things affecting your child (the risk factors) and the strengths your child has (the protective factors). For example, if your child doesn’t use his or her free time very well, or if he or she suffers from depression, those are bad things in his or her life – the risk factors. On the other hand, you as a parent being involved in treatment and writing letters, or your child belonging to a school or church activity group – those are good things – the protective factors.

When creating a treatment plan, the goal is to figure out how to deal with the risk factors and increase the protective factors.

The new way TJJD looks at treatment involves:

1. Connecting your child with positive people and influences
2. Using resources in your community to help your child
3. Getting your child excited about and involved in activities that are good

Parents' Bill Of Rights

Parents are partners with correctional staff, educators, and treatment providers in their child's rehabilitation and shall be encouraged and assisted to actively participate in the design and implementation of their child's treatment, from intake through discharge.

Parents of children who have been committed to the care, custody, or control of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department have the following rights:

- 1. As a parent, you have the right to know that you and your child will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, national origin, language, economic status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age and that each child will be treated as an individual.**
- 2. As a parent, you have the right to expect the agency to provide a safe, secure, and sanitary environment for your child.**
- 3. As a parent, you have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of your child's incarceration.**
- 4. As a parent, you have the right to be a vocal and active advocate on behalf of your child.**
- 5. As a parent, you have the right to be an active participant when decisions are made about your child.**
- 6. As a parent, you have the right to be informed about matters related to your child's welfare.**
- 7. As a parent, you have the right to access your child's records.**
- 8. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's treatment, including medical treatment, behavioral health treatment, and education.**
- 9. As a parent, you have the right to communicate with your child, including visitation, telephone, and mail.**
- 10. As a parent, you have the right to be assured that all TJJD staff are professional, courteous, and respectful.**
- 11. As a parent, you have the right to know that TJJD will take immediate corrective action to protect the rights of parents and youth.**
- 12. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's transition-planning — from intake through release, parole, and eventual discharge.**
- 13. Children who are 18 years or older must have signed a release of confidentiality authorizing parents to view their information**

A Detailed Discussion of the Parents' Bill of Rights

The Parents' Bill of Rights is TJJD's promise to take care of your child, an invitation to you to be involved and vocal, and a guarantee that the time your child spends in TJJD will be meaningful. Your involvement in your child's care is critical to his or her success. We need your help and ask that you partner with correctional staff, educators, and treatment providers in your child's rehabilitation. We will encourage and assist you to actively participate in the design and implementation of your child's treatment, from intake through discharge.

As parents of children¹ who have been committed to the care, custody, or control of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department you have the following rights:

1. As a parent, you have the right to know that you and your child will be treated fairly regardless of race, religion, national origin, language, economic status, disability, gender, sexual orientation, or age and that each child will be treated as an individual.

You and your child will be treated fairly by TJJD staff, without regard to your age, gender, religion, sexual orientation, the color of your skin, the language you speak, the amount of money you have, the country you come from, or any disabilities you may have. You and your child should always be treated with professionalism, respect, and dignity.

2. As a parent, you have the right to expect TJJD to provide a safe, secure, and sanitary environment for your child.

As a parent, you have a right to expect that the environment your child is in will be safe, secure, and clean. Some ways that you may be able to exercise those rights include attending an orientation and/or a tour of the facility in which your child is placed. You should be able to see your child's environment, including a dorm, the school, and cafeteria at scheduled opportunities.

3. As a parent, you have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because of your child's incarceration.

We recognize that there are many factors that contribute to a child being committed to TJJD. Your child's incarceration is not an indicator of your worth as a parent. TJJD staff will not judge you because your child has been committed to TJJD.

4. As a parent, you have the right to be a vocal and active advocate on behalf of your child.

It is important to be a vocal and active advocate on behalf of your child. Your rights as your child's parent do not end simply because your child has been committed to TJJD. Some of your rights may include:

- The right to attend any open meetings hosted by TJJD.
 - The right to prohibit identifiable pictures or videos of your child from being disseminated for public use.
 - The right to direct the religious training of your child.
 - The right to file a complaint with the expectation that it will be tracked, investigated, and resolved in a timely manner in accordance with law, policies, or administrative directives.
 - The right to appeal decisions on behalf of your child, in accordance with TJJD policy, concerning grievances or allegations of mistreatment.
 - The right to access any policy or directive upon request.
 - The right to express your concern and have it taken seriously without the threat or fear of retaliation against you or your child.
5. As a parent, you have the right to be an active participant when decisions are made about your child.

As a parent, you also still have the right to actively participate when decisions are made about your child. Your rights include:

- The right to participate in writing, in person, or over the telephone within the guidelines stated in the policies included in the appendix of this handbook.
 - The right, as allowed by law, policy, or directive, to attend meetings related to your child, and to be accompanied by your advocate, attorney, or interpreter.
 - The right to provide input or feedback on TJJD policies and directives.
 - The right to expect a timely response to your requests regarding your child.
6. As a parent, you have the right to be informed about matters related to your child's welfare.

Parents need information about their children. That need is especially critical when your child is away from you for long periods of time. While your son or daughter is in TJJD, you have the right to be informed about different aspects of his or her welfare. Some of these rights include:

- The right to monthly notification of your child's behavior, including any consequences for rule violations.
- The right to timely notifications of special events at your child's facility, including due process hearings or graduations.

