



MONTANA


JUDICIAL BRANCH

Montana Youth Court Overview

Law and Justice Interim Committee –
September 10, 2025



Agenda

- Overview of Montana Youth Court
 - Youth Court Process Flow
 - Youth Court Data
 - Challenges & Opportunities
 - Questions & Next Steps
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Legal Authority & Mission

- Governed by Title 41, Montana Code Annotated
- Declaration of Purpose: MCA 41-5-102
- Mission: Promote accountability, rehabilitation, and community safety

Structure & Jurisdiction

- Operates within Montana's District Courts
- District Court Judges are assigned to sit as Youth Court judges and oversee local youth court services
- Chief Juvenile Probation Officers and local youth court services provide intervention and supervision
- Jurisdiction: youth ages up to 18 for delinquency, status offenses, and
 - up to 25 for select situations under MCA
 - technically no minimum age in MCA

MT Judicial Districts

Judicial District by County



District 1: Broadwater, Lewis & Clark

District 2: Silver Bow

District 3: Deer Lodge, Granite, Powell

District 4: Mineral, Missoula

District 5: Beaverhead, Jefferson, Madison

District 6: Park, Sweet Grass

District 7: Dawson, McCone, Prairie,

Richland, Wibaux

District 8: Cascade

District 9: Glacier, Pondera, Teton, Toole

District 10: Fergus, Judith Basin, Petroleum

District 11: Flathead

District 12: Chouteau, Hill, Liberty

District 13: Yellowstone

District 14: Golden Valley, Meagher, Musselshell, Wheatland

District 15: Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt

District 16: Carter, Custer, Fallon, Garfield, Powder River, Rosebud, Treasure

District 17: Blaine, Phillips, Valley

District 18: Gallatin

District 19: Lincoln


District 20: Lake, Sanders

District 21: Ravalli

District 22: Big Horn, Carbon, Stillwater



Core Functions

- Intake & screening of referrals
 - Risk/needs assessments
 - Individual case planning
 - Diversion & restorative justice programs
 - Supervision & monitoring
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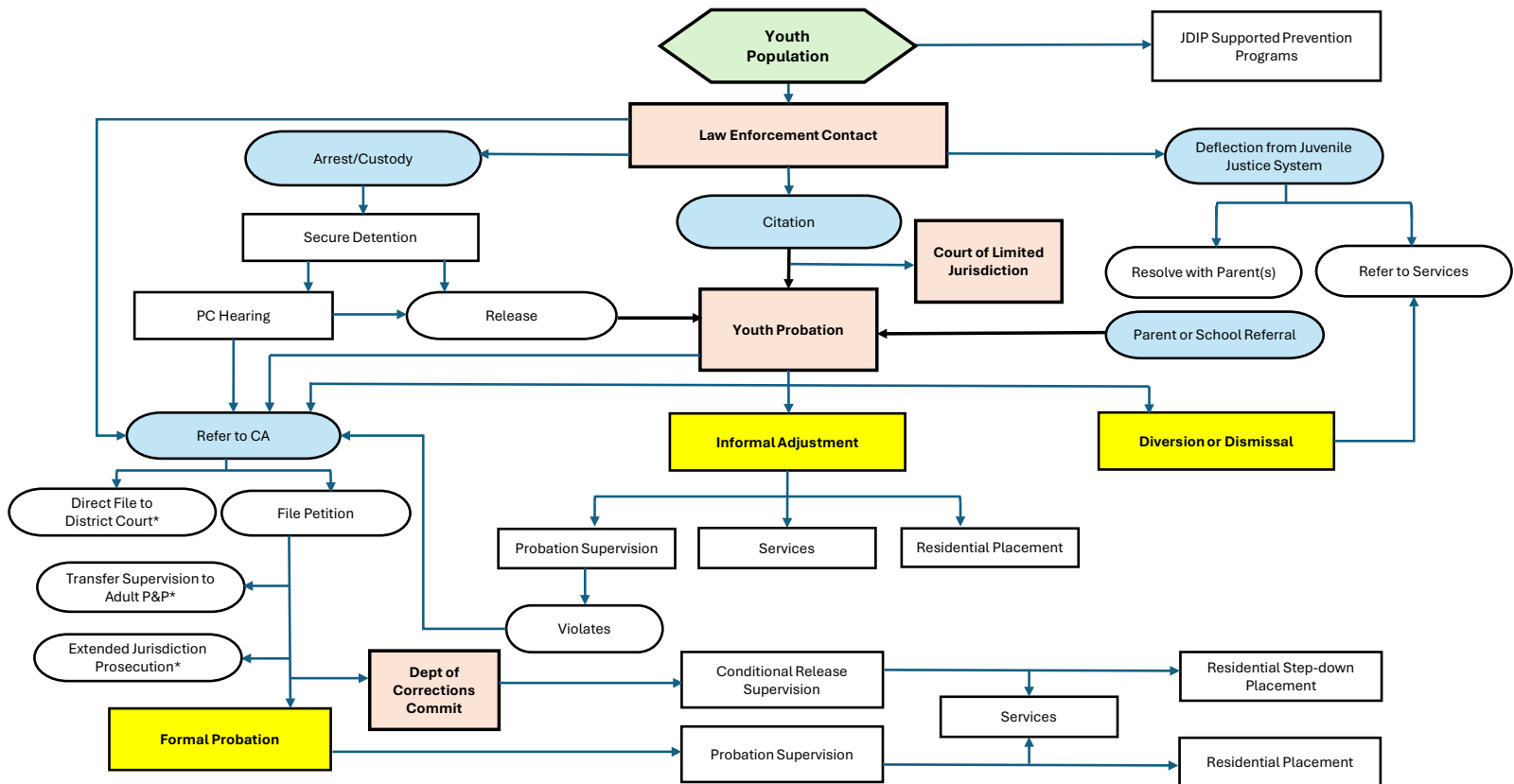
Youth Court Process Flow

