Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging & Best Practices
March 13, 2026 | 1 pm - 3 pm
100 Community Pl., Crownsville, MD
Agenda

I. Call to Order

II. Approval of December 11, 2025 Meeting Minutes

III. Opening Remarks

IV. Introduction - Deena Hausner, Director of Policy and Strategic Initiatives, GOCPP

V. Legislative Readout

VI. Commission Bylaws Review and Adoption

VII. Workgroup updates

A. Engagement enhancements:

- Data and presentation materials to the workgroups at least a week in advance for absorption and readiness
- Prep worksheets
- Cameras on, when possible
- 72-hour post-meeting Google form feedback

VIII. Break

IX. Public Education Workgroup Pre-DJS Flowchart Presentation

X. Housekeeping items

XI. Adjournment

Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform & Emerging & Best Practices Minutes

December 11, 2025
4 pm - 6 pm

Virtual

Commission Attendees:
Attendance was not captured for this meeting.

I. Call to Order

Vice Chair Liz Park called the meeting to order in the absence of Chair Judge Andre Davis. She welcomed members and thanked them for their continued engagement in the Commission's work as the year concluded.

II. Approval of Prior Minutes

The minutes of the October 23, 2025 Commission meeting were presented for approval.

Susan Leviton moved to approve the minutes and Eric Ford seconded the motion. The minutes were approved without objection.

III. Workgroup Updates

Fatality Review Workgroup

Carlotta Woodward reported that the Fatality Review Workgroup conducted its first case review session, completing three in-depth reviews of youth fatalities that occurred while the individuals were under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services. Members requested additional documentation to support their analysis and described the process as intensive and time consuming.

The workgroup is developing a recommendations matrix and preparing pre-meeting guidance materials to help members navigate the case review process. The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, where three additional cases will be reviewed. The group anticipates bringing recommendations to the Commission following completion of the initial review cycle.

Prevention Workgroup

Aubrey Edwards-Luce reported that the Prevention Workgroup recently completed a multi-month inquiry into food insecurity as a foundational driver of juvenile justice system involvement.

The workgroup found that barriers to food access are often driven by policy and administrative constraints rather than food scarcity. Members examined the intersection of hunger, housing instability, and youth system involvement, with particular attention to populations that are often excluded from federal definitions of homelessness, such as youth who are couch surfing.

The workgroup has launched a research partnership with the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future to develop a joint research project using qualitative interviews, school and arrest data, and ecological mapping to understand how unmet basic needs contribute to youth system involvement.

Future work will include:

- targeted research in selected zip codes
- interviews with youth and families
- additional inquiry into physiological needs such as water quality, asthma, sleep, clothing access, and medical needs

The next meeting of the Prevention Workgroup is scheduled for January 12.

Youth Rehabilitation Services Workgroup

Aaron Betsinger provided an update on behalf of the Youth Rehabilitation Services Workgroup.

The workgroup has synthesized lessons from recent meetings with representatives from the Governor's Office of Children, Local Management Boards, and credible messenger programs. Several themes have emerged from these discussions, including:

- unmet behavioral health needs among youth
- fragmented service coordination across jurisdictions
- uneven access to services across counties
- the importance of trusting relationships between youth and service providers

The workgroup has drafted several emerging recommendation areas for the 2026 annual report and is working with Commission staff on prioritization exercises to refine those proposals.

The next meeting of the workgroup will occur on January 30 and will focus on reflection, alignment, and planning for future topics including youth service bureaus, the continuum of care initiative, and the DJS intake decision tool.

Juvenile Justice Processes and System Coordination Workgroup

Staff reported that the Processes Workgroup is transitioning from its recent work on juvenile detention noncompliance to a new focus on children who "fall between the cracks" of existing systems.

The workgroup will examine cases in which youth do not receive appropriate services or support, including situations where youth are released without charges or discharged from detention without coordinated follow up.

Members discussed the importance of understanding cross-system responsibility for these youth, particularly where agencies disagree about which system should assume responsibility. The workgroup will begin identifying speakers and developing guiding questions to explore these issues further.

Susan Leviton emphasized that these challenges reflect longstanding coordination gaps between local and state systems and that improving communication across agencies will be essential to addressing them.

Public Education and Narrative Change Workgroup

Nathaniel Balis reported that the Public Education and Narrative Change Workgroup has been developing a comprehensive decision tree illustrating the process that occurs before a youth reaches DJS intake.

While DJS maintains a system map describing processes within the agency, the workgroup determined that important decision points occur earlier in the process and should be included in public education materials.

The workgroup collaborated with representatives from the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association to document the real-world decisions officers make when responding to youth behavior. These include options such as warnings, release, diversion referrals, physical custody, or citation.

Members noted that these decision points often vary across jurisdictions depending on available diversion programs and local policies. The workgroup will refine the process map and seek additional review from law enforcement partners before presenting a finalized version.

Liz Park highlighted the importance of examining racial disproportionality across each of these decision points.

IV. Commission Synthesis and Cross-Workgroup Themes

Staff noted that several common themes are emerging across the Commission's workgroups, including:

- school disengagement
- housing and food instability
- repeat low-level harm and unmet family needs

These shared signals are informing the development of cross-cutting recommendations for the Commission's next annual report.

Staff also shared that future Commission meetings may focus on a single workgroup at a time to allow deeper discussion of findings and recommendations.

V. Youth and Family Engagement

Commissioners discussed the importance of strengthening youth and family engagement in the Commission's work.

Aubrey Edwards-Luce proposed exploring opportunities to engage youth and families through focus groups or community-based discussions.

Munazza Abraham of DJS shared that the Department's Office of Equity and Inclusion is developing a Family Hub Steering Committee to incorporate youth and family voices into agency practices. Additionally, DJS is conducting youth focus groups across the state through an OJJDP grant and is planning to establish a multidisciplinary advisory board with significant youth representation.