- The right to be provided contact information for the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of the Independent Ombudsman.
 - The right to timely notification if your child is sprayed with oleoresin capsicum (pepper spray), placed in a manual restraint, assaulted, injured, hospitalized, transferred to another facility, escapes or is discharged.
 - The right to be informed of your child's progress and treatment, including medical, psychological, psychiatric, and educational progress, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
 - The right to make a written request for a summary of grievances filed by your child.
 - The right to comprehensive, easy to understand information about your child's stay at TJJD, provided in your preferred language whenever possible.
 - The right to be informed of serious or persistent medical conditions related to your child.
 - The right to know the process, timelines, and decisions which affect your child's stay, including the dates related to minimum length of stay, special services committee meetings, and meetings of the release review panel.
7. As a parent, you have the right to access your child's records.

To be an active participant in your child's education and treatment, you need access to your child's records. Some of your specific rights include:

- The right to access, upon written request, any records concerning your child, including test scores, grades, disciplinary records, psychological evaluations, health, dental, and immunization records, and grievances and allegations filed on your child's behalf, unless otherwise prohibited by law.
 - The right to receive (upon written request) financial reports related to your child's student trust funds.
 - The right to receive copies of any TJJD document to facilitate your child's successful reintegration back into the community.
8. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's treatment, including medical treatment, behavioral health treatment, and education.

Meaningful and active participation in your child's treatment and education would also mean that you have the following rights:

- The right to contribute to his or her individual case plan.

- The right, upon request, to parent/teacher communication and meetings.
 - The right to attend a family orientation.
 - The right to attend an open house to see your child's school and meet his or her teachers.
 - The right to receive quarterly academic progress reports.
 - The right to discuss your child's health condition with a licensed healthcare professional and to be informed if there are significant medication changes.
 - The right to discuss medical questions or concerns with the facility's nurse manager.
 - The right to be present if your child has to be hospitalized.
 - The right to be present and participate in a monthly review of your child's treatment progress.
 - The right to have the location of your home taken into account when your child is placed in a TJJD facility, depending on his or her treatment needs.
 - The right to meet in person or by telephone with staff involved in your child's care or programming needs.
 - The right to know that your child is receiving adequate treatment, programming and recreational activities.
 - The right, upon request, to review all teaching materials, textbooks, and other teaching aids used in the classroom for your information.
 - The right to know the names and contact information for the facility's superintendent, assistant superintendent, youth rights specialist, family liaison, principal, and your child's case manager and psychologist.
 - The right to receive a second medical or psychiatric opinion, if appropriate, as determined by the TJJD medical director.
9. As a parent, you have the right to communicate with your child, including visitation, telephone, and mail.

Continued communication with your child is essential. You have the right to visit your child, talk to him or her on the telephone, and to send and receive letters from your child within the guidelines listed in the policies linked from the table of contents in this online handbook. Specifically, those rights include:

- The right to a timely visit with your child after properly checking in.
- The right to have your child's mail and telephone calls handled in a respectful, timely fashion.

- The right to communicate privately with your child, including visitation, telephone, and mail.
 - The right to face-to-face contact visits with your child on the weekends and by appointment on weekdays when reasonable.
 - The right to have reasonable accommodations during visitation. Please contact the facility's superintendent in advance of your visit to make arrangements for any special accommodations.
 - The right to be informed, in a timely manner, of current policies and procedures that affect visiting with your child.
 - The right to private, in-person communication with your child.
 - The right to have special visitation requests accommodated, including but not limited to special family holidays or meetings, long-distance travel requirements, parent work schedules that preclude visiting during normal hours, or bereavement.
 - The right to furnish your child with approved reading material that will supplement his or her education.
 - The right to have accurate information about current visitation rules.
10. As a parent, you have the right to be assured that all TJJD staff are professional, courteous, and respectful.

You have the right to expect that TJJD staff will treat you and your child in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner. TJJD staff will be professionals in their field. You have the right to know that they have been properly trained and credentialed for their job responsibilities. Furthermore, you should expect TJJD staff to keep accurate records, from the time of your child's intake to his or her eventual discharge.

11. As a parent, you have the right to know that TJJD will take immediate corrective action to protect the rights of parents and youth.

This bill of rights is our promise to you that we will treat you and your child fairly and that the time he or she spends away from home will be meaningful. If you feel that your or your child's rights have been violated, please contact the superintendent or Youth Rights Specialist of your facility who will make sure that your complaint is investigated.

12. As a parent, you have the right to meaningful participation in your child's transition planning – from intake through community reentry and eventual discharge.

Few things are as important as good planning for your son's or daughter's eventual return home. As a parent, you have the right to participate in that planning, beginning at your child's initial commitment to TJJD and continuing through the parole process all the way to his or her eventual discharge. Your rights include:

- The right to know that effective transition planning for your child, including early identification of youth and family needs and referral to appropriate services and resources, begins at intake and continues through reentry until discharge.
- The right to be informed of the services, support, and resources available to you and your child in your home community, including possible medical coverage and other government benefits.
- You have the right to expect full support in effective planning for your child for all transitions including from facility to facility, facility to home, and youth services to adult services.
- The right to be informed of your rights and responsibilities while your child is on parole.
- The right to provide input in the development of your child's conditions of parole.

Who Do I Talk To?

