



Coalition *for*
Juvenile Justice

A large, faint, light gray illustration of a domed building, likely the Texas State Capitol, serves as a background for the text. The dome is prominent, with a central spire and a series of columns supporting the base.

Hill Day

PLANNING

GUIDE

WHAT IS HILL DAY?

CJJ's Hill Day offers an opportunity to engage with lawmakers in both the House and Senate, raising awareness about pressing juvenile justice issues at both the national and state levels. It is also a chance to educate lawmakers on the critical role the ***Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)*** plays in driving meaningful, community-based juvenile justice reform.

By showing up, we remind elected officials that juvenile justice is not an abstract policy issue, but something that impacts real lives. We pair compelling stories with data to paint a clear picture of what's working, what's not, and where federal leadership is needed most.

Through Hill Day, we demonstrate to elected officials that the issues in the field of juvenile justice are urgent and actionable. We amplify our collective voice, build relationships with decision-makers, and keep juvenile justice on the national agenda.



THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION ACT (JJDP)

WHAT IS THE JJDP?

Passed in 1974, the JJDP created a federal-state partnership for juvenile justice and delinquency prevention, ensuring that youth involved in the system receive federal standards of care. To be eligible for the funds provided under the JJDP, states must uphold the four core protections for justice-involved youth.

Four Core Protections of the JJDP

- 1) **Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)** – Sect. 223(a)(11)(A) – not placing status offenders (truants, curfew violators, runaways, etc.), non-offenders, or unauthorized immigrants in secure detention.
- 2) **Removal of Juveniles from Adult Jails and Lockups** – Sect. 223(a)(13) – not detaining or confining juveniles in adult jails or lockups (subject to certain exceptions).
- 3) **Sight or Sound Separation of Juveniles from Adult Inmates** – Sect. 223(a)(12) – not detaining or confining juveniles in any institution in which they have sight or sound contact with adult inmates.
- 4) **Reducing Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED)** – Sect. 223(a)(15) – identifying and reducing racial and ethnic disparities among youth who come into contact with the justice system.

The JJDP also includes provisions for Removing Juveniles Charged as Adults – Sect.223(a)(11)(B) – meaning that **juveniles charged as adults should not be detained or confined in jails or lockups unless the court makes certain findings allowing it.**

Additionally, the JJDP established the **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)**, the only federal agency dedicated to supporting states' juvenile justice work. OJJDP plays a vital role in ensuring youth are treated differently than adults. The JJDP, reauthorized in 2018 with unanimous bipartisan support after 16 years, requires adequate funding and oversight to ensure its full implementation. The Act is now due for reauthorization, and continued federal commitment is more critical now than ever.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THE JJDP?

- Keeps communities safe** by incentivizing states' investment in evidence-based programs that promote accountability and reduce delinquency
- Sets federal standards** to protect the rights of youth in the justice system
- Focuses on rehabilitating youth** and reintegrating them into society
- Provides federal funding** to support state / local youth justice improvements with input from State Advisory Groups
- Ensures fair treatment** by guiding states to implement data-driven, just approaches
- Requires accountability and oversight** in resource use and grant program compliance

HILL DAY PREP

Scheduling Visits

Identify your representatives:

You can figure out who your Members of Congress are and how to contact them by using Congress.gov's "[Find Your Member](#)" tool. Enter your address and the tool will show you your Senators and Representatives. Click "Contact" under their names to be taken to their contact information on their respective websites.

Schedule a meeting:

It's essential to follow each office's preferred method for scheduling. Many offices provide online forms for meeting requests, others may prefer emails or phone calls. Consult your Congressperson's office website for specific instructions. Feel free to use [this](#) tracking sheet template to keep track of your visit details.

When setting a meeting, you will need:

- The date of your visit
- The times you are available (allow 1.5 hours between visits to allow for travel between offices)
- Members of your contingent
- Where your contingent members reside
- Who you're representing (SAG, CJJ, other entity)
- What are the topics you'll be discussing (JJDPAs and other local juvenile justice issues)
- Who is the contact person for your contingent (with phone number for day-of contact)

If the Senator or Congress member doesn't have availability that day, ask if a policy staffer is available instead. Visits with staffers can be equally impactful.

Follow-up:

If you haven't received a response 2 weeks before your planned visit, it's appropriate to follow up.

Group Preparation

Meetings with members or their staff are very brief, often less than 15 minutes. Preparation is key.