Commission members expressed interest in coordinating these efforts where possible.

VI. Legislative Session Guidance

Liz Park reminded Commissioners that during the upcoming legislative session they may reference the Commission's recently adopted autocharging report and discuss their individual views. However, members should not represent themselves as speaking on behalf of the Commission unless formally authorized.

VII. Department of Juvenile Services Update

Secretary Betsy Fox Tolentino provided a six-month update on the Department of Juvenile Services.

Key updates included:

Community-Based Investments

- $30 million invested in community-based programming, including $10 million in new initiatives
- Expansion of the Thrive gun violence prevention initiative to additional counties
- Reintroduction of Multisystemic Therapy (MST) and MST-A in Baltimore City

Operational Improvements

- 45 staff positions reclassified to address residential staffing shortages
- Rewire Cognitive Behavioral Therapy training expanded to residential staff

- Overtime reduced by 12 percent through improved scheduling oversight and monitoring

Policy Changes

- New policy requiring detention upon police request when a youth on electronic monitoring is arrested for a new offense
- Policy has been used 22 times statewide since implementation

Data Transparency

- Development of the Department's first public data dashboard, expected in early 2026
- Updates underway to the detention risk assessment grid and intake decision tool

Residential Program Reform

- Development of a new residential treatment model combining evidence-based interventions with demonstrated behavioral change
- Expanded workforce development partnerships to address the increasing number of older youth (ages 18 to 20) in committed programs

Commissioners asked questions regarding diversion resources available at intake and the relationship between the Thrive initiative and other violence intervention models.

VIII. Next Meeting and Upcoming Activities

The Commission will next convene on **March 12, 2026**, with a potential in-person meeting at a DJS facility. Workgroups will resume meetings beginning in January.

Commission staff will circulate a poll to assess alternative meeting times and provide preparatory materials for upcoming workgroup sessions.

IX. Adjournment

Vice Chair Liz Park thanked Commissioners, agency partners, and staff for their work throughout the year and wished members a positive holiday season.

The meeting was adjourned.

BYLAWS OF THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM AND EMERGING AND BEST PRACTICES

PREAMBLE

Pursuant to the authority established in House Bill 814 (Chapter 735 of 2024), the following Bylaws are adopted to govern the Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices.

ARTICLE I. NAME, PURPOSE, AND POWERS

Section 1. Name

The name of this body shall be the Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices (hereafter "the Commission").

Section 2. Purpose

The purpose of the Commission is to:

1. Review and report on:
    a. All juvenile services, facilities, and programs in Maryland;
    b. The educational programs and services of the Department of Juvenile Services;
    c. Programs designed to divert children from the juvenile justice system;
    d. The treatment and programming needs of females in the juvenile justice system;
    e. The use of Child in Need of Supervision petitions;
    f. The number of Children in Need of Supervision petitions authorized or denied by jurisdiction; and
    g. The wait times for placement of children in facilities.
2. Research culturally competent, evidence-based, research-based, and other promising programs and practices relating to:
    a. child welfare;
    b. juvenile rehabilitation;
    c. mental health services for children; and
    d. prevention and intervention services for juveniles.
3. Evaluate the cost-effectiveness of existing and promising programs and practices researched by the Commission.
4. Identify means of evaluating the effectiveness of programs and practices researched by the Commission.

5. Giving special attention to organizations located in or serving historically underserved communities, identify strategies to enable community–based organizations that provide services for juveniles to evaluate and validate services and programming provided by those organizations.
6. Review data relating to arrests, completion of programming, and recidivism from the Maryland Longitudinal Data System Center.
7. Identify pathways for greater coordination among the Department of Juvenile Services, the State's Attorney's offices, law enforcement agencies, and local organizations that provide services to juveniles.
8. Recommend policies and programs to improve juvenile services in Maryland.
9. Participate in interpreting for the public the objectives of the juvenile services in the state.
10. Participate in planning the development and use of available resources to meet the needs of juveniles.
11. Coordinate with the Maryland Department of Labor to identify potential job and apprenticeship opportunities for juveniles under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services.
12. Examine and review fatalities involving children under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services, and provide recommendations on policies and programs to prevent such deaths, including:
    a. A death caused by a child under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services, if the child is convicted or adjudicated delinquent for the death; and
    b. The death of a child under the supervision of the Department of Juvenile Services.

Section 3. Powers

1. The Commission shall perform the duties and exercise the powers granted under State Government Article § 9-3502, and other pertinent provisions of law.
2. The Commission may hold meetings, request data, establish workgroups, and adopt rules necessary to fulfill its statutory mandate.

ARTICLE II. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Appointment

The Commission shall consist of 28 members, including:

1. Two (2) ex officio members, the Secretary of the Department of Human Services and the Secretary of the Department of Juvenile Services;
2. Two (2) members of the Senate of Maryland appointed by the President of the Senate;

3. Two (2) members of the House of Delegates appointed by the Speaker of the House; and
4. 22 members appointed by the Governor.

Section 2. Term of Service

1. Appointed members shall serve a three (3) year term from the date of appointment, except that the members initially appointed to the Commission, on or after June 1, 2024, shall serve terms as follows:

   A. Seven initially appointed members' terms shall expire in 2025.
   B. Seven initially appointed members' terms shall expire in 2026.
   C. Seven initially appointed members' terms shall expire in 2027.

2. At the expiration of a member's term, a member shall continue to serve until a replacement is appointed.
3. A member who is appointed after a term has begun serves only for the rest of the term and until a successor is appointed and qualifies.
4. An appointed member who serves two consecutive full 3-year terms may not be reappointed for three (3) years after completion of those terms.
5. A member's service on the Commission is not compensated.

