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Glossary of Juvenile Justice Terms

Term	Definition
Adjudication	<p>Adjudication refers to the court process, starting with the filing of charges on a petition by the District Attorney, through which the judge determines if a youth committed the offense. The term “adjudicated” is similar to convicted and indicates that the court concluded that the youth committed the offense:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Pre-adjudication</i> refers to the period prior to the court’s final determination. During this period, there are court hearings during which the District Attorney and Defense Attorney try to resolve the case. Some youth will have their case dismissed during this phase and will never be adjudicated. • <i>Post-adjudication</i> refers to the period after the court has concluded that the youth committed the offense (sustained the charges) and resolved the case by ordering a disposition, which may include some form of probation supervision, out of home placement, or term of secure confinement.
Admission to Juvenile Hall	<p>Depending on the nature of the alleged offense and the legal circumstances, a youth who is arrested may be admitted to Juvenile Hall to be securely housed (“detained”) until they appear before the court. The admission may be associated with one or more incidents alleging new law violations and/or other legal circumstances, such as a warrant.</p>
Allegation	<p>An unproven accusation or claim that someone has broken the law or committed a crime. Police may make an arrest alleging that someone has committed a crime based on probable cause. The allegation may eventually result in a conviction (in criminal court) or disposition (in juvenile court) if proven true through the court process.</p>
Arrest	<p>The taking of a person into legal custody by a law enforcement officer either under a valid warrant or based on probable cause that the person has committed a crime or a delinquent act. In the juvenile justice system, <i>referrals</i> are the equivalent of arrests in the adult system.</p>
Assessment	<p>An evaluation of an individual’s strengths, needs, and risks to inform case planning and service referrals.</p>

Booking	The process whereby an individual is taken into custody and “booked” or “processed.” During the booking process, an officer typically takes the individual’s personal information, photo, and fingerprints; records information about the alleged offenses; performs a criminal background check; and places the youth in formal detention.
Citation	A written order, also called a notice to appear or summons, issued by the arresting agency, to appear before a judge, probation officer, or community-based diversion agency at a later date in response to a law violation. Depending on the nature of the alleged offense and the legal circumstances, a youth who is arrested may be issued a citation and released to their parent or legal guardian (cited and released), rather than admitted to Juvenile Hall.
Commitment	A court order giving guardianship of a youth with sustained charges to the San Francisco Juvenile Probation Department, to be committed to secure confinement in Juvenile Hall or a Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF). Commitment to Juvenile Hall or SYTF is similar to incarceration for adults.
Community Assessment & Resource Center (CARC)	The Community Assessment and Resource Center (CARC) is San Francisco’s community-based diversion program, and a single point of entry for crisis intervention, assessment, service integration, and referral of youth arrested in San Francisco for misdemeanors and non-707(b) felony offenses. Eligible youth are assessed through a collaborative process, involving JPD, case managers from Huckleberry Youth Programs, and other partner community-based organizations. CARC case managers work with youth to reintegrate them into their schools, arrange for special educational services as appropriate, obtain mental health services, complete community service and probation requirements, and engage the youth in positive social, arts, athletic, employment, and youth development programs.
Community-based Organization	A community-based organization (CBO) is a nonprofit organization that is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and provides services to individuals in the community.
Counselor	A Juvenile Hall counselor is responsible for the care, custody, safety, and welfare of youth housed in Juvenile Hall.
Decline to File	After police make an arrest for suspected criminal or delinquent activity, the arresting agency presents its evidence to the District Attorney’s (DA) Office to determine what, if any, charges can be proven beyond a reasonable doubt, and form the basis of a complaint or petition, thereby initiating the court process. If the DA’s office cannot prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt, they will <i>decline to file</i> the charges.
Detention	Detention is the temporary holding of individuals accused of crimes or those awaiting disposition. In San Francisco, if detained, youth are housed in secure custody at Juvenile Hall. In California, subsequent to an arrest resulting in detention, the court must make a decision within 72 hours (or 3 court days) regarding whether to release the youth.

