



Juveniles usually enter the juvenile justice system in South Carolina when they're taken into custody by law enforcement or when they're referred to DJJ by a Circuit Solicitor or a school. At this stage, a juvenile is usually interviewed by personnel at a DJJ county office (DJJ has offices in 43 of South Carolina's 46 counties). Law enforcement might also elect to send the juvenile to a South Carolina juvenile detention center, pending a hearing.

After county office or detention center personnel have interviewed a juvenile, DJJ makes recommendations to the Circuit Solicitor's office regarding the case. The Solicitor has a number of options available when deciding how to pursue a case. A Solicitor may choose to divert a juvenile to a community program (such as a drug court or juvenile arbitration program) or require the juvenile to make restitution for the offense. Solicitors may also choose to proceed with prosecution or to dismiss a case entirely.

If a Solicitor chooses to prosecute, the next stage of the process involves the family court. A family court judge is charged with determining the guilt or innocence of a juvenile and with sentencing those juveniles "adjudicated delinquent" (found guilty). Often a judge will request a DJJ evaluation of the child before making his final ruling, or prior to commitment. This involves psychological, social, and educational evaluations conducted either in the community or at one of DJJ's three regional evaluation centers. This evaluation helps the judge decide how to proceed in the best interests of the child.

A family court judge may find the juvenile "not delinquent" (not guilty) or "delinquent" (guilty). If found delinquent, the juvenile may be put on probation or given a "determinant"

(fixed amount of time) or an "indeterminate" commitment.

If a juvenile receives an indeterminate commitment, he or she will be held for an indefinite period of time, up to age 21. Upon commitment, a juvenile will be given a time range or "guideline," determined by the state Board of Juvenile Parole (for all felonies and select misdemeanors) or DJJ's own release authority (for most misdemeanors and all status offenses). This range is based on the severity of the juvenile's offense and his history of previous offenses. These guidelines can run anywhere from 1-3 months up to 36-54 months. The Board and DJJ use these guidelines – along with an evaluation of the juvenile's behavior and progress – to determine the length of incarceration.

Juveniles may remain incarcerated beyond their guideline (up to their 21st birthday). They may also be paroled prior to their minimum guideline for exceptional behavior and progress.

Juveniles may be granted conditional or unconditional releases. A conditional release might involve requiring the juvenile to complete a local aftercare program or program at a wilderness camp or group home. A conditional release also involves a period of parole supervision. DJJ county officers supervise juveniles on parole, much as they supervise juveniles on probation.

For more detailed information on the juvenile justice process, visit our website at:

www.state.sc.us/djj/process.html

For more information or additional DJJ resources please visit our website at <http://www.state.sc.us/djj/>, or contact your local DJJ office (full listing on next page).