Section 3. Duties

1. Members shall attend meetings, serve on workgroups, contribute to deliberations, and comply with ethics requirements.
2. Attendance requirements outlined in State Government Article § 8-501 of the Annotated Code of Maryland require members appointed by the Governor to attend at least 50% of the meetings during any consecutive 12-month period.
3. Commission members may send a designee in their place in case of the regular member's unavailability.
4. No member has the authority to act individually and independently in the name of the Commission.

Section 4. Resignation

1. An appointed member's voluntary resignation must be submitted in writing to the Chair and to the appropriate appointing body that appointed the member.

2. Unless waived by the Governor, the failure of a member appointed by the Governor to attend at least 50% of the Commission's meetings within a 12-month period shall constitute that member's resignation from the Commission.
3. Not later than January 15 of the year following the end of a 12-month period during which a member appointed by the Governor failed to attend at least 50% of the Commission's meetings, the Chair shall forward to the Governor: (1) the name of the

individual considered to have resigned; and (2) a statement describing that individual's history of attendance during the period.

Section 5. Removal

1. The Commission may make recommendations to the appropriate appointing body that an appointed member be removed for good cause.
2. The Commission's recommendation for removal of an appointed member must be approved by two thirds vote of members, at any regularly scheduled or special meeting of the Commission, whenever it is in the best interests of the Commission.
3. A member may be removed or suspended for good cause by the individual or entity that appointed the member.

ARTICLE III. OFFICERS AND STAFF

Section 1. Officers and Term of Service

1. The officers of the Commission are the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary.
2. The Chair serves at the pleasure of the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House.
3. Only members of the Commission are eligible to serve as officers.

Section 2. Duties

Chairperson

The Chair shall be appointed from among the members of the Commission by the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House. The Chair is responsible for the following tasks:

1. Presides over all Commission meetings.
2. Reports the outcome of matters brought before the Workgroup Chairs to the full Commission at Commission meetings.
3. Coordinates with workgroup Chairs to oversee long-range Commission planning and implementation activities and strategies.
4. Works cooperatively with GOCPP staff on matters involving full Commission activities, roles and responsibilities.
5. Assigns appropriate members with tasks necessary to facilitate the full Commission’s decision-making and long-term strategic planning.
6. Serves as the spokesperson for the Commission.

Vice-Chair

Shall be appointed by the Chair from among the members of the Commission.

1. Presides over all meetings of the Commission in the absence of the Chair.

2. Assumes all other responsibilities of the Chair in the Chair's absence, where appropriate.
3. Serves at the pleasure of the Chair.

Secretary

Shall be appointed by the Chair from among the members of the Commission.

1. Works with GOCPP staff to keep full and accurate minutes of each Commission meeting.
2. Serves at the pleasure of the Chair.

Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy Staff

1. Works collaboratively with Commission and workgroup members to assist members in fulfilling their required roles and responsibilities.
2. Maintains and creates meeting documents such as meeting notices, agendas, minutes, and recordings.
3. Ensures compliance with the Open Meetings Act.
4. Coordinates between state and federal agencies, local governments, and organizations.
5. Serves as point-of-contact for logistical matters.
6. Attends all Commission and workgroup meetings.

ARTICLE IV. MEETINGS

Section 1. Regular Meetings

1. The Commission shall meet at least six (6) times per year, and may meet in person or virtually.
2. The Chair shall annually present a schedule of the time and place for regular meetings for the ensuing year for approval by the Commission.
3. The Chair, in consultation with GOCPP staff, shall determine the location of each regular or special Commission meeting.
4. Notice of time and place for each Commission meeting shall be given in writing to each member no less than two (2) days in advance of such meeting.
5. The notice shall include a meeting agenda. The agenda shall be prepared by GOCPP staff in consultation with the Chair. Discussions and actions by the Commission shall not be limited to the items in the agenda but may include any business consistent with these Bylaws and the statutory duties and powers of the Commission.
6. Workgroups meet virtually once per month.

Section 2. Special Meetings

1. May be called by the Chair or majority of members.
2. The convening of a special meeting shall be contingent upon satisfaction of the notice requirements in Article IV of these Bylaws, unless those requirements are waived by a majority of the members then serving on the Commission. The waiver may be approved by telephone or other electronic modes of communication.

Section 3. Quorum

1. A majority of serving members constitutes a quorum.
2. No formal action may be taken by the Commission without the approval of a majority of the members present and voting.

Section 4. Voting

1. All Commission meetings shall be conducted in accordance with the Maryland Open Meetings Act (Title 3 of the General Provisions Article, Annotated Code of Maryland).
2. Voting on all matters before the Commission shall be by voice vote unless otherwise directed by the Chair.
3. In all cases where a vote is taken, the yeas, nays and abstentions shall be separately recorded, with the exception of a unanimous vote, which may be recorded as such.
4. Commission actions require a majority vote.
5. Proxy voting is not permitted.
6. Designees may not vote for the regular member.
7. Asynchronous voting is not permitted.
8. Unless otherwise inconsistent with these Bylaws, the conduct of all Commission meetings, including meetings of standing workgroups and ad hoc committees, shall be governed by the rules contained in the latest revised version of Robert's Rules of Order.

Section 5. Remote Participation

1. A member's virtual participation in Commission meetings is permitted when they are unable to attend in person.
2. Members should inform GOCPP staff at least 24-hours in advance of scheduled in-person meetings in order to receive a virtual link to attend.
3. On camera participation is required for virtual attendees, unless valid circumstances prevent being on screen.

Section 6. Closed Sessions

1. Meetings may be closed only for specific, approved reasons (e.g., personnel, legal, or security issues), and the reason for closing must be announced.