Organize into small groups, dividing your contingent into groups of 2-4 people, each assigned to visit specific offices.

3 to 4 weeks before the visit, **designate a team leader for each group**. The team leader will guide the conversation and keep the meeting on task, while other team members should take on the role of sharing personal stories to highlight how the JJDPAs impacts them.



[Click here for a map of the Capitol Hill Complex](#)

HILL DAY TALKING POINTS

FEEL FREE TO MODIFY AND SUPPLEMENT AS NEEDED.

INTRODUCTIONS

- Briefly introduce everyone in your group
- Thank the Congressperson, Senator, or staff member for taking the time to meet with you
- Describe your youth justice work (*what youth justice means to you and/or your community*)
- Describe the entity you are representing (*the CJJ, your SAG, and any other organizations*)

APPROPRIATIONS

1. Highlight return on investment

Federal funding has been instrumental in reducing youth delinquency and improving the effectiveness of our juvenile justice system in [your state]. For instance, [specific example of success, e.g., a program that saw measurable reductions in recidivism rates or improvements in community outcomes]

2. Explain how federal funds are utilized in your state

These federal investments are highly leveraged at the state, local, and tribal levels, and enabling progress that would otherwise be unattainable. [Provide relevant example, if possible.]

3. Stress the importance of continued federal investment

However, this progress is now at risk. In [your state], federal cuts have reduced funding by [state the overall amount, reference included state fact sheet]. As a result, [mention specific impacts, such as a program that could no longer be funded or how fewer children can be served due to the funding cut]

4. Describe the consequences of funding cuts and delays

Cuts or delays in non-defense discretionary programs, especially in juvenile justice, would weaken oversight, reduce access to community-based interventions, and undermine accountability. Funding instability may force agencies to scale back programs, lay off staff, and limit prevention efforts.

5. Ask for support

We need [Congressperson name] to champion sustained funding for juvenile justice programs. Can we count on [Congressperson name] to support continued investment in programs that work to keep our children and communities safe?

JJDPA IMPLEMENTATION

1. Highlight progress in your state

[Provide a specific example, such as a program that has successfully decreased detention rates for status offenders.]

2. Explain why federal support is crucial for full implementation of the JJDPA

The JJDPA was reauthorized in 2018 to better reflect the excellent work happening at the state level while continuing to address areas in need of improvement. This includes:

- *Reducing the incarceration of youth who do not pose a threat to public safety,*
- *Funding more evidence-based prevention programs, &*
- *Ensuring that non-delinquent youth are not incarcerated with those who have committed delinquent offenses.*

While the reauthorization set the stage for positive change, we have received minimal guidance on how to fully implement these crucial reforms, particularly regarding the housing of youth awaiting trial and preventing their detention in adult facilities.

[Stress that reauthorization in 2018 passed with bipartisan support.]

3. Ask for support

To continue the progress we've made, we are asking [Congressperson name] to work with leaders in Congress to ensure full implementation of the JJDPA and secure the federal support necessary to maintain momentum. Can we count on [Congressperson name] to champion this cause?

TIP: Bring along your State Fact Sheet! ([linked here](#))

Copies of State Fact Sheets are provided by CJJ the morning of Hill Day.

WRAP-UP

- Give space for questions (*if there are questions you don't know the answer to, let them know you will get back to them as soon as possible, and let CJJ staff know how we can support you*)
- Thank the attendees for their time and consideration

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY VS. LOBBYING

EDUCATIONAL ADVOCACY

Educating policymakers and attempting to bring about social change on behalf of a particular goal, program, interest, or population.

Examples:

- Sharing facts about juvenile justice trends
- Explaining how the JJDPA works and its importance
- Providing research or case studies on the impact of juvenile justice programs on public safety and young people's overall well-being

LOBBYING

Trying to influence the voting and action of policymakers.

Examples:

- Asking a Congressperson to vote for or against a specific bill
- Providing proposed legislative language

State grantees are prohibited from lobbying with state resources. SAG members and DSA staff who participate in Hill Day should be intentional with their language, and avoid lobbying.

ARE YOU READY? HILL DAY PREP CHECKLIST

- Identify your members of Congress
- Research your members of Congress— learn their priorities
- Schedule your meeting
- Organize your team
- Prepare your message— decide which team member will cover which topics
- Bring your materials— CJJ talking points, CJJ State Fact Sheet, a notebook for taking notes

Still have questions? Please contact info@juvjustice.org

