



Reducing Structural Barriers to School and Work for People with Juvenile Records

Executive Summary

In recent years, a growing number of states have enacted reforms to ease restrictions related to education and employment for people with criminal records. However, few have devoted the same attention to how these “collateral consequences” impact people with juvenile records.

Like adults, people with juvenile adjudications can experience a variety of barriers to their continued education, credentialing, and employment for the rest of their lives, even as a result of committing minor offenses. These restrictions especially affect people of color due to persistent racial and ethnic disparities in rates of juvenile justice involvement. And given the impact that COVID-19 will have for the foreseeable future on both employment rates and state budgets, it is crucial that state policies don’t unnecessarily prevent people with juvenile records from taking part in an inclusive economic recovery.

To better understand the education and employment barriers that people with juvenile records face, The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center conducted an unprecedented analysis of policies and practices in 12 states. We used the findings to develop recommendations and resources that policymakers in all states can use to guide statutory reforms.

Our Findings

- State statutes appear to be designed to limit collateral consequences for juvenile records, but may not actually do so in practice.
- The majority of colleges and universities and some employers ask applicants about their criminal histories and/or require background checks. And almost none distinguish between juvenile adjudications and adult convictions.
- States have relief mechanisms to mitigate collateral consequences that result from juvenile adjudications, but their effectiveness is limited.

Policy Solutions

1. Establish state law that clearly distinguishes juvenile adjudications from criminal convictions and that prevents prospective employers and postsecondary institutions from asking about or considering adjudications in their decisions.
2. Make all juvenile arrest and court records and associated information confidential at all times, with limited exceptions for clearly designated public safety purposes.
3. Ensure record clearance processes are universal, automatic, and free of charge.
4. Ensure that people who become involved with the juvenile justice system are informed about the consequences of an adjudication as well as their rights and obligations when it comes to record clearance and disclosure.

Dig Deeper

To support the adoption of these policy solutions, the corresponding **policy solutions toolkit** provides practical resources for policymakers including sample legislative language and best practice examples from states across the country.