Referral sources: law
enforcement, schools,
community, parents

Intake/Screening →
Diversion or Petition →
Court Hearing →
Disposition →
Supervision/Services →
Completion

MT Juvenile Justice Flowchart


Montana Juvenile Justice Flowchart



* Ways in which juvenile matter can extend beyond 18.

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Evidence-Based Practices

- Validated risk/needs assessments
 - Graduated responses & incentives
 - Strength-based, community-driven interventions
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Why We Track Data

- Provide objective information as requested
- Monitor trends & resource needs
- Improve program effectiveness
- Promote transparency & accountability



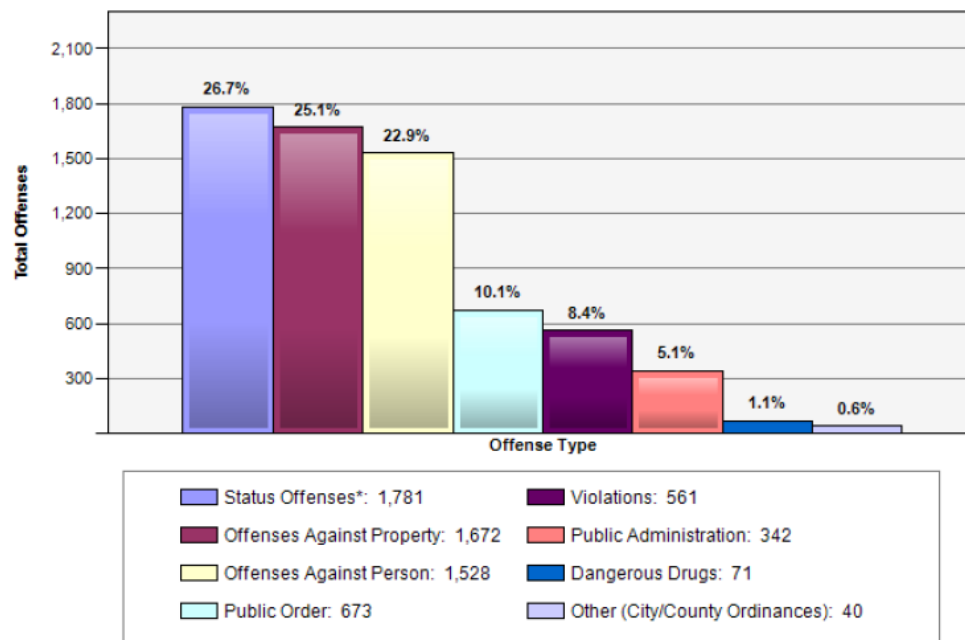
Key Youth Court Metrics

- 2024
 - Referrals by calendar year