Section 7. Records and Minutes

1. Meeting materials and minutes of each Commission meeting shall be distributed to each Commission member before the next regular Commission meeting.
2. Minutes may be amended by vote of the Commission at the next regular Commission meeting.
3. To the extent practicable, records and minutes that are not confidential shall be maintained on the Commission's website to be accessible to the public.

ARTICLE V. WORKGROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Section 1. Workgroups

1. The Chair or the Commission, by majority vote of the members then serving, may establish both standing workgroups and ad hoc committees.
2. Each workgroup Co-chair and member shall serve at the pleasure of the Chair of the Commission.

Section 2. Membership

1. The Chair shall be an ex officio member of all workgroups and ad hoc committees.
2. Upon appointment by the Governor or as soon thereafter as practicable, the Chair shall appoint members to each of the standing workgroups and shall designate the Co-chairs of each.
3. Each member of the Commission is required to serve on at least one standing workgroup; however, two workgroups is preferable to achieve sufficient group size and engagement.
4. Commission members will express interest in assignments to workgroups.
5. The Commission Chair will make final selections.
6. In making such appointments, the Chair of the Commission shall determine the number of members on each standing workgroup, with no workgroup consisting of fewer than five members.

Section 3. Workgroup Co-Chair Duties

1. Workgroup co-chairs shall be appointed from among the members of the Commission by the Commission Chair.
2. Preside over all workgroup meetings.
3. Identify workgroup goals.
4. Coordinate with GOCPP staff and workgroup members to schedule meetings as needed to perform workgroup duties.
5. Report to the Commission Chair on workgroup activities.
6. Assign workgroup members with tasks.

Section 4. Member Responsibilities

1. Workgroups study assigned issues and draft recommendations.
2. The standing workgroups of the Commission shall be the workgroups on Public Education and Narrative Change, Fatality Review, Prevention, Youth Rehabilitation Services, and Juvenile Justice Processes and System Coordination.
3. Public Education and Narrative Change - Educate the public about the challenges and the promise of Maryland's children and explain the relevant data in an informative and accessible way to inform policymaking.

4. Fatality Review - Review and offer recommendations to prevent fatalities involving children under DJS supervision.
5. Prevention - Review and offer recommendations to improve treatment and services for youth in the juvenile justice system, child and family welfare systems, and community.
6. Youth Rehabilitation Services - Review and offer recommendations to improve the outcomes for juvenile re-entry, including reviewing educational services provided by DJS and identifying employment opportunities between justice-impacted youth and state agencies.
7. Juvenile Justice Processes and System Coordination - Review and offer recommendations to improve the processes by which juveniles move throughout the juvenile justice system and facilitate inter-agency coordination.
8. Members shall engage with all preparatory material and information in advance of meetings, and complete post-meeting survey responses within 72 hours of meeting adjournment.

Section 6. Remote Participation

1. On-camera participation is required for Workgroup meetings, unless valid circumstances prevent being on screen.

Section 7. Advancing Recommendations and Reports

1. Reports must be approved by a majority of workgroup members with a quorum present.
2. Only members of the Commission shall be entitled to serve as members of standing workgroups and ad hoc committees.
3. Reports approved by workgroups must be submitted to the full Commission for an official Commission position.
4. All workgroups will prepare complete annual reports of activities and submit them to the Commission by the June meeting.

Section 8. Ad Hoc Committees

1. Ad hoc committees may be created by the Chair.
2. The members of an ad hoc committee shall be appointed by the Chair of the Commission, who shall also designate the chair of the ad hoc committee.
3. Ad hoc committees shall normally have a life not to exceed one year, unless renewed for a specific additional period by the Commission or the Chair of the Commission.

ARTICLE VI. PUBLIC ACCESS AND RECORDS

Section 1. Open Meetings Act

1. All meetings, with the exception of ad hoc committee meetings and closed sessions, shall comply with the Open Meetings Act.

Section 2. Public Information Act

1. Commission records are public unless confidential , as in case files for the Fatality Review workgroup.

Section 3. Record Retention

1. Minutes and recordings must be retained for at least five years.

ARTICLE VII. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND ETHICS

1. Members shall avoid conflicts, recuse themselves when necessary, and comply with ethics rules. All members are subject to and shall comply with the Maryland Public Ethics Law, including all reporting, disclosure, gift, and conflict of interest provisions applicable to members of boards and commissions, as administered by the Maryland State Ethics Commission.
2. Members shall file all required financial disclosure statements in accordance with applicable law, including initial, annual, and termination disclosures where required.
3. Any member with a potential conflict of interest shall disclose the conflict on the record and recuse themselves from participation in the matter, and such recusal shall be reflected in the minutes.
4. Failure to comply with applicable ethics requirements may result in sanctions as provided by law.

ARTICLE VIII. ANNUAL REPORT

1. The Commission shall prepare and approve an annual report each year by October 1.

ARTICLE IX. REPEAL OF PRIOR PROVISIONS

1. These Bylaws supersede and replace any bylaws or provision adopted prior to DATE, 2026, by the Commission or its predecessors and any regulations or policies of the Commission or its predecessors to the extent inconsistent with any provision contained these Bylaws.