...if I have concerns that my child is being mistreated?

Because our number one priority is the safety of our youth and employees, TJJD has established a hotline for reporting your concerns directly to the Office of the Inspector General. The Office of the Inspector General is staffed by law enforcement officers who investigate criminal acts committed by TJJD staff or youth and can file criminal charges against either. We urge you to call them toll free at 1-866-477-8354.

You may also contact the Office of the Independent Ombudsman at (855) 468-7330. The Ombudsman's office has independent monitors who focus on problems that affect the TJJD facilities in hopes of improving the standard of care for all youth.

Finally, you may also report your concerns to your facility's Youth Rights Specialist. These TJJD employees are in charge of the youth grievance system. They make sure your complaints are answered.

Quick Answer – To report abuse of your child call the TJJD Office of Inspector General (these are law enforcement officers) at the 24-hour hotline: (866) 477-8354.

To complain about problems with TJJD, you may also call the Office of the Independent Ombudsman at (855) 468-7330.

...if I have questions about how my child is doing?

Your child's case manager is your main contact in TJJD for any questions or concerns you may have. Your child's caseworker is responsible for:

- providing ongoing assessments of your child's progress in treatment. Families are encouraged to participate in the multi-disciplinary team meetings and/or provide written response to the treatment plans sent to the family;
- case planning;
- encouraging family involvement in the treatment of your child;
- providing group and individual counseling service; and
- performing community reintegration, discharge and release planning to assure that risk and protective factors are addressed throughout your child's stay in TJJD.

The case manager will let you know how your child is doing and what needs to be worked on in treatment. This information is included in a progress report, called an Individual Case Plan or (ICP). This is important information. Your child's multi-disciplinary team (MDT) will develop the ICP with input from you and your child and will regularly mail you a copy. If your child is 18 years old or older, the case manager must have his or her permission in order to send you the ICP. The ICP will include goals related to your family. You can work with the case managers to develop the ICP by making suggestions about what your child needs to work on before coming home and rules your child must follow at home.

As the case manager learns more about your family, he or she may refer you to services in your community that can provide you with assistance and support, such as:

- counseling, including substance abuse and mental health counseling;
- assistance programs, including financial and travel assistance programs for visiting a child committed to the department;
- workforce preparedness programs;
- parenting programs; and
- department seminars, workshops, or forums.

While case managers help parents and youth in a variety of ways, it is important to note the case managers are unable to provide you with certain information that is protected by law. This includes any information about chemical dependency treatment unless your child signs a release. This applies to youth of all ages.

...if I want to learn more about how to be actively involved in my child's education and treatment?

Family liaisons are responsible for generating family involvement in youth rehabilitation and education by developing, organizing, implementing and overseeing family participation at TJJD facilities. Family liaisons coach, educate, support, and encourage family members to make informed choices so their voices drive the plan of care that is recommended for their youth.

...if I want to learn more about the types of worship services TJJD offers?

TJJD is committed to allowing youth equal opportunity to practice, observe, and enrich their religious faith. Your child will be asked to declare a religious preference upon entering TJJD. The chaplain will ensure your child is provided pastoral counseling, worship, and educational opportunities. If you wish to learn more about what TJJD offers, please contact the chaplain at your child's facility.

TJJD youth represent dozens of different religious beliefs including all of the world's major religions. The agency accommodates religious ceremonies and customs when they are not a threat to safety. While youth have the right to participate in any religion of their choice, they also have the right not to participate at all. TJJD does not compel youth to practice any religious activity.

The primary role of a TJJD chaplain is to:

- *Protect the religious freedom of TJJD youth*
- *Provide religious rites, rituals, and practices, and*
- *Help TJJD youth clarify their moral values.*

...if I would like a copy of my child's medical, school, behavioral and treatment records?

If your child is under 18 years of age and you are his or her legal guardian, you have the right to access records concerning your child, including test scores, grades, disciplinary records, psychological evaluations, and medical records. Please write to the Open Records Department in our Office of General Counsel or call 512-490-7282 for assistance.

...if I am moving?

If you move or change phone numbers, contact your child's caseworker to make sure TJJD has your most current contact information.

Other Services

Volunteer Services

Volunteers offer tremendous support to youth. Community relations coordinators at each facility recruit, train, and supervise volunteers to mentor, tutor, provide

spiritual guidance, and other help to your child. All volunteers are screened and have completed extensive criminal background checks. You or your child can request services from a volunteer by contacting the caseworker.

Educational Liaison Services

Educational Re-entry liaisons (ERL) are responsible for ensuring that youth, at the point of discharge from the facility, have all their education/workforce development re-entry information and documentation prepared. In addition, these positions assist with providing various components of independent living skills development such as employment preparation and advocacy skills. ERLs help youth with their educational needs beyond their stay in TJJD facilities. The liaisons provide information and referral for GED preparation, high school enrollment, enrollment in community colleges or vocational schools, and can help youth apply for financial aid. Additionally, they assist youth and aftercare staff in navigating the systems that often seem overwhelming to students. They work closely with parole officers and halfway house staff to help identify each youth's academic needs and refer them to the resources needed to be successful in the community.

Family Reunification Services

TJJD contracts with outside providers to deliver comprehensive home-based intervention services to families and their youth in order to successfully reunify youth with their families and ease their transition back into schools, the work force and their communities. These providers deliver an array of services including intensive case management, parenting skills classes, individual counseling, and crisis intervention.

