

JUVENILE SERVICES

TROUBLED/AT RISK CHILDREN

POSITION: The League believes that state-provided services to troubled/at risk children should be comprehensive and accessible, emphasizing early screening and identification, prevention, and early intervention.

- Services should be individualized, community based, and include participation by the family, if appropriate. Services should be delivered and coordinated through a case management system with agency linkage.
- Early screening and identification of children at risk should be available through health care providers such as health departments, hospital nurseries, and physicians. Prevention and early intervention services should be provided through the Department of Health and other community sources, e.g., schools, childcare centers, Head Start programs, and mental health centers.
- State services to troubled/at risk children and families should be available to all, regardless of ability to pay. The highest priority should be given to children who are abused, neglected, delinquent, mentally ill, or diagnosed with multiple risk factors.
- Perpetrators of abuse/neglect should have access to treatment, within the family structure if possible, to encourage family preservation.
- State and local government should share responsibility for providing services for troubled/at risk children and families.
- To assure effective action, the League supports adequate funding for state mandated programs.

Adopted 1987, Amended 1992

JUVENILE JUSTICE

POSITION: The League supports a statewide juvenile justice system based on uniformity, equity, accessibility, and accountability.

- Youthful offenders should remain with their families, within their own communities, and be diverted from the court whenever possible.
- The juvenile court should be required to select the least restrictive alternative program or placement. Consistent implementation of the least restrictive alternative concept should result in a more effective rehabilitation of children.

The League supports the improvement of the state supported institutions for children through:

- Employment of adequately trained and paid personnel, regional diagnostic and treatment centers, additional educational and rehabilitative programs and adequate after-care programs.
- A juvenile justice system should include the following:
 1. Juvenile court judges should be required to be licensed attorneys. It is recommended that they also have training and experience in juvenile law and child development.
 2. The state should provide funding for paying juvenile court judges in order to attract qualified attorneys with special interest in juvenile law. The state and counties should share the responsibility for funding court staff, training, and operations.

3. All salaried and volunteer personnel working in juvenile institutions and detention centers should be provided with periodic, updated, and relevant training in child development, effective communication skills, juvenile law, and other related subjects.
4. All salaried juvenile court personnel, except for clerical workers, should meet certain minimum education and/or experience requirements in juvenile social services, juvenile law, and/or related fields.
5. Uniform intake procedures and standards, including detention screening guidelines, should be adopted and mandated for all juvenile courts. Legal sufficiency to prosecute a case should be the primary intake/detention criterion with diversion being the primary option. Detention hearings should be expedited through the use of referees and other court personnel trained to conduct such hearings.
6. A uniform record-keeping system should be adopted and mandated for all juvenile courts, facilities, and institutions in Tennessee. Confidentiality of records should be strictly enforced.
7. The due process rights of youth and families should be fully protected and explained at all stages of the juvenile court system process.
8. Dispositional guidelines or sentencing ranges for each type of offense should be adopted to allow for uniformity, consistency, and fairness. This will include age, type of offense, record, etc.
9. Counseling services should be made available to all youth and their families who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.
10. Preference should be given wherever possible to public service or restitution programs in the disposition of delinquency cases. Such programs provide for effective rehabilitation through the development of a sense of responsibility for one's acts, and also provide for the repayment to the victims of offenses and to the community as a whole for the wrongs committed by juveniles.
11. Status offenders should not be incarcerated or detained except when necessary to protect them from immediate and serious danger. Whenever appropriate they should be left in their homes or with relatives or friends. The least restrictive appropriate alternative should be used. The development of emergency shelter resources should be encouraged for all children who need them.
12. Standards should be developed regarding the operation of, conditions in, and treatment of children in correctional institutions and detention facilities. Disciplinary procedures and behavioral expectations should be clearly spelled out, made known to the youths in the institutions, and applied uniformly and fairly. The use of isolation should be discouraged, and strict conditions and time limits placed on its use. Whenever isolation is used, the use and its reasons should be written into the juvenile's record. Corporal punishment should not be used in institutions and facilities for juveniles.
13. The placement of children in adult jails should be prohibited.

Adopted 1972, Amended 1973, 1982