BYLAWS OF THE MARYLAND COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM AND EMERGING AND BEST PRACTICES

Manual Approved: December 11, 2024

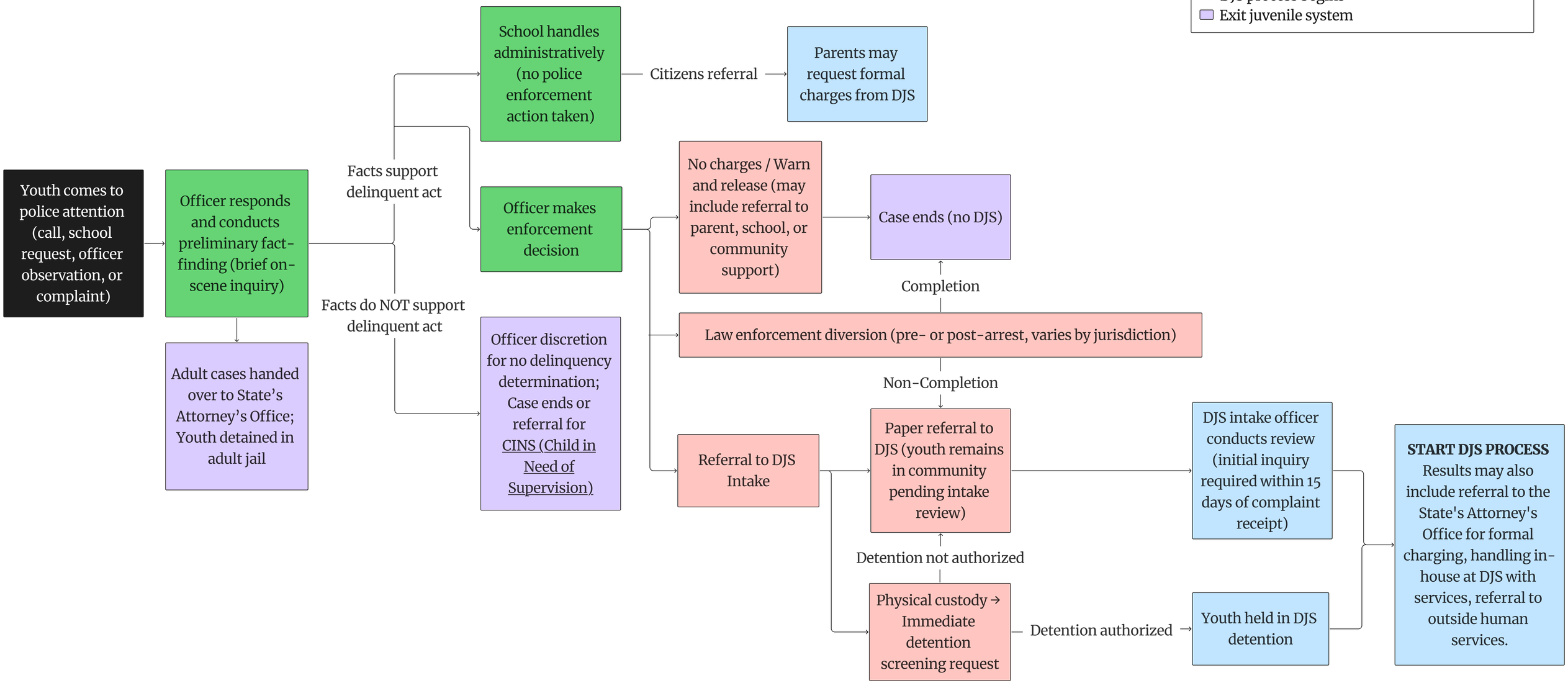
Bylaws Approved:

Maryland Youth Pre-DJS Process Flowchart

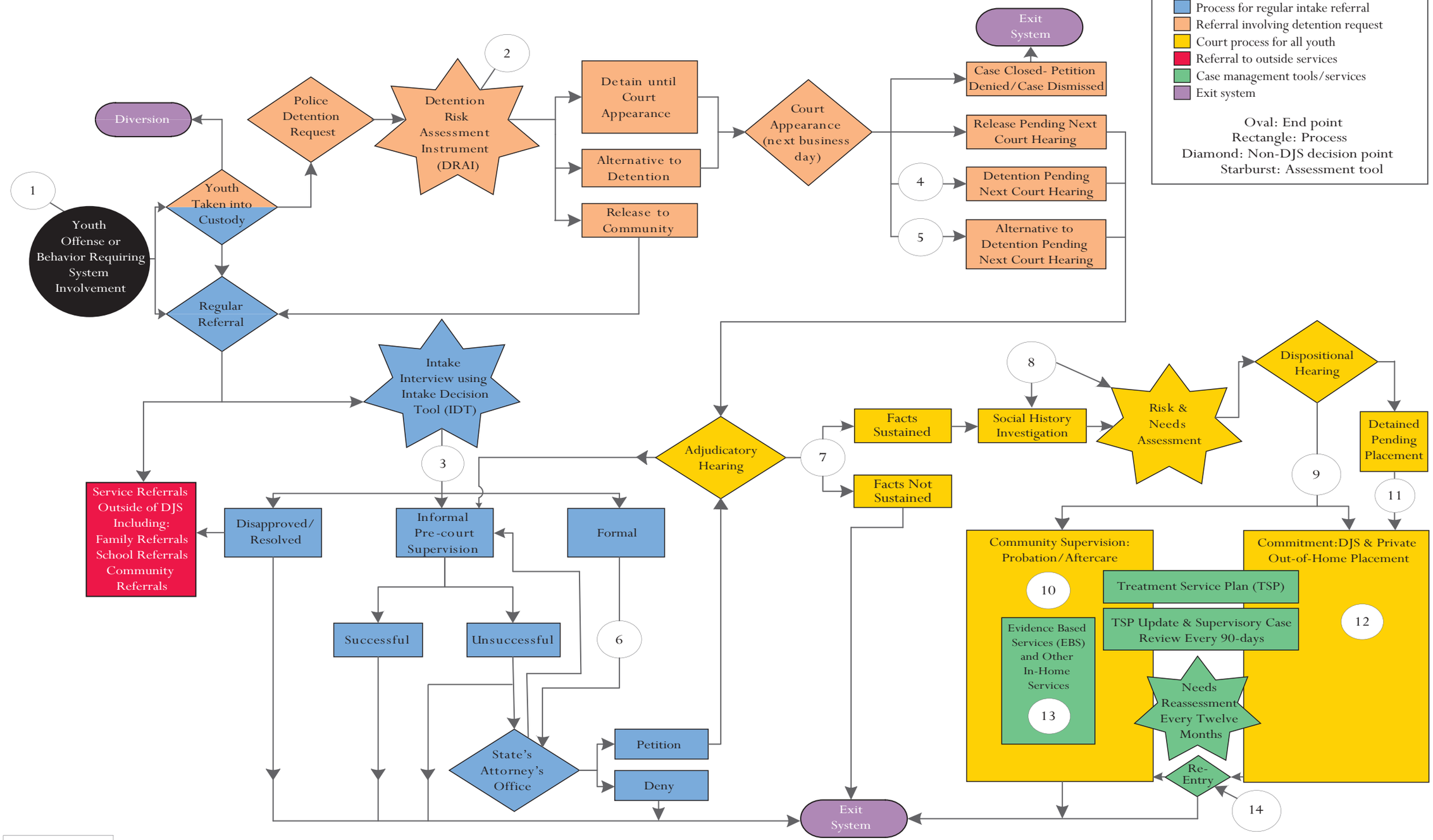
This Pre-DJS decision tree typically occurs in a 24-hour process from charging to report
***see accompanying brief for clarity on terminology, procedural distinctions, and explanatory notes**