 - Offense Categories
 - Offense Classifications
 - Top 10 Offenses
 - Type of Disposition Used
 - 5 yr. Trend
 - Unduplicated Youth
 - Number of Referrals
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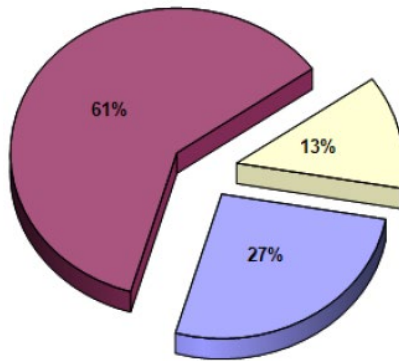
REFERRALS TO MONTANA'S YOUTH COURTS

Youth Referred to Youth Court:	3,117
Referrals (a youth may have multiple referrals):	4,636
Offenses (a referral may have multiple offenses):	6,668

OFFENSE CATEGORIES

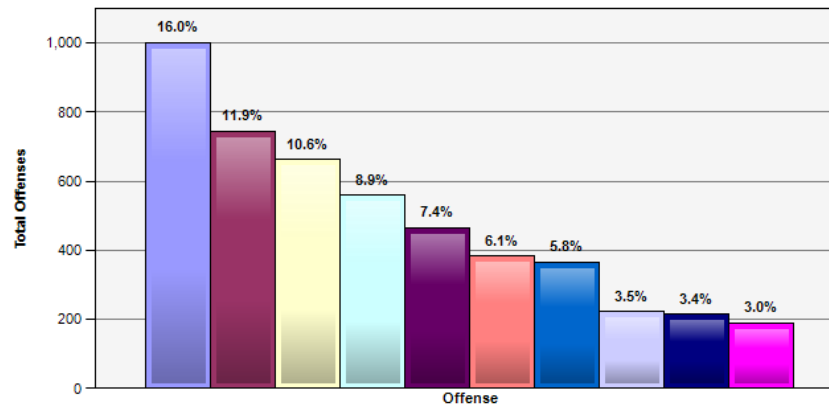


OFFENSE CLASSIFICATIONS



■ Status: 1,781
■ Misdemeanor: 4,043
■ Felony: 844

TOP 10 OFFENSES

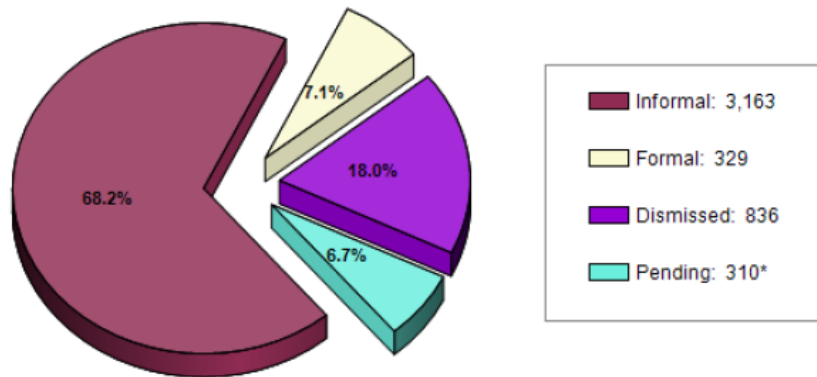


■ MIP Alcohol/Marijuana/Tobacco: 1001
■ Runaway/Ungovernable/Curfew: 745
■ Theft - Unauth Control Over Property - Misd: 662
■ Disorderly Conduct - Misd: 559
■ Assault - Misd: 466

