

TOP 10 QUESTIONS FROM EDUCATORS FOR JUVENILE COURT COUNSELORS

1. At what point do Juvenile Court Counselors want information from school district staff when there are attendance or behavior issues for students they are assigned to-when problems are brewing, when students receive school detentions or for suspensions?

- We would like to know when a youth's absences are more than two consecutive days. This allows both the school and the Juvenile Services Division (JSD) to address problematic attendance. Notification at 10 consecutive days of absences is too late to rectify this issue which interferes with school placement and the capacity to earn credits.
- Juvenile Court Counselors (JCCs) would like to be notified prior to suspensions and expulsions. This allows collaboration with the school district, the Juvenile Department and family to find resolution instead of working through new school placement and lost credits.
- JCCs would like to participate in Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings as appropriate school placement is important to their department.
- The issues JCCs should be informed about are disruptive and/or physically aggressive behavior and lack of school attendance.
- JCCs do want to be notified about any in-school detentions that occur. This allows the JCC to process the incident with the youth. The JCC can use this information to provide a Juvenile Department sanction or assist in determining if a probation violation petition should be filed.

2. How does the Juvenile Justice System serve younger students? What is the youngest age served through JJS?

- JSD works with youth 12 to 18 years old who have delinquent referrals. A delinquent referral for a youth under 12 will generally be considered a dependency issue and will be referred to another agency. Most often that agency will be the State Department of Human Services (DHS).
- If a youth under 12 is referred to JSD for sexually inappropriate behavior (SIBS), the cases will be reviewed by a committee, which includes a Deputy District Attorney, DHS, PPDS, and a JCC. If there is a victim, the case will most likely be opened with DHS and the family would get supervision and receive other services.
- If a youth under 12 is referred to JSD for a felony fire setting referral, a petition may be filed. Fire setters will be referred for an assessment. Services will be based on this assessment.

3. Does the system have a prevention program? Is there anything like a “scared straight” program?

- Research shows “Scared Straight” programs don’t have long-term effectiveness in changing behaviors. JSD does not use this strategy. Research is more convinced that keeping a youth in school is a more powerful deterrent to criminal behavior.
- We have the Education Success Team (EST) to help with the most at risk probation youth return to school.
- We have the Major Suspension program which is in cooperation with Portland Public Schools.
- JSD has an Informal Unit that provides sanctions and services to first time misdemeanor and property felony referrals. This allows the youth to be held accountable but not have a delinquent adjudication on his record.

4. How is gang activity addressed?

- Youth are not placed on probation because of gang membership or association. Gang membership is about behavior. Identification of gang membership comes from police departments, self reports, parent reports and school reports.
- Historically, gang membership has been identified with certain colors and clothing. Presently the hip hop culture has the same dress style, which has made it hard to tell true gang members by clothing attire.
- If a youth is “gang” identified and comes to appointment at the Juvenile Justice Complex wearing inappropriate clothing they will be made to change clothes and have a parent contact the JCC to get the inappropriate clothing back.
- Graffiti, is mostly tagging, not gang tagging. It becomes “gang” when a specific gang membership or gang name is used.
- Once a youth is placed on probation and who is identified as a gang member, the Court will order that there be no gang participation, no gang paraphernalia, and no contact with other gang members.
- JCCs randomly drop in/pick up clients at school to see what they are wearing to school.
- JSD can offer the school districts training that distinguishes gangs from the clothing of choice and address whether kids who are seriously gang affiliated.
- Any information including where gangs meet or congregate are shared with other JCCs and when necessary with the police.

5. What are the criteria for releasing youth from involvement from the Juvenile Justice system? Can schools be notified of criteria for release so we can assist in monitoring related school behaviors?

- Youth are released from JSD after successfully completing conditions of their probation; commitment to a Youth Correctional Facility; or probation has expired. Juvenile involvement with the court is considered public information. JSD shares

with all Superintendents a list of youth on probation and the supervising JCC's name. You can get the probation end date from the JCC or from EST, 503-988-4595.