Key:

- Youth Behavior Requiring Police Involvement
- Case assessment
- Enforcement and Referral Decision
- DJS process begins
- Exit juvenile system



Maryland Juvenile Justice System Process Flowchart



Revised 6/2022

Brief on the Pre-DJS Youth Decision Process Flowchart: Development and Statewide Law Enforcement Feedback

Prepared by the Public Education and Narrative Change Workgroup of the Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging and Best Practices

Introduction

The Public Education Workgroup of the Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and Emerging & Best Practices developed the Pre-DJS Youth Decision Process Flowchart to improve public understanding of what typically happens when a youth comes to police attention prior to any involvement by the Department of Juvenile Services (DJS). Public education efforts, as well as legislative and community discussions, revealed persistent confusion about arrest, diversion, custody, and DJS intake timelines. The Workgroup set out to create a neutral, descriptive educational tool that accurately reflects real-world law enforcement practices and clarifies the stages youth may encounter before potential DJS involvement.

Partnership and Law Enforcement Engagement

To ensure credibility and accuracy, the Commission engaged the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and the Maryland Sheriffs' Association early in the process. This outreach was intended to secure collaboration, avoid prescriptive framing, and build shared understanding of operational realities across jurisdictions. Law enforcement representatives participated in initial working sessions to support flowchart development, walkthroughs, and revision, followed by statewide review, refinement, and feedback incorporation. This engagement strengthened the product through operational clarity and statewide validation.

Statewide Survey Results

A statewide survey was circulated through law enforcement association networks to vet the draft flowchart. Sixteen jurisdictions responded across five regions: Eastern Shore (Cecil, Queen Anne's, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline), Central Maryland (Anne Arundel, Carroll), Capital Region (Montgomery, Prince George's), Southern Maryland (Charles), and Baltimore City Police Department. Responses reflected Chiefs, Sheriffs, and senior leadership input.

Fifteen respondents provided narrative responses. Ten respondents indicated the flowchart was "yes, generally accurate," five indicated it was "mostly accurate with minor differences," and one indicated it was "somewhat accurate but important differences exist." This outlier response reflected operational distinctions, rather than a determination that the flowchart was structurally inaccurate.

Areas of Consensus

Across regions, respondents affirmed the logical flow and decision points embedded in the draft. No respondents characterized the draft flowchart as structurally inaccurate. Feedback focused on clarification and precision of language and procedural steps rather than fundamental changes. Respondents validated the design and emphasized the importance of explanatory clarity to reduce public misunderstanding.

Statewide Patterns Identified Through Narrative Feedback

Seven core patterns emerged statewide and were consistently reflected in narrative responses:

- Diversion is not uniform statewide.
- Many school incidents resolve without enforcement.
- Law enforcement involvement in school-based decisions varies.
- Fact-finding may result in no delinquency.
- "Paper referral" to DJS terminology varies by jurisdiction.
- Jurisdictional variation must be explicitly acknowledged.
- Detention is screened, not automatic.

Consensus emerged on these core procedural distinctions and on the necessity of acknowledging statewide operational differences.

Feedback Incorporation

All narrative feedback was reviewed individually and incorporated into the revised draft. Revisions include:

- Added a negative fact-finding pathway.
- Clarified school administrative handling language.
- Refined enforcement discretion wording.
- Split paper referral and custody pathways.
- Specified diversion variability.
- Clarified detention screening language.
- Added a 15-day intake inquiry note.
- Included a statewide jurisdictional disclaimer.

Each revision directly addresses operational realities identified by respondents and strengthens the flowchart's precision and applicability.

Key terms

Child in Need of Supervision (CINS)
A child under 18 who requires court intervention due to behaviors such as chronic

truancy, running away, or habitual disobedience, but who has not committed a delinquent act, and whose case is addressed through supervision and services rather than criminal Prosecution.

Select Diversion Programs:
Teen Court
A peer-led diversion program in which youth who admit responsibility for certain low-level offenses appear before trained youth volunteers who recommend restorative sanctions such as community service, educational workshops, or jury service, allowing the matter to be resolved outside formal juvenile court if successfully completed.

Gang Intervention
A prevention and diversion strategy designed to interrupt gang involvement by connecting youth with mentoring, case management, family support, and community-based services aimed at reducing violence and promoting long-term stability.

