

Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
Resolution 2025-1
Support Children Before they Enter the Juvenile Legal System

Resolution: Reject or Amend the Justice-Involved Youth in Community Act of 2025.

Purpose: To ensure that District youth receive the support they need to prevent further encounters with the juvenile legal system.

1. Whereas, the JJAG provides active consultation to the Mayor and government agencies to ensure the provision of comprehensive delinquency prevention programs and programs designed to reduce status offense behaviors that meet the needs of youth through the collaboration of many local systems with which a youth may interface.
2. Whereas, the Justice-Involved Youth in Community Act of 2025 proposes to provide "Trusted Adults" to young people who enter into Deferred Disposition Agreements, Deferred Prosecution Agreements, and Consent Decrees with the Office of Attorney General.
3. Whereas, two agency members of the JJAG testified against the Justice-Involved Youth in Community Act: both the Office of the Attorney General who prosecutes youth for juvenile crime in the District and the Public Defender Service of DC who defends them.
4. Whereas, the requirement of reporting alleged non-compliance to probation officers is antithetical to establishing a relationship of trust between youth and anyone in a mentoring role.
5. Whereas, the bill mandates that the Attorney General would be required to terminate the agreement based on the "Trusted Adult's" determination of non-compliance.
6. Whereas, the resulting role for "Trusted Adults" is duplicative of supervisory services supplied by probation officers working for the Court Social Services Division, who are in regular contact with OAG, to whom they report noncompliance and make recommendations as to whether the agreement should be revoked.

7. Whereas, mentorship requires a non-carceral relationship with young people: someone who listens to the child, discusses important problems, and offers advice and resources, but is not positioned or dispositioned to punish them.
8. Whereas, research about mentoring best practices suggests that a punitive approach to mentoring doesn't work, and can indeed backfire. Of all the various mediating factors that mentoring programs included, an advocacy role wherein mentors can advocate ****on behalf**** of their mentees had by far the most significant effect on a program's effectiveness in terms of youth outcomes.
9. Whereas, the National Alliance on Mental Illness defines a "Trusted Adult" as someone who offers support, encouragement, and a role model for action, someone who "talks, rather than tells," and someone who acts as a safe, neutral part of a child's safety network, all of which is at odds with the pseudo-supervisory role envisioned by this bill.
10. Whereas, it is important to ensure that mentoring pairs are given an opportunity to extend beyond one year, as that has been shown to be the time period over which the benefits of mentorship become concrete. Shorter periods of mentorship have been shown to be not only less effective and even harmful.
11. Whereas, formal mentoring programs prepare participants for the eventual end of those relationships, using a closure process that ensures that youth do not feel rejection or self-blame. (Which revocation and commitment would likely do.)

Therefore, be it resolved that the DC JJAG disapproves of the Justice-Involved Youth in Community Act of 2025 unless it can be amended to avoid the dual and conflicted roles of monitor and mentor for Trusted Adults.