Victims' Services

TJJD is committed to providing victims of juvenile crime their rights under the law, ensuring that they are informed, involved, and treated with dignity, fairness and respect. This includes providing victim notification upon request to victims of TJJD offenders as detailed in Chapter 57 of the Family Code and Chapter 56 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Victims are given the opportunity to submit information that can be used in the youth's treatment program. Also, victims are notified when the offender is released back into the community; however, TJJD does not disclose offenders' physical addresses to victims. If you are the victim of a juvenile crime and would like to learn more about your rights, contact the agency's victim services coordinator at 1-888-850-7369 (toll free), or 512-490-7289 (in Austin).

The Spotlight – TJJD's Electronic Newsletter

To receive a copy of TJJD's electronic newsletter highlighting events and people who make a difference in the lives of youth, send an email to webadmin@tjtd.texas.gov and tell the agency you want to be added to the mailing list. *The Spotlight* is periodically published as news warrants.

Transitioning to the Community

Youth who have completed their required time and have progressed through the treatment program can qualify for release on parole or move to a TJJD-operated halfway house or other community-based residential program.

Halfway Houses

Halfway houses are TJJD-operated, community-based facilities where up to 24 youth live. Youth usually spend their days attending school, going to work, or completing community service hours and volunteer work. Their evenings are spent participating in small group activities that focus on practicing skills, doing homework, or doing chores. A halfway house teaches your child how to live in the community in a socially responsible way.

Youth who are assigned to halfway houses are typically those who have excelled in treatment and don't need to be in a high security setting to finish their time, or they are youth who have no home to which they can return.

Parole

Treatment continues even after your child returns home. Instead of having a case manager, your child will have a TJJD parole officer. The parole officer will monitor your child in the community. This includes office contacts, visits at home, school, and on the job. The parole officer will also help identify resources to meet your child's needs. Almost all TJJD youth are sent home on parole. It is a rare circumstance that leads to direct discharge from TJJD without parole.

Youth who are sentenced offenders who might have to serve a number of court-ordered years on parole (past the maximum TJJD age of 19) are typically released from TJJD directly onto adult parole managed by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. There are very few circumstances where sentenced offenders are placed on TJJD parole until their 19th birthday and are then transitioned to TDCJ parole. Unless the court adjudicated your child as a sentenced offender, with what is called a determinate sentence, your child will not go on adult parole.

What Happens While My Child Is On Parole?

The parole officer will do a home visit within 90 days of your child's admission to TJJD. He or she will visit your home to tell you about TJJD as well as ask you for information about your child's history, strengths, and needs. The parole officer gathers this information and makes a recommendation about the best place for your child to go after leaving his or her residential placement in TJJD. The parole officer will also answer your questions about parole and help you find services in your community that will help your family.

Quick Answer – Planning your child’s return home begins just as soon as he or she arrives at TJJD. In fact, your child will be assigned a parole officer early in his or her stay at TJJD, and you will meet this person when the parole officer conducts a home visit. The first home visit will happen within three months of your child being sent to TJJD.

Like the caseworker when your child is in a TJJD facility, the parole officer is an important person for you to get to know. When your child comes home, the parole officer will be able to help you get connected with services in your community that can help you and your child.

Youth on parole are required to have face-to-face visits with their parole officer a certain number of times per month, determined by the youth’s progress and length of time on parole. Some youth report once each week; some report once every other week; and some report monthly. These face-to-face visits may take place at your child’s school, job, community service site, or at a TJJD office.

If your child is unable to meet with his or her parole officer on a given day, simply call the parole officer to reschedule. If appointments are missed without prior notification, your child may face consequences for violating parole rules. A continuing pattern of failure to report to the parole officer could result in serious consequences like returning your child to a TJJD residential facility.

When youth are on parole, they are typically required to do community service, work, and attend required counseling and/or school. Youth on parole must complete 40 hours of constructive activity each week. Constructive activity may refer to employment, school attendance, seeking employment, vocational training, attending treatment , performing community service, or any other rehabilitative activity. If your child is doing some things that worry you, it’s a good idea to let your child’s parole officer know. Together, we can help your child stay on track.

How long will my child be on parole?

The length of time your child is on parole depends on your child’s willingness to comply with the conditions of parole and complete the parole case plan. If you would like to know more about your child’s progress, be sure to attend his or her parole case reviews. Contact your child’s parole officer to learn more.

Who can I talk to while my child is on parole?

In addition to your child’s parole officer, the family liaison coordinator can help. Also, your child’s educational liaison will be able to answer all the questions you have about educational opportunities for your child such as preparing for the GED, enrolling in public school, applying for financial aid, and enrolling in vocational school or college. In addition, the parole supervisors are also available to talk to you regarding your child and any questions or issues you have. For youth needing employment and/or occupational skills development , workforce development re-entry specialists can provide help.

How can I be involved while my child is on parole?

The first thing you can do to become involved in your child's transition is to partner with your child's caseworker before your child's release to parole. You can share your concerns and any special needs you or your child may have.

When your local parole office offers a parent orientation, you are encouraged to attend to learn how you can prepare for your child's return. Many children go through challenges when they are trying to get used to home life after being in a highly structured program. Your child's parole officer can help you learn more. Your child will have to follow rules and guidelines when he or she comes home on parole. You can help by encouraging your child to follow these guidelines. Keep good contact with the parole officer when you have concerns or questions.

