



MINISTÈRE  
DE LA JUSTICE

*Liberté  
Égalité  
Fraternité*



# Protecting Educating Integrating\*

DIRECTORATE OF  
JUDICIAL YOUTH  
PROTECTION



# Contents

Within the French Ministry of Justice, the Judicial Youth Protection Services (PJJ) support and protect minors and young adults in contact with the law, when they are in danger or when they have committed an offence.

PART

1

p. 06



## JUVENILE JUSTICE

The right balance between education and sanction

PART

2

p. 10



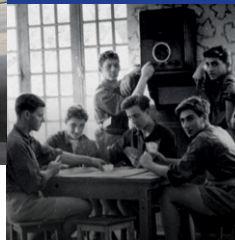
## TAKING CARE OF MINORS

Follow-up at the service of educational action, integration and the fight against reoffending

PART

3

p. 14



## HISTORY OF JUDICIAL YOUTH PROTECTION SERVICES

Protecting and educating young people facing justice

PART

4

p. 16



## ORGANISATION OF JUDICIAL YOUTH PROTECTION SERVICES

Coordination and territorial implementation of the policy for taking care of minors

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## Protecting Educating Integrating

### Judicial Youth Protection Services

The mission of Judicial Youth Protection Services is to protect, educate and guarantee the social, academic and professional integration of minors facing justice in order to effectively fight reoffending. In the field of child protection, Judicial Youth Protection Services provide their expertise in the assessment and follow-up of situations of children in danger or at risk of danger.

On a daily basis, Judicial Youth Protection Services professionals work in multidisciplinary teams to carry out educational, social and professional integration actions aimed at young people. They also act in conjunction with youth magistrates, and provide them with their expertise.



**138 239**

minors monitored in 2024

of which **39 %**  
for youth protection only

### Court ruling support system

Judicial Youth Protection Services provide their expertise to youth magistrates. They provide them with a court ruling support system in the social and educational field involving minors and young adults who have committed an offence.

For minors in danger or at risk of danger, Judicial Youth Protection Services particularly implement educational investigation measures (MJIE) consisting of an in-depth assessment of the personality, problem and overall situation of the young person and his/her family.

### Educational action by way of warrants

The education teams of Judicial Youth Protection Services monitor and care for minors entrusted to them by way of a court ruling, in their open-custody services and placement institutions, and those of the authorised voluntary sector whose operation they supervise.

Judicial Youth Protection Services are also responsible for the educational follow-up of minors held in juvenile prison units or in juvenile detention centres.

## FQCUS

### Educational action for Judicial Youth Protection Services

The Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection brings together special needs educators, social workers, psychologists, technical education teachers, administrative workers, unit managers, department directors, etc.

They design and implement educational and integration actions for the young people who are being monitored.

Judicial Youth Protection Services professionals work in open-custody services, integration services or placement institutions.

They are present in court and work in conjunction with penal institutions with units where minors are accommodated.

# 9500

This is the number  
of professionals working  
in Judicial Youth  
Protection Services



PART 1

# JUVENILE JUSTICE

The right balance  
between education  
and sanction

When a minor is suspected of having committed an offence, specific procedures apply regarding his/her judicial path : the courts, the professionals he/she will be required to meet, the decisions that will be made regarding him/her, will be specific to adolescents under 18.

Because a child or teenager does not have the same maturity as an adult, the Juvenile Criminal Justice Code (CJPM) provides for specific rules regarding the way young people facing justice should be judged and supported.

### **DID YOU KNOW ?**

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989, and which sets out that every child facing justice has the right to age-appropriate measures to help them integrate socially.

### **Differentiated and appropriate treatment**

Minors are entitled to specialized justice that takes into account their age, their psychological and intellectual development and their ability to change. The primary objective is education and reintegration rather than sanctions. Thus, cases involving minors are dealt with by specialised courts (youth courts, youth court judges, juvenile courts, freedom and detention judges specially in charge of juvenile cases, etc.), composed of specially trained magistrates.