Drug Court (Juvenile Drug Treatment Court)
A structured, court-supervised diversion program for youth with substance use concerns that combines judicial oversight, treatment services, regular monitoring, and graduated incentives or sanctions to address underlying behavioral health needs.

Fresh START
A locally structured diversion initiative typically focused on early intervention, accountability, and service connection for first-time or low-level offenders, with the goal of preventing deeper system involvement through education, mentoring, and restorative requirements.

JOINS
A collaborative intervention program that generally connects youth and families to coordinated services, supervision, and supports in lieu of formal court processing, often targeting youth at elevated risk of continued system contact.

Implications for the Commission

Law enforcement engagement across five regions provides strong validation of the flowchart's structural foundation and operational accuracy. Regional variation has been explicitly documented and incorporated, reducing the risk of misinterpretation or jurisdictional conflict. This collaborative process enhances the flowchart's legitimacy and increases the likelihood that it will function effectively as a public-facing educational resource.

Closing

This project reflects collaboration in action. Law enforcement engagement materially strengthened the flowchart through operational clarity and statewide validation, resulting in a revised product that reflects shared procedural understanding while acknowledging jurisdictional variation.

Pre-DJS Youth Decision Process

Public Education Workgroup of the Maryland Commission on Juvenile Justice Reform and emerging and Best Practices

February 2026

Project Origin

Public education efforts revealed confusion regarding pre-Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) processes. Legislative and community discussions highlighted misunderstandings about arrest, diversion, custody, and intake timelines.

Goal Setting

The objective was to create a neutral, descriptive educational tool that accurately reflects real-world law enforcement practices.

Need for Clarity

A clear flowchart was needed to demystify the stages youth encounter before potential DJS involvement, fostering better understanding among stakeholders.

EARLY OUTREACH

Engaged the Maryland Chiefs of Police Association and Maryland Sheriffs' Association early to ensure credibility and accuracy.

OBJECTIVE

Secured collaboration, avoided prescriptive framing, and built shared understanding of operational realities.

Law Enforcement Engagement

- Initial Working Session with Representatives from Chiefs of Police and Sheriff's Associations
- Flowchart Development
- Flowchart Walkthrough and Revision
- Workgroup Review
- Statewide Law Enforcement Review and Refinement
- Feedback Incorporation
- Request for Final Law Enforcement Review and Feedback
- Workgroup Review and Approval

Law enforcement engagement strengthened the flowchart through operational clarity and statewide validation.

Statewide law enforcement feedback on Youth Pre-DJS flowchart

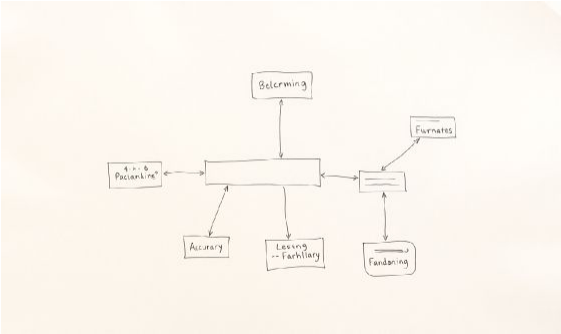
Data reflects Chiefs, Sheriffs, and senior leadership input

16	Jurisdictions responded
5	Regions represented, Eastern Shore (Cecil, Queen Anne's, Dorchester, Talbot, Caroline); Central Maryland (Anne Arundel, Caroll) Capital Region; (Montgomery, Prince George's); Southern Maryland (Charles); Baltimore City Police Department
15	Narrative responses, **each reviewed individually and incorporated into the revised draft**
10	"Yes, generally accurate" responses
5	"Mostly accurate with minor differences"
1	"Somewhat accurate but important differences exist"

Areas of consensus

Structural accuracy

No respondents characterized the draft flowchart as structurally inaccurate. Feedback focused on clarification and precision of language and procedural steps rather than fundamental changes.



Affirmed design

The draft design received affirmation across all regions. Respondents validated the logical flow and decision points embedded in the flowchart.

Clarification focus

Feedback concentrated on adding clarity to terminology, procedural distinctions, and explanatory notes rather than restructuring the process.

Statewide patterns

- Diversion is not uniform statewide
- Many school incidents resolve without enforcement
- Law enforcement involvement in school-based decisions varies
- Fact-finding may result in no delinquency
- “Paper referral” to DJS terminology varies by jurisdiction
- Jurisdictional variation must be explicitly acknowledged
- Detention is screened, not automatic

Consensus emerged on core procedural distinctions and the necessity of acknowledging statewide operational differences.

Implications for the Commission

Statewide validation

Law enforcement engagement across five regions provides strong validation of the flowchart's structural foundation and operational accuracy.

Transparent acknowledgment

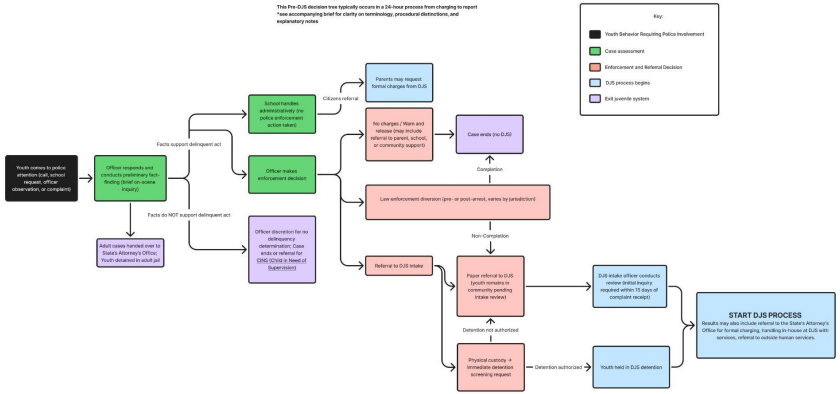
Regional variation has been explicitly documented and incorporated, reducing risk of misinterpretation or jurisdictional conflict.