Understanding the Automatic Restriction of Access to Records

Who has a juvenile file and record in Texas?

A child who has been arrested, taken into custody or charged with a criminal offense (any felony) that was committed when he or she was at least 10 years old, but younger than 17 years old, probably has a juvenile file and record. The child may also have a juvenile record if he or she was charged with some Class C misdemeanor offenses if the justice or municipal court transferred the case to a juvenile court.

What are juvenile justice files and records?

Under the record keeping system for juvenile records in Texas, if a child was adjudicated for any felony, the child probably has a juvenile record with numerous entities including local law enforcement, the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). That record is a permanent record that is not destroyed or erased unless the record is eligible for sealing and the child or the child's family hires a lawyer to file a petition in court to have the record sealed.

Who usually has access to juvenile files and records?

While juvenile files and records are generally confidential, there are some important exceptions. A juvenile record can be accessed by police, sheriff's officers, prosecutors, probation officers, correctional officers, and other criminal and juvenile justice officials in this state and elsewhere. Also, the record may be available to employers, educational institutions, licensing agencies, and other organizations when the person applies for employment or educational programs.

Juvenile treatment records (counseling, placement, drug treatment, etc.) are confidential and accessible only to authorized users.

What is the automatic restriction of access to records system?

In Texas there now exists a records system that is designed to limit access to your child's juvenile records after he or she reaches 21 years of age if he or she does not commit additional criminal offenses after becoming 17 years of age. The system is called automatic restriction of access to records. This is in addition to your child's opportunity to have his or her records sealed and destroyed under other provisions of the Texas Family Code.

Under automatic restriction of access to records, your child's records are not destroyed or sealed. They remain in place, but under restricted access. They are available only to criminal justice agencies for criminal justice purposes, such as investigating potential employees and prosecuting crimes.

For all other inquiries – non-criminal justice employment, education, etc. – the holder of the records is required to reply that the records “do not exist” and your child is legally allowed to deny that he or she was ever arrested, prosecuted or adjudicated for a crime.

How do a juvenile's records become eligible for restricted access?

For restricted access to take place, no action is required by the child or the child's family. You do not have to file a petition or hire a lawyer. The process is automatic when your child turns 21 if, since his or her 17th birthday, he or she has not:

- committed a felony or a Class A or B misdemeanor; or
- received deferred adjudication for or been convicted in adult court of a Class A or B misdemeanor or a felony.

If your child meets the requirements set out above he or she will be given a fresh start at age 21. This allows your child to pursue various employment and educational opportunities without harm from a past juvenile record. But remember, this opportunity will only happen if your child does not commit any new criminal offenses. If your child commits a crime after turning 21, his or her records will be removed from restricted access.

What does it mean if records are placed on restricted access?

If a child's record is placed on restricted access, when he or she turns 21, access to his or her records will be denied to employers, educational institutions, and other people who may want the information. Only criminal justice agencies will have access to these records and only for criminal justice purposes, which includes

investigation of crimes and for screening the applications of people who apply for employment in a criminal justice agency (police officers, etc).

What records are not eligible for restricted access?

The only juvenile records that are not eligible for automatic restricted access are cases that were:

- handled as determinate sentence cases by the juvenile court;
- certified (transferred) to adult criminal court to be handled in the same manner as adult cases; or
- prosecuted in justice or municipal court.

What about gang records?

Information about gang activity is maintained by DPS in gang book records as authorized by law. These records are exempt from the new system because the access to these records is already limited to criminal justice agencies for a criminal justice purpose.

What about sex offender records?

Sex offender registration records are exempted from the restricted access system because the purpose of registration is to notify the public. If your child is a registered juvenile sex offender, he or she may have a right to have his or her records sealed once the obligation to register expires. Also, there are other legal proceedings that may allow reconsideration of your child's obligation to register. Talk to your child's probation or parole officer or speak to a private attorney.

How does the restricted access records system benefit my child?

If a child's records are placed on restricted access, he or she may:

- deny the existence of the juvenile record; and
- deny the arrest, prosecution, or adjudication ever happened.

For example, once your child's juvenile records are on restricted access, he or she may legally answer, "No" when a job application, educational, or occupational licensing application asks, "Have you ever been arrested, convicted or adjudicated of a crime?"

It is important to understand that if your child commits a crime after turning age 17 and he or she is convicted of or placed on deferred adjudication for the offense in adult criminal court, his or her juvenile records are not eligible for restricted access. In this case, your child does not have the right to deny the existence of his or her juvenile record. If he or she denies the record in this situation, your child could be prosecuted for perjury (failing to tell the truth).

What should my child do to make sure his or her records are placed on restricted access?

To be sure your child's records are eligible for and placed on restricted access, he or she must:

- successfully complete his or her period of probation or parole with no violations; and
- commit no criminal offense after becoming 17 years of age.

The restricted access system truly gives juveniles the opportunity for rehabilitation and a fresh start if they do not commit any further criminal offenses.

What should my child do if he or she wants to be notified when and if his or her records are restricted?

If your child wishes to receive notification of actions restricting access to his or her records, your child must notify the TJJJ Youth Records Department before his or her 21st birthday and keep TJJJ updated with a current address.

