

Kids and Crime: Myth Versus Fact

Myth: The current reforms are causing an increase in crime.

Fact: The current reforms are not causing an increase in crime. Youth crime in Maryland is on the decline in all areas except car theft and gun offenses. Car thefts and gun offenses among youth have increased around the country, not just in Maryland. Maryland mirrors the national trend in car thefts and gun offenses even among states that have not implemented the protections of the JJRA and CIPA.

Myth: Children who commit crimes are not being punished.

Fact: Children are being punished. More children were arrested and detained in 2023 than in the past two years. Children over the age of 13 who commit crimes, including stealing cars or carrying guns are being detained. Any child over the age of 10 who commits a carjacking or other violent crime can and are being detained. Children 16 years or older who commit carjacking are automatically charged as an adult.

Myth: There is nothing the police can do about children who are stealing cars.

Fact: Programs exist to hold children accountable and work with children under the age of 13 who steal a car. Additionally, children over 10 who are charged with carjacking and all children over 13 charged with stealing a car can be adjudicated in the juvenile system.

Myth: Children have to be detained to be held accountable for their actions.

Fact: Incarceration is not the same as accountability. Incarceration is punishment. When children are held accountable, they are able to take full responsibility for their behavior which means: Understanding how that behavior affected others; Acknowledging that the behavior resulted from a choice that could have been made differently; Acknowledging to all affected that the behavior was harmful to others; taking action to repair the harm where possible; making changes necessary to avoid such behavior in the future. [OJJDP- Accountability](#)



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Myth: These new laws make it impossible for police to do their jobs.

Fact: While the new laws change the way police have traditionally dealt with young children, these laws only add to the tools police have to work with children. It is important to ensure Law Enforcement is properly trained on the new laws and the procedures in engaging young children and referring them to the proper agencies for services. It is also important that officers are properly trained on what to do when a child is in their custody. In doing so children and the community will be kept safe.

Myth: We should fine parents when their children don't engage in services or abide by GPS monitoring.

Fact: These ideas decrease public safety and leave children less safe. Many parents of justice involved youth are low income. Subjecting them to financial penalties and causing even more stress on the family will place not only the child that is system involved in more harm, but could create harm for children in the home who are not in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Myth: Parents should be criminalized when their children don't follow through with services in connection with their court involvement.

Fact: When a parent is incarcerated, they are unavailable to care for, monitor or provide support for their children. Public Safety is threatened when we criminalize parents and make them unavailable to care for their children, especially those who are at high risk of criminal involvement and need higher levels of support. It also creates a risk of any children in the home being placed in foster care where they are more likely to be system involved.



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