- For specific information regarding probation compliance the youth and his parents must sign a release of information specifically for the school.

6. How or who oversees the follow-up on youth in the system? How are these activities monitored?

- Each youth placed on probation with JSD is assigned a JCC. The JCC is responsible for supervising the youth's probation.
- Each case has standards that are required. The supervisor for the unit will review progress of each case with the assigned JCC.
- If a youth is non-compliant with the conditions of probation, consequences may be imposed.
- Cases are staffed with their Team when considering recommendations for detention or out of home placement.
- JSD has an Alternative Placement Committee that is available to make recommendations regarding cases.

7. It appears to schools that there are often little or no consequences for students who violate conditions of their probation/parole. For example, regular school attendance is a regular condition of probation, but when schools report absences to a Juvenile Court Counselor, no action is apparent. What is a reasonable expectation for follow-through from the Juvenile Justice system?

- JSD has a sanctions grid to assist with probation violations. School non-attendance is a violation of the standard conditions of probation. JCCs are strongly encouraged to immediately contact schools regarding attendance issues. Our goal is to deal with the infraction immediately by providing an appropriate intervention. If the youth does not respond to the intervention a probation violation petition can be filed. If a petition is filed and the youth appears before the court, the sanctions grid will be used to determine the outcome.
- Youth in detention are there for the community's protection or when there are serious violations of probation.
- Services available to youth who are struggling with school can include attendance at the Daily Reporting Center (DRC), GOALS weekend, community service, tutoring, and skill building classes to address behavior issues.
- A JSD JCC or an EST staff will attend school and IEP meetings as often as necessary.
- The EST was established to become a partner with all Multnomah County schools to assist high risk youth who have been suspended, expelled or not attending school to return to an educational setting and may be contacted at any time with school issues.

8. It appears that the system seems to focus on serious crimes. How are lesser crimes addressed?

- JSD has an Informal Unit that has the discretion to handle charges without court intervention. That allows youth to get the services they require without generating a criminal record.
- EST also provides the community with outreach presentations on gang trends/activities, and educational topics. Examples are: how to access school assistance, how to advocate for themselves and provide information they need to know about school attendance, suspension/expulsion protocols. The presentations are also done in Spanish.
- JSD sponsors a “Back to School” program which is available to all families receiving services. JSD partners with school district representatives for presentations. JSD provides school supplies for all school age members of the families who attend this program.
- JSD provides a staff member that works with the Major Suspension Program and the DESCC Program which are housed in Portland Public Schools.

9. What kind of support can schools expect from the Juvenile Justice system when a registered sex offender enrolls in school? Why is it that this information sometimes gets shared with schools days after a new student enrolls?

- Often times youth are already currently in a school when the Court process begins. The youth would be held to a safety plan pending an adjudication hearing. The safety plan does not include notification to schools. The youth's attorney will not allow a release to be signed at the point of pre adjudication. Notification cannot be provided until any youth has been found within the jurisdiction of the court.
- Once jurisdiction has been established. JCC's that specialize in Sex Offender treatment are diligent in working with school personnel. The assigned JCC meets with the schools, attends all IEP meetings, and does a school safety plan for their client. A copy of the plan is kept with the school. Each safety plan is a joint effort so the needs of each school are considered. Each school principal/vice principal decides which of their staff will attend the school safety planning meeting.
- All youth adjudicated for a felony sex offense including sex abuse III (Class A Misdemeanor) must register with the state as a sex offender.
- Sharing of the charge and disposition of the case is public information but details can not be shared without a release of information from the youth and parent.

10. Is it possible to have monthly meetings with a school's team and Juvenile Court Counselors to discuss shared students, school concerns and progress? How could this be set up?

- Yes, it's possible but we would need to have further discussion as to how we could implement this process. It is the commitment of JSD to assist youth to maintain their school placement.
- JSD now has an Educational Success Team that works exclusive with youth who have been suspended, expelled or have stopped attending school. Educational Success Team has a commitment to follow our high risk kids for the first 60 days to insure the youth has integrated into school. After the 60 days this case returns to the primary JCC.