Should my child try to get his or her records sealed or destroyed?

The sealing and destruction of juvenile records procedures do offer some additional benefits to a youth and may be the preferred course of action. To have your child's record sealed, he or she must initiate a formal court proceeding and may need an attorney. Also, if he or she has criminal records in a justice or municipal court, special expungement procedures apply. If you or your child has questions about any of these procedures, discuss them with an attorney or your child's probation or parole officer.

Committee Member Acknowledgments

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department is indebted to all of the committee members who participated in the creation of the Parents' Bill of Rights.

Note: Initials are used in lieu of the names of TJJJ youth and parents to protect their privacy.

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¹ *Children who are under the age of 18 years or are over 18 years and have signed a release of confidentiality authorizing TJJD to share confidential information with their parents. This includes guardians and Child Protective Service conservators.*

Definitions for Common TJJD Terms & Acronyms

Adjudicated - equivalent to “convicted” and indicates that the court concluded the juvenile committed the act.

Adjudication Hearing - a fact-finding hearing that determines whether or not a youth engaged in delinquent conduct or in conduct indicating a need for supervision.

Agency Performance Measures - an indicator of agency efforts and accomplishments. Measures indicate agency accomplishments already achieved, planned, or required by legislative directive.

Admission, Review, and Dismissal (ARD) - committee responsible for making the educational decisions for students in special education. Parents, teachers, and other facility staff are members of the ARD committee. An ARD is needed for initial placement or any time the school staff or parents feel a change is needed in a student's special education program.

Alcohol and Other drugs (AOD) - a compulsive use of alcohol or other drugs to the point that stopping is difficult and causes physical and mental reactions.

Alcohol and Other Drugs(AOD) Treatment - specialized treatment program for youth who are addicted to drugs or alcohol.

Alleged Mistreatment Investigation (AMI) - investigations conducted by the Office of the Inspector General when anyone (parents, youth, staff, volunteers) voices concern that there is reason to believe a youth is being abused, neglected, or exploited.

American Correctional Association (ACA) - conducts research and evaluation activities, provides training and technical assistance to members. ACA has programs for correctional institutions and implementation of an accreditation program to meet comprehensive national standards measures.

Average Daily Population - daily average of the number of youth within a facility.

Bill - a proposed new law, or amendment to existing law, that is introduced for legislative consideration. A bill which is

enrolled by the legislature and approved by the governor becomes a law.

Capital and Serious Violent Offender Program (CSVOP) - specialized treatment for youth who have committed a capital offense or a serious violent offense. This treatment is offered at the Giddings State School.

Career and Technology Education (CATE) - previously called vocational classes, a CATE class is a class or course where youth learn skills or trades and can earn professional certifications.

Case Manager - the primary contact between a youth's parent or guardian and TJJD.

Certification - the waiver of juvenile court jurisdiction and the transfer of a youth to the appropriate criminal court for criminal proceedings as an adult.

Classification - process for determining the needs and requirements of youth who have been ordered to confinement in a juvenile justice facility and for assigning them to housing units and programs according to their needs and existing resources.

Classifying Offense - the offense for which a youth is classified at TJJD, and is the most serious offense of the relevant offenses documented in the youth's record.

Clinical Services - health care services administered to offenders in a clinic setting by persons qualified to practice in one of the health care disciplines.

Committing Offense - the most serious of the offenses found true at the youth's most recent judicial proceeding.

Conduct Indicating a Need for Supervision (CINS) Probation - defined by the Texas Family Code; covers certain non-criminal or status offenses and less serious law violations, including (1) three or more fineable misdemeanor offenses or ordinance violations, (2) truancy, (3) runaway, (4) the first or second DWI, and (5) violation of any city ordinance or state law prohibiting inhalant abuse.

CoNEXTions© - the umbrella program that offers a menu of different therapeutic techniques and tools to help individual TJJD youth. The name stems from the basic goal of the program - to connect youth to healthy, law-abiding relationships with their peers, families, and communities. It expresses the hope that once youth are properly connected with other people, they are in better positions to make realistic and optimistic connections to their futures, or the NEXT phases of their lives.

Contract Care - facilities operated by private nonprofit or for-profit corporations or organizations in which the employees working daily in the facilities and directly with the residents are employees of the private corporation or organization.
Correctional Care Form (CCF) - CCF are the paper forms TJJD uses to document a variety of youth-related events and services.

Correctional Care System (CCS) - a mainframe database application used to store information on all youth committed to the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. Everything that

happens to a youth in TJJD custody is reflected in the system, beginning at intake and continuing until discharge after completion of parole, or transfer to Texas Department of Criminal Justice. This information can only be accessed by authorized TJJD employees.

Correctional Facility - houses incarcerated youth accused of or convicted of criminal activity.

Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) - specialized treatment unit at the Corsicana Residential Treatment Center for youth in need of intensive mental health services.

Delinquent Conduct - defined by the Juvenile Justice Code as conduct, other than a traffic offense, which violates a penal law of the state of Texas and is punishable by imprisonment or by confinement in jail; or a violation of a reasonable and lawful order which was entered by a juvenile court. In general, juvenile delinquency under Texas law results from either violation of the Texas Penal Code or violation of conditions of probation.