■ Partner/Family Member Assault - Misd: 383
■ Criminal Mischief - Misd: 365
■ Obstructing A Peace Officer - Misd: 222
■ Contempt of Court Violations: 215
■ Criminal Trespass to Property - Misd: 189

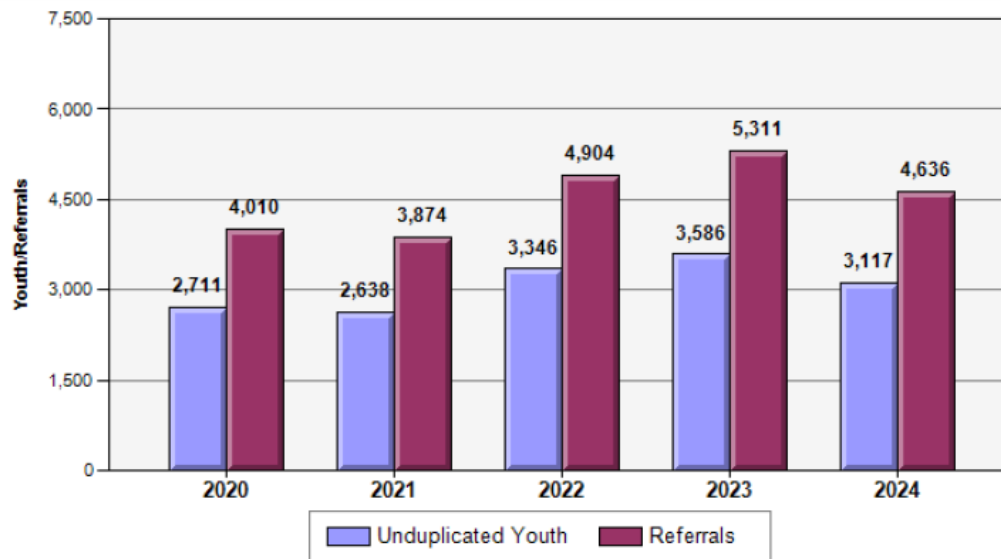
TYPE OF DISPOSITION USED

- Informal:** Referral handled by Juvenile Probation Officer
Formal: Referral in which youth appears before Youth Court Judge
Dismissed: Referral in which case is dismissed by Juvenile Probation Officer, County Attorney, or Court
Pending: Referral awaiting action from the County Attorney's Office or the Court, or a ticket has been issued and Juvenile Probation is waiting to see the youth and parent(s), or is awaiting further investigation by law enforcement



5 YEAR TRENDS


UNDUPLICATED YOUTH AND REFERRALS



[Youth Reports / UM Evaluations](#)

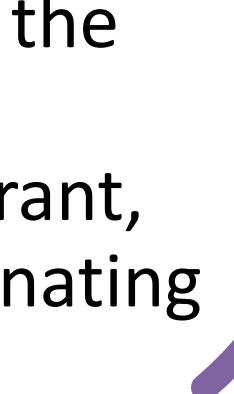


Current Challenges

- Limited resources & staffing
 - Gaps in service availability
 - Addressing disparities in outcomes
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Opportunities

- Building off Council of State Governments Juvenile Justice Center work in MT
 - Strengthening interagency collaboration
 - Using data to guide targeted interventions
 - Planned initiatives like the State Justice Institute Technical Assistance Grant, Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council
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Closing & Next Steps

- Recap: Youth Court's role, processes, data use, and future priorities
- Offer follow-up reports or data deep dives and other resources as requested



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Questions

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