



Fast Start: Juvenile Protection & Safety

WORKING FOR IMPROVED JUVENILE JUSTICE IN ILLINOIS

Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) – Background

The Illinois PTA is actively working to improve the statutes and programs that affect children and youth who may come in contact with the juvenile court system because of having been accused of or convicted of breaking the law. We have written extensively about juvenile justice, and have adopted, (by convention action), recommendations to help assure that our State, recognizing that juveniles can and should be treated differently than adults by the courts, emphasizes education and rehabilitation for youth. As preparation for working with our association in this area, you are urged to go on our website, in the advocacy area, and read,

- “Ten Years of Progress,” our current report on juvenile justice issues, and also, to become acquainted with;
- The Legislation Platform of the Illinois PTA, found in the same section of the website.

Taking Action with our PTA members

- Read, and share with your unit’s membership, information provided by our Illinois PTA Legislation Director, Lisa Garbaty, (lgarbaty@illinoispta.org) on proposed new laws, or information about recently adopted laws affecting juvenile justice issues – also on the website.
- Review the recommendations in “Ten Years of Progress” and the suggested actions, and choose one or two to work on with your unit.
- Ask you principal to identify the behavioral issues that kids in your school need the most help handling that might get them in trouble, particularly beyond “in school” discipline, and ask what parents and the PTA can do to help change those situations.
- One of the first signs of trouble in a child is truancy. Is there an issue with truancy in your school? What is done to prevent truancy, and to treat truancy if it ever exists?
- Invite the Juvenile Officer from your local police force to address a PTA meeting on the problems that the youth in your community have that might find them in trouble – ask the officer to talk about how parents and the PTA can help keep youth out of trouble. Ask them to explain what rights a youth have if they ever come in contact with the law in your community. What programs are there in your community that help those youth who have come in contact with the law? Can your PTA help with those programs, perhaps by helping with the supplies the programs might need, or volunteers?

One of the reasons we all need to pay attention to juvenile justice issues is that we now know that teenagers, even those who are 18 or 19, simply do not have the same understanding of the consequences of their actions as adults do. That part of their brain has simply not matured yet. Studies have established this, and as a result, we know we must take special care of these – our future generation of adults.



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Key points to start your PTA year off right.