

**Montana Judicial Branch  
Youth Court Caseload  
June 2024**

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**Quick Overview**

- 22 Youth Courts – attached to each judicial district
  - The vast majority of cases (90% plus) are handled “informally” with a referral to Juvenile Probation Officer
    - JPO provides services and interventions like counseling, required community service, etc. to get the youth back on track
  - Youth Court funds local intervention programs designed to keep at-risk juveniles from entering the system – tutoring programs, job-development programs, etc.
  - Extremely successful:
    - 2007 – 6,676 juveniles were referred with 13,673 offenses
    - 2023 – 3,604 juveniles were referred with 7,325 offenses
- Youth Court is a civil system – it is not criminal
  - The county attorney can file a juvenile case (DJ), which leads to court-imposed sanctions – *reminder of data from March meeting*
    - 2021/2022 case counts – the actual cases filed – a juvenile may have more than one case
    - 2021/2022 charge courts – the actual charges filled by county – a juvenile case can (and most often does) contain more than one offense; charges are often dropped as the case proceeds
- Juveniles charged as adults – criminal case (DC)
  - If a juvenile meets age and offense standards, the county attorney may file a criminal (DC) case – statute outlines the requirements
  - Prior to the DC case moving forward the court must hold a transfer hearing to determine if the case should proceed as a DC case or should be handled as a DJ case
  - A juvenile charged as an adult is processed the same way as regular track criminal case
- Available Data
  - Report Cards with yearly data from CY2007
  - Program Evaluations
- MIP Data
  - Minor in Possession of Alcohol, Marijuana, or Tobacco
    - Joint jurisdiction between the courts of limited jurisdiction and the Youth Court for MIPs under 18

- MIPS between 18-21 have exclusive jurisdiction in the courts of limited jurisdiction
- Youth Court has more options with juveniles – “sentence” in courts of limited jurisdiction is detailed in statute
- Current Challenges and Opportunities
  - Small but significant increase in serious felony offenses
    - Other states’ experiences – October symposium
  - Juveniles with mental health conditions or other disabilities
    - Difficult with placements
    - Adding screening information to address needs
    - PIF programming specific to crisis needs
    - HB872 commission discussions
  - Council of State Government Strategic Planning Initiative

Handouts:

1. Chart of Youth Court Interventions
2. 2023 Youth Court Report Card
3. 10-year Offense and Juvenile Trends
4. MIP Data
5. CSG Overview