Collaborative credibility

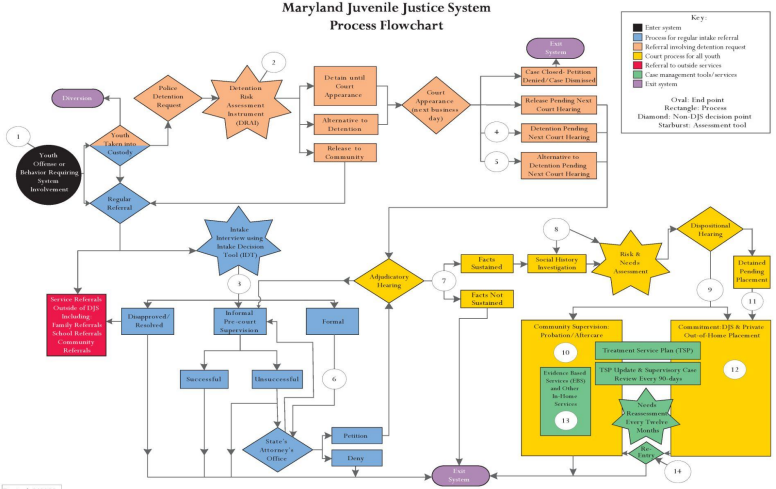
Collaborative process enhances the flowchart's legitimacy and likelihood of consistent implementation statewide.

Maryland Youth Pre-DJS Flowchart

This Pre-DJS decision tree typically occurs in a 24-hour process from charging to report
*see accompanying brief for clarity on terminology, procedural distinctions, and explanatory notes



Maryland Juvenile Justice System Process Flowchart



Revised 6/2022

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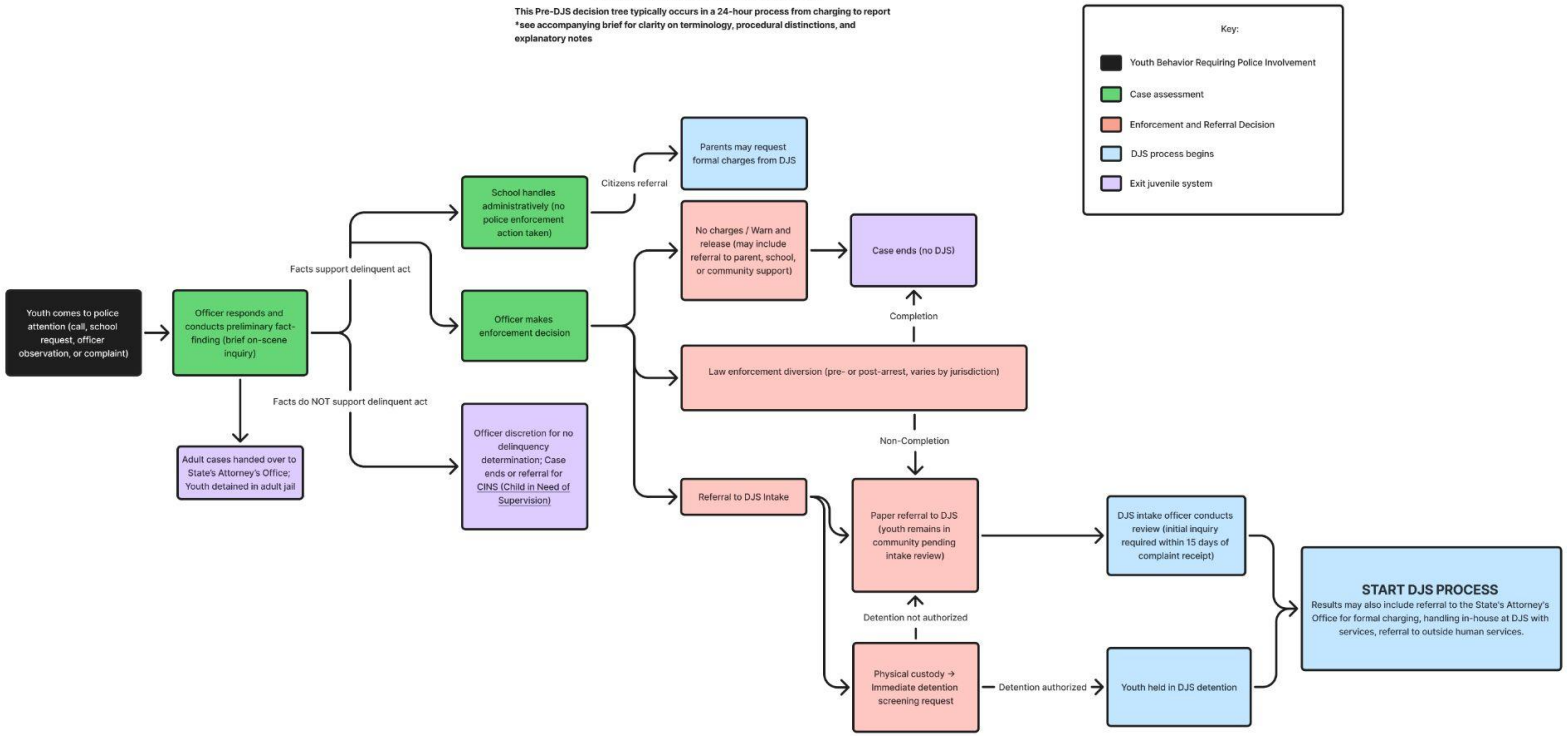

Thank You

Collaboration in Action