

Did you know that if your child gets in trouble with the law, police don't have to arrest them?

Depending on the alleged offense, your child may be eligible for a youth diversionary program that keeps them out of the juvenile justice system. New Jersey's police departments have to offer two types of diversionary programs: curbside warnings and stationhouse adjustments.

Every kid arrested for status offenses, like curfew violations or running away, or for low-level offenses — such as disorderly conduct, loitering, trespassing, or other ordinance violations — represents a missed opportunity to reduce children's contact with the juvenile justice system.

What is a curbside warning?

If children are caught behaving as children — that is, engaging in behaviors that may be disruptive or potentially dangerous, but not necessarily illegal — the New Jersey attorney general allows police officers to give children an informal talking-to or warning.

would be 3rd degree offenses, such as possession of a weapon or narcotic.

At the time of the incident, you should always ask police officers or your local county prosecutor what alternatives to arrest are available for your child.

What is a stationhouse adjustment?

A stationhouse adjustment is for when children are accused of behaviors that could possibly be considered crimes if an adult engaged in them. It is a contract between a child and a police department to satisfy a set of conditions, such as writing a letter of apology or performing community service. If these conditions are successfully met, the child will not be subject to juvenile delinquency proceedings and can avoid having a juvenile record.

What can I do?

The [New Jersey attorney general requires](#) all law enforcement agencies to offer curbside warnings and stationhouse adjustments. Unfortunately, many do not. The ACLU-NJ encourages parents and community members to reach out to your local police chief or county prosecutor and ask how often youth diversionary programs are used, what the typical conditions are, and the rate of successful completion. Let them know that you support ways to reduce the number of children who enter the juvenile justice system.

When is a stationhouse adjustment available?

Children accused of minor delinquent acts — such as loitering, disorderly conduct, or municipal ordinance violations, like curfews — may be eligible for a stationhouse adjustment.

To take a deep dive into curbside warnings and stationhouse adjustments, in January 2018 you can read the ACLU-NJ's report *Missed Opportunities: Youth Diversionary Programs in New Jersey*.

In general, for children, local police departments are able to adjust ordinance violations or alleged offenses that would be 4th degree offenses if committed by an adult, such as shoplifting or marijuana possession. County prosecutors have the power to decide whether to adjust what

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