

The juvenile court has jurisdiction over persons who commit criminal acts prior to their 18th birthday.

Whether a charge is classified as a felony or a misdemeanor doesn't have the same significance in juvenile court as it does in the adult court.

The more significant difference is whether the charge is classified as a Serious Juvenile Offense (SJO) or not.

The maximum commitment for a conviction for an SJO is four years. For all other charges, it is 18 months. Either commitment may be extended for another 18 months.

All delinquency commitments end on the person's 20th birthday, regardless of how much time is left on the commitment.

Recent changes in the law will permit the placement of a juvenile in a secure juvenile detention center only upon a finding that:

1. there is probable cause to believe that the child has committed the acts alleged, and
2. there is no less restrictive alternative available, and
3. there is:
 - i) probable cause to believe that the child will pose a risk to public safety if released to the community prior to the court hearing or disposition, or
 - ii) a need to hold the child in order to ensure the child's appearance before the court, as demonstrated by the child's previous failure to respond to the court process, or
 - iii) a need to hold the child for another jurisdiction

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