Detention Hearing	The Detention Hearing is the first court hearing after a youth is arrested and detained, at which the court will determine whether the youth will be released from custody, placed on Home Detention, or remain at Juvenile Hall pending further order of the court.
Dismissal	A judge's ruling to terminate the charges, thus ending the court case. When a case is dismissed, it means that the charges are dropped.
Disposition	If the judge determines that a youth committed the act for which he or she is charged by the District Attorney, the judge will issue a disposition to address the youth's behavior. This is similar to sentencing for an adult.
District Attorney (DA)	The District Attorney is a public official elected to represent the state in judicial proceedings in a particular county. Attorneys (lawyers) at the DA's Office review charges alleged by the police, and based on the evidence decide whether to file charges by way of a petition, initiating court proceedings that will determine whether a youth broke the law, and if so, the court's response.
Diversion	Diversion refers to a wide range of interventions, which vary from county to county, that may be implemented as an alternative to traditional justice system responses. At the point of arrest, police may divert a youth to a community-based organization for services (not currently available in San Francisco). Once an arrest is presented to the Juvenile Probation Department, excluding certain offenses, rather than presenting the case to the DA for charging, the probation officer may divert the youth to the Community Assessment and Resource Center (CARC), or other special classes, counseling, or community service ("informal probation"). Once a case is presented to the DA, the DA may divert the youth to a pre-filing diversion program. Even after a petition is filed, the court may divert the youth to informal probation. If a youth successfully completes the diversion program, at whatever stage it occurs, the youth will not face subsequent court proceeding, avoiding either arrest, prosecution, or a disposition.
Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ)	The Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), formerly known as the California Youth Authority (CYA), was California's youth prison system for individuals with sustained charges for 707(b) offenses or sex offenses. DJJ ceased intake, with limited exceptions, on July 1, 2021 and closed on June 30, 2023. Responsibility for the custody, care, and supervision of youth who would have otherwise been eligible for DJJ has been shifted from the state to counties ("DJJ Realignment").
Electronic Monitoring	Electronic monitoring is a GPS monitor that tracks the location of the wearer 24 hours a day. The court may order a youth to wear an ankle bracelet that electronically monitors their movement as a condition of probation or release from detention. Youth may also be placed on Alcohol Monitoring, which automatically samples the wearer's perspiration to test for alcohol consumption.

Home Detention/ Home Supervision	Home supervision (or “Home Detention”) is a program in which youth who would otherwise be detained in Juvenile Hall are permitted to remain at home pending court disposition of their case, with court-ordered conditions, under the supervision of a deputy probation officer.
Informal Probation	In response to an arrest, in lieu of submitting a petition request to the District Attorney, the Probation Officer may refer the youth to services not to exceed six months. If the youth completes the terms of their informal probation agreement, the probation officer will close the case, and there will be no further court proceedings.
Juvenile Delinquency	An act of breaking the law committed by a person who has not yet turned 18 years old, for which an adult could be prosecuted in a criminal court, but when committed by a youth is within the jurisdiction of the juvenile delinquency court. Delinquent acts include crimes against persons, crimes against property, drug offenses, and crimes against public order, when juveniles commit such acts.
Juvenile Hall	Juvenile Hall is the official reception and detention center for youth detained as a result of an arrest for alleged delinquent misconduct or a juvenile court order in San Francisco. Juvenile detention is short-term confinement, primarily used after a youth has been arrested, but before a court has determined whether the youth has committed the alleged act. The court may also commit a youth to placement at Juvenile Hall as a disposition or consequence for delinquent acts. San Francisco Juvenile Hall is a 150-bed, secure facility operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year.
Make It Right	Make it Right is a pre-filing diversion program operated by the San Francisco District Attorney’s Office: “Through Make it Right, eligible young people are given the option, before their cases are charged, to participate in restorative community conferencing. In this process, the youth come together with their victim and their supporters (including family/caregivers, youth services, schools, coaches, and others) in a community-based facilitated dialogue to develop an agreement for the young person to repair harm, address root causes, and make amends. This collective agreement identifies concrete actions the youth will take to address harm caused to the victim, the community, the youth’s family, and him/herself. With support from a community-based case manager, the young person has a six-month period to complete their agreement. If successful, the case is not prosecuted.”
New Law Violation	A new law violation refers to the act of breaking a law or committing a crime. When a juvenile breaks the law, this is called a delinquent act. A new law violation is distinguished from a probation violation or a warrant, which are related to previous law violations.

Offense	An offense is an act of breaking the law. Ranging from most serious to least serious, offenses are categorized as either a felony, misdemeanor, or infraction. San Francisco Juvenile Probation does not handle infractions. The arrest offense is the act of allegedly breaking the law for which an individual is arrested by the police. The charged offense is the act charged by the District Attorney when they file a petition, initiating court proceedings. The sustained offense is the offense the court finds that a youth has committed, either through a trial or through a plea agreement process.
Out of Home Placement	Through the juvenile delinquency court process, the court may find that returning a youth home would be contrary to the child's welfare if a youth poses a genuine risk to public safety and requires treatment that cannot be provided while they remain in their home, or if their family home has been proven to be unsafe. In this instance, the court may order a young person to an out of home placement with a Resource Family (which includes all types of caregivers formerly known as foster parents), or a Short-Term Residential Treatment Program (previously called a group home). Family members can also serve as kinship Resource Families.
Petition	The legal document the District Attorney files with the court, which describes the law violations (charges) a youth is alleged to have committed. Filing a petition formally begins the court process.
Probable Cause	Probable cause is a requirement found in the Fourth Amendment of the United States Constitution that must usually be met before police make an arrest, conduct a search, or receive a warrant, requiring that there is a reasonable basis for believing that a crime may have been committed.
Probation Officer (PO)/ Deputy Probation Office (DPO)	The law enforcement official assigned to investigate a delinquent act alleged by the police, develop a plan to help youth succeed and avoid further justice system involvement, support youth in meeting court ordered conditions, and report back to the court on their progress.
Probation/ Supervision	Court-ordered supervision of youth in the community by a probation officer requiring youth to meet court ordered conditions, including, for example, school attendance, community service, restitution, counseling, substance abuse treatment, behavioral and/or mental health treatment, or other services, as a response to sustained delinquency charges.
Public Defender	A public defender is a lawyer appointed to represent people who otherwise cannot reasonably afford to hire a lawyer to defend themselves in court proceedings. In San Francisco, the Public Defender is a public official elected to provide defense services.

