



Respond Effectively When Young Children Get in Trouble

By Activating a Family-Focused
Response Outside of the
Juvenile Court System

Kids are kids, and we don't expect them to act like tiny adults. We don't expect them to manage the family budget or understand college textbooks, and we can't expect them to navigate the justice system. To create safer communities and stronger kids, Kentucky must respond to children who get in trouble as early as possible and in the most effective way possible. Young children who get in trouble need interventions, but the juvenile court system is not the place to address issues for little kids. The formal court process can be traumatic, negatively impact a child's development, and trap children in an increasingly difficult maze of problems.

Common-sense shifts in how the state responds when young children get in trouble would lead to safer communities and brighter futures for kids:

Involve families in solutions to put children on a path to becoming successful adults

Parents play a critical role in supporting positive behaviors in their children. Connecting the child and family to community services will put them on track to success more quickly. This response is more effective than the juvenile court process, which can expose kids to trauma and disrupt their development and education.

Create safer communities by preventing children from getting in trouble later in life

The best solution addresses root causes of behavior and teaches children how to be successful in their community. The early experiences and environments of young children are closely tied to their families. Community services, such as mental health treatment for the child or parenting programs, would more effectively address the child's behavior and promote public safety. Strong, supported families can help children grow into contributing members of their community.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Solution:

Activate a family-focused response outside of the juvenile court system when young children get in trouble to keep kids on track to success and create safer communities.