



Welcome to the June [Youth Rights & Safety Hub](#) (YRSH) newsletter! YRSH is non-political and non-partisan. We seek to educate, not advocate. We do this by sharing relevant resources and data debriefs about youth rights and safety issues in our state.

Spotlight

The Sentencing Project's Report – *From Punishment to Prevention: A Better Approach to Addressing Youth Gun Possession*

Reducing gun violence should be an urgent priority in the United States. However, a new report from The Sentencing Project shows that youth justice systems' responses are often ineffective and excessively punitive. [From Punishment to Prevention: A Better Approach to Addressing Youth Gun Possession](#) argues the most effective strategies to reduce gun violence involve comprehensive gun violence interruption initiatives that focus on the very narrow population of youth and young adults at highest risk for gun violence. However, the U.S. Department of Justice recently eliminated \$150 million in federal funding for gun interruption efforts, despite strong evidence that these initiatives have sharply reduced murders and gun crimes in many cities in recent years.

Though the share of youth who carry firearms has not changed appreciably in recent years, arrests and court cases for weapons possession have risen sharply since the pandemic began. Moreover, Black youth are increasingly likely to be the ones arrested for carrying weapons -- making up half of all weapons arrests -- despite the fact that Black youth are no more likely than their white peers to carry firearms.

Justice system responses to youth referred to court on weapons charges have grown increasingly punitive in recent years, with fewer youth diverted from prosecution and more youth placed in locked detention. In many jurisdictions, youth are often transferred to stand trial as adults merely for gun possession. Research shows that all of these practices are likely to worsen outcomes and increase the likelihood of future offending among the many youth carrying firearms who pose minimal risk to public safety and possess weapons mainly for self-protection.

June Views on the News

Like it or not, we must pay attention to the media—because the stories they tell shape how many people think about youth justice. Including elected officials and young people themselves! Is the reporting fair? Are the headlines accurate? What stories are being told...and what is being left out?

The question media consumers may find themselves asking this month is: Are we too lenient on kids, or too tough? Check out the first in our monthly series “Views on the News” [on YRSH’s Substack](#), and subscribe to get alerts as when we post new articles.

Change atop the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services — Approximately three years after officially becoming Secretary of Maryland’s Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), Vinny Schiraldi is moving on. Since the moment of his appointment, Schiraldi has been a lightning rod for media headlines, and his departure was no different. Schiraldi said he resigned from the position, and he laid out his reasons this [op-ed](#), but the governor described the decision differently to [Armstrong Williams](#).

New acting secretary, DJS veteran Betsy Fox-Tolentino, has vowed to pursue a more collaborative approach, with greater emphasis on agency operations.

Correcting the Record

Amid all the surprise, confusion, and speculation of the past three weeks regarding leadership at the Department for Juvenile Services, one statement stands out in need of correction. The [on-line version](#) of WBFF reporter Mikenzie Frost’s one-on-one interview with Acting Secretary Fox-Tolentino stated that, “Under Schiraldi, DJS was an agency often shrouded in secrecy in terms of getting data and information about juvenile crime numbers, recidivism, ankle monitors, and progress for young people.” While there are legitimate reasons to critique DJS operations, a lack of transparency and not sharing data with the public is not one of them. One can complain legitimately about when DJS publishes its data, the density of the data, and the precise categories that it reports, but Maryland’s DJS is now, and long has been, a leader in data transparency—the nearly 300 page annual [Data Resource Guide](#) (DRG) is proof. To learn more about DJS annual data report, [read YRSH’s analysis the the FY 2024 DRG](#).

In The News

- [How D.C.’s failure to curb truancy fueled a surge in youth crime](#), by Robert Samuels, Lauren Lumpkin and John D. Harden, *Washington Post*, June 9, 2025 - District leaders linked school attendance to crime, but failure to reduce absenteeism in middle schools

yielded the biggest youth crime surge in a generation.

- [Real public safety solutions are powered by the community](#), by **Natasha Dartigue, Baltimore Sun, June 21, 2025** - The historic decline in gun violence in Baltimore represents the direct result of strategic community-based interventions, writes Natasha Dartigue.
- [Vincent Schiraldi says he left DJS due to 'human rights abuses' in juvenile justice system](#), by **Sam Janesch, Baltimore Sun, June 26, 2025** - The "main reason," Schiraldi describes leaving DJS is he no longer wanted to be associated with Maryland's habit of incarcerating young people in adult corrections facilities.
- [Facing pressure, Maryland's juvenile services agency gets leader with deep roots, high stakes](#), by **Brenda Wintrose, Baltimore Banner, June 25, 2025** - Hard conversations will come, but Tolentino said she'll listen to law enforcement partners and community members.
- [Justice for Maryland's youth still has a ways to go](#), by **Alvin Lee, Baltimore Sun, June 21, 2025** - The movement for juvenile justice reform is increasingly necessary, writes Alvin Lee.
- [From Punishment to Prevention: A Better Approach to Addressing Youth Gun Possession](#), by **Richard Mendel, Report from The Sentencing Project, June 12, 2025** - Justice system responses to youth referred to court on weapons charges have grown increasingly punitive, with fewer youth diverted from prosecution and more youth placed in locked detention. Proven solutions exist that better support youth and improve community safety.

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