Determinate Sentenced Offender (DSO) - a youth committed to TJJD with a determinate sentence of up to 40 years for offenses specified in section 54.04(d)(3) or 54.05(f) of the Family Code. The sentence may be completed in the adult prison system depending on the youth's behavior while at TJJD.

Determinate Sentencing - a blended sentencing system for the most serious offenses that provides the possibility of juvenile court transfer of youth at age 16 from TJJD to the adult system to complete their sentence.

Director of Security (DOS) - TJJD staffer at a facility that oversees the security unit where youth are placed for aggressive behavior, serious rule violations, or when they need one-to-one supervision.

Disposition Hearing - a court hearing held subsequent to the adjudication hearing only if the youth is in need of rehabilitation or the protection of the public requires that disposition be made.

Faith Based Initiatives - programs offered by congregations and faith-based organizations that address the issues of crime and violence, drug use, poor education and access to meaningful employment.

Federal Funds - funds received from the United States government by state agencies and institutions that are appropriated to those agencies for the purposes for which the federal grant, allocation, payment, or reimbursement was made.

General Administrative Policies (GAP) - administrative policies that detail expectations related to TJJD staff and facilities.

General Educational Development (GED) - earned when a youth has completed all of the requirements as outlined by the Texas Education Agency. It is an alternate way of completing high school instead of earning a diploma.

Halfway House (HWH) - a residential center or home where drug users, sex offenders, the mentally ill, or convicted felons are placed immediately after their release from a primary institution such as a prison, hospital or rehabilitation facility. The purpose of a halfway house is to allow the persons to

begin the process of reintegration with society, while still providing monitoring and support; this is generally believed to reduce the risk of recidivism or relapse when compared to a release directly into society.

Indeterminate Sentencing - commits a youth to TJJD for an indefinite period of time, not to exceed his/her 19th birthday.

Individual Case Plan (ICP) - youth's individualized plan for treatment and education, based on his or her specific strengths and risks.

Infirmary -TJJD facility on-campus medical clinic.

Institution - facilities used for the lawful custody and/or treatment of youth.

Juvenile Correctional Officer (JCO) - TJJD staff who receive special training and work in all areas of a campus to help TJJD youth make positive changes in his or her behavior.

Juvenile Probation - a mechanism used by juvenile justice agencies that serves as a sanction for juveniles adjudicated in court, and in many cases as a way of diverting status offenders or first-time juvenile offenders from the court system. Some communities may even use probation as a way of informally monitoring at-risk youth and preventing their progression into more serious problem behavior.

Licensed Chemical Dependency Counselor (LCDC) - person licensed in Texas to provide specialized chemical dependency treatment.

Licensed Sex Offender Treatment Provider (LSOTP) - person licensed in Texas to provide specialized sexual behavior treatment to youth who have committed sex offenses.

Manager of Institution Clinical Services (MICS) - TJJD staffer who oversees treatment provided to TJJD youth.

Minimum Length of Stay (MLOS) - minimum period of time an indeterminate sentenced youth must stay in TJJD. This is set by TJJD policy.

Minimum Period of Confinement (MPC) - minimum period of time a determinate sentenced youth must be held in a TJJD facility before being eligible for parole. This is set in state law.

Multi-Disciplinary Team (MDT) - team, consisting of staff members at TJJD facilities that meets monthly to discuss the progress your child has made. Parents are valuable team members and are encouraged to participate in MDT meetings.

Office of Inspector General (OIG) - an independent law enforcement division of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department to investigate criminal allegations involving TJJD and TJJD interest. OIG was created in June 2007. OIG is staffed by law enforcement officers who investigate criminal acts committed by TJJD staff or youth and file criminal charges when appropriate.

Office of Independent Ombudsman (OIO) - a state agency established for the purpose of investigating, evaluating, and securing the rights of the children committed to the department, including a child released under supervision before final discharge.

PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports)- is a decision-making framework for that guides selection, integration and implementation of the best evidence-based behavioral practices for improving important behavioral outcomes for all students. In general, PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making, (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (c) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices.

Performance-based Standards (Pubs) - program for Youth Correction and Detention Facilities is a system for agencies and facilities to identify, monitor and improve conditions and treatment services provided to incarcerated youths using national standards and outcome measures.

Parole - period of TJJJ supervision beginning after release from a residential program and ending with discharge, also aftercare.

Parole Officer (PO) - officer assigned to a youth while he or she is on parole.

Primary Service Worker (PSW) - TJJJ staff members who work closely with TJJJ youth - usually his or her caseworker or parole officer.

Probation - one of the dispositional options available to a juvenile court judge after a youth is adjudicated as delinquent; community-based corrections which presents the youth with a set of rules and regulations and addresses the needs of the youth and the family.

Progressive Sanctions - a model to be used by the juvenile court to ensure that delinquent youth receive the punishment and treatment most appropriate to their crime; youth progress from less restrictive to more restrictive dispositions depending on offense history, type of offense, and previous sanction level.

Psychotropic Medication - prescription medications that affect the psychic function, behavior, or experience of the person for whom they are prescribed.

Redirect Program- functions as a means for delivering intensive interventions in a structured environment for youth who have engaged in certain serious rule violations. The program is designed to promote violence reduction and skill building as a means of increasing safety on Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) campuses.