Record Sealing	When a record is sealed, it means that it can only be accessed under certain, limited circumstances, and that the subject of the record can legally and truthfully say that they do not have a record. Police and Juvenile Probation may seal arrest records for youth for whom a petition was not filed and who have successfully completed diversion. The court may seal records for cases in which a petition was filed if the case was dismissed or after a specified time period. Under certain circumstances, the court may order that sealed records are also destroyed, which means that they must be physically obliterated and can no longer be accessed under any circumstance.
Resource Family	In California, a Resource Family is a caregiver who provides home-based care for children in foster care. Resource Families include individuals, couples, and families. They may be related, have a familiar or mentoring relationship, or no previous relationship with the child. The Resource Family is approved to provide care on a temporary (foster care) and/or permanent (adoption and legal guardianship) basis, and includes all types of caregivers in the child welfare and probation systems formerly known as foster parents, approved relatives, or approved Non-Relative Extended Family Members.
Secure Youth Treatment Facility	A Secure Youth Treatment Facility (SYTF) is a secure facility operated, utilized, or accessed by the county of commitment to provide appropriate programming, treatment, and education for youth, age 14 or over, who would have otherwise been eligible for confinement at a Division of Juvenile Justice facility, having been adjudicated for a 707(b) offense or a registerable sex offense. San Francisco currently operates an SYTF in Juvenile Hall.
Short-term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP)	A short-term residential therapeutic program (STRTP), formerly called a group home, is a licensed residential congregate care setting for youth ordered to out of home placement. STRTPs must provide a set of core services, which include mental health services, to be licensed by the state. The placement must be reviewed by the court every six months.
Technical Violation	A technical violation is a violation of the conditions of probation or home detention. For example, removing a court ordered electronic monitor is a technical violation of a court ordered condition, as is leaving an out of home placement without permission. A probation officer may file a probation violation with the court in response to the technical violation, which may result in additional court-ordered conditions.
Transfer In/Out	When a youth who resides in San Francisco is adjudicated in another county, the case may be sent to San Francisco for disposition. When a youth that lives in another county is adjudicated in San Francisco, the case may be sent to the youth's home county for disposition. In either scenario, if the youth is placed on probation by the court, the youth may be transferred to their home county to be supervised by the local probation department.

Ward/ Wardship	If a youth under the juvenile court’s jurisdiction has broken the law, the court may determine the youth to be a ward of the court, whereby the court has legal authority to act as their parent/guardian. Wardship probation is when the court orders a ward to be placed on probation and supervised by the probation department in the community. Youth may remain on juvenile wardship probation until they turn 21 for most offenses, and up to 23 or 25 for select offenses.
Warrant	<p>A warrant is an order issued by a juvenile court judge, which can be issued before a youth’s charges have been adjudicated (pre-trial), or after adjudication and/or disposition (for example, while on probation).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A <i>bench warrant</i> is issued by a sitting judge, typically when a youth has failed to appear at a court hearing. • Any law enforcement agency, most often the Police or the District Attorney, including agencies from other jurisdictions, may request that the court issue an <i>arrest warrant</i> for alleged criminal conduct. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When the police request an arrest warrant directly from the court, it is called a <i>Ramey Warrant</i>. ○ In San Francisco, when the DA requests an arrest warrant, it is called a <i>Petition Warrant</i>. • The Juvenile Probation Department may also request an arrest warrant from the court if a petition has already been filed, and probation demonstrates to the court that there is a concern for the safety of the youth or the community, the youth’s whereabouts are unknown, or the youth has willfully evaded the court/probation.
Welfare & Institutions Code (WIC)	The Welfare & Institutions Code is the section of California law that relates to welfare, dependent children, mental health, handicapped, elderly, delinquency, foster care, Medi-Cal, food stamps, rehabilitation, and long-term care, and including juvenile delinquency.
WIC 602	Welfare & Institutions Code 602 is the California law that states that if the court finds that a youth aged 12-17 has broken the law, they may determine the youth to be a ward of the court, whereby the court has legal authority to act as their parent/guardian.
WIC 707(b)	Welfare & Institutions Code 707 is the California law that defines specific serious categories of crime, including but not limited to, robbery, rape, assault with great bodily injury, murder, and attempted murder that, when alleged, charged, or sustained carry special consequences for youth. Youth who are age 14 or older who are arrested for a 707(b) offense must be detained by the Juvenile Probation Department until they can appear before a judge.
Youth	The term youth refers to individuals under the jurisdiction of the juvenile court. This includes children age 12-17 who are arrested for delinquent acts. It also includes transitional age youth (TAY) up to age 25, who may still be under juvenile court jurisdiction due to a secure commitment, or probation, out of home placement, or extended foster care status.