Re-entry - involves the use of programs targeted at promoting the effective reintegration of offenders back to communities upon release from prison and jail; involves a comprehensive case management approach to assist offenders in acquiring the life skills needed to succeed in the community and become law-abiding citizens. A variety of programs are used to assist offenders in the reentry process, including prerelease programs, drug rehabilitation and vocational training, and work programs.

Release Review Panel - group of TJJD staff who determine whether release to the community is appropriate based on a youth's recent behavior, academic achievement, response to treatment and individual risk and protective factors.

Revocation Hearing - a hearing before the parole authority at which it is determined whether revocation of parole should be made final.

Secure Facility - facility designed and operated to ensure that all entrances and exits are under the exclusive control of the facility's staff, thereby not allowing a youth to leave the facility unsupervised or without permission.

Sentenced Offender - a youth committed to TJJD with a determinate sentence of up to 40 years for offenses specified in section 54.04(d)(3) or 54.05(f) of the Family Code. The sentence may be completed in the adult prison system depending on the youth's behavior while at TJJD.

Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP) - specialized treatment for youth who have committed sex offenses and who are in need of intensive services.

Special Prosecution Unit (SPU) - created by SB 103, to assist district attorney's offices in the prosecution of criminal cases within the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. The SPU works in coordination with OIG in presenting and prosecuting investigations conducted by the OIG.

Special Services Committee (SSC) - committee at TJJD facilities that conducts entrance/exit assessments, release reviews, or discuss a request to seek a child's transfer to the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. The Special Services Committee is usually led by the manager of institution clinical services and includes the program administrator, principal, assistant superintendent, and others.

Specialized Residential Treatment - programs designed specifically for the treatment of serious violent offenders, sex offenders, chemically dependent offenders, offenders with mental health impairments, and offenders with mental retardation.

Statute - a law enacted by the legislature. Statutes are generally placed in codes with other legislation on the same subject.

Strategies - A strategy describes a method to achieve goals and objectives. The legislature typically appropriates money to strategy line items.

Youth Rights Specialist (YRS) - TJJD staff responsible for oversight of the youth grievance system. At institutions, this function is performed by a staff member employed as a YRS. At community transition centers or halfway houses, the assistant superintendent serves as the YRS. In parole offices, the parole supervisor serves as the YRS.

Conclusion

We know this time away from your child may be difficult, but we promise to make it worthwhile. We will work hard with you to help your child learn what he or she needs to be successful at home, at school, and in the community.

TJJD Mission Statement

The mission of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department is to create a safer Texas through the establishment of a continuum of services that promotes positive youth outcomes through:

- **Organizational excellence and integrity that earns and promotes public trust;**
- **Evidence-based performance and accountability that produces results;**
- **Collaboration and teamwork that builds on partnerships with youth, families and local communities; and**
- **Innovation and technology that results in efficient systems and services.**

The TJJD mission statement is not just words. It is our promise to you and the people of Texas to do the best job we can. If you identify barriers that get in the way of your ability to participate in your child's treatment or if you are having problems, please let us know. We'll do everything possible so that you can be an active partner with us.

It is never too late to achieve success. TJJD has decades of experience working with the state's most serious or chronic young offenders. There are proven ways to help young offenders grow up to be successful adults. All of us, working together can make a big difference for our youth. Be active, be concerned, be demanding, hold us accountable, and help us help your child and your family.

HELPFUL TJJD POLICIES

TJJD has numerous policies and procedures. The General Administrative Policies (GAP) are the formal rules for how TJJD has to operate. In addition to GAP, there are also operational manuals that establish procedures for staff to be able to do their job. You may be interested in several agency

policies and procedures, but the following policies may be particularly helpful to you:

GAP.380.9315 – Youth Mail: This policy describes the rules about youth mail and your child’s rights to communicate through the mail or the telephone. TJJD supports family contact and can only be restricted if it is necessary to maintain facility order and security or to protect youth from improper influences.

GAP.380.9107 – Youth Personal Property: This policy describes the rules about personal property your child is allowed to have in TJJD, and those things that are prohibited.

GAP.380.9313 – Use of Telephone: This policy describes the rules about your child’s use of telephone which provides youth with reasonable access to telephones to call home.

GAP.380.9312 – Visitation: This policy describes the rules about visitation. TJJD promotes and fosters communication and contact between you and your child.

GAP.380.9331 – Youth Grievance System: This policy describes the youth grievance system. You and your child have a right to file grievances about the care, services, treatment, or conditions at TJJD facilities.

GAP.380.85.71 – Home Placement: This policy describes the rules about your child returning home on parole.

You can access several TJJD policies and procedures on the agency’s website or you can ask staff at your child’s facility about a particular policy or process if you have any questions.

www.TJJD.state.tx.us

The TJJD website provides you with: complete access to all TJJD policies, a current directory of all facilities and programs, emergency information when necessary, agency press releases and newsletters, and much more. If you do not have internet access at home, most public libraries provide it for free. You may also contact TJJD for assistance regarding this publication.

If you wish to receive the *TJJD Spotlight* electronic newsletter, send an email to TJJD@TJJD.texas.gov and tell the agency to add you on the mailing list. It is periodically published, highlighting events and happenings at TJJD facilities and offices.

Texas Juvenile Justice Department



UNDERSTANDING

THE TEXAS JUVENILE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT & THE PARENTS' BILL OF RIGHTS

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