### **Appropriate legal proceedings**

When a minor is suspected of having committed an offence, the public prosecutor may decide to prosecute depending on the severity of the facts constituting the offence. A special needs educator of Judicial Youth Protection Services then talks with the minor to take stock of his/her personal situation and propose an educational solution to the judge. Legal proceedings provided for by the CJPM are based on a two-stage sentencing : first on the guilt of the minor and then, 6 to 9 months later, on the type of sanction.

1. After an assessment conducted by Judicial Youth Protection Services teams, a first decision will rule on the minor's guilt, within a maximum period of 3 months. If convicted, the minor will be monitored for six to nine months by Judicial Youth Protection Services, under the supervision of the judge. This period is known as the "educational probation period".

2. The court definitively rules on the penalty at the end of the educational probation period based on the report drawn up by Judicial Youth Protection Services. This includes information pertaining to the young person's situation and suggestions that the judge may take into account when reaching his/her decision. The sanction must always be individualised and adapted to the minor ; it is announced within 12 months of the initiating proceedings.

## The educational probation procedure

Questioning  
by investigation  
services

3 months

Decision  
on the guilt and  
compensation  
of the victim(s)

Educational  
probation

6 to 9 months

Decision  
on sanction

Educational  
measure or penalty

Possibility  
of care up  
to 21 years

As an exception to this common law procedure, and in particular in the context of reoffending, minors may be judged on the sanction and guilt during one hearing, known as a single hearing.

## Mitigating liability depending on age

Mitigating the criminal liability of minors means accepting that minors, because of their age and developing maturity, cannot be held accountable for their actions in the same way as adults, which justifies a different approach to criminal justice.

In concrete terms, if a minor is found guilty of an offence, the penalty incurred will be less severe than that incurred by an adult for the same offence.

### **DID YOU KNOW ?**



In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CIDE), minors can only be convicted if their discriminating intelligence is demonstrated. French law introduced a refutable presumption of lack of discernment for minors under 13.

They cannot be the subject of any penalty.

## The balance between education and sanction

The juvenile criminal justice of minors is based on the principle of the primacy of education over sanctions. A minor found guilty of an offence may be subject to sanctions: these may be judicial educational measures and, only if the circumstances and his/her personality so require, penalties.



The sanctions announced vary depending on the severity of the facts constituting the offence and the minor's personality. They are aimed above all at his/her reintegration.

Before the sentencing, the minor may also be the subject of a temporary educational measure and, if this proves necessary, so-called security measures, aimed at restricting his/her freedom, such as court-ordered supervision, house arrest under electronic surveillance or custody.

Judicial educational measures aim to support young people within an approach to change, empowerment and socialisation. They involve individualised educational follow-up. They may be accompanied by prohibitions (not meeting the victim, for example) and obligations (completing a citizenship course).

The penalties incurred by minors are reduced by half compared to those ruled when adults are involved. This may include confiscation, probation, community service, fines, socio-judicial monitoring, or house arrest under electronic surveillance. They may also take the form of imprisonment (from 13 years) combined with a simple suspension, a probationary suspension or prison with no remission. This penalty is always used as a last resort.

**Judicial Youth Protection Services monitor and implement court-ordered measures.**

**They support and help minors understand the severity of their actions, develop a sense of responsibility, and acquire the skills necessary to integrate socially.**

## FQCUS

**Before age 13 :** a child cannot be sentenced to imprisonment. Only educational measures or a judicial warning may be issued, if his/her discriminating intelligence is demonstrated.

**From 13 to 16 years old :** minors may be subject to educational measures and/or penalties. The use of an educational measure must be the first choice.

**From 16 to 18 years of age :** when the facts constituting the offence are particularly severe, and if the circumstances and personality of the minor so justify, the mitigation of liability may be rejected and the minor may be judged as an adult.

**From the age of 16 only,** the minor may be ordered to carry out community service (TIG).

### IN BRIEF.

Juvenile criminal justice differs from that of adults in that it gives priority to an educational response over a criminal response. It is based on the principle that the child is a personality in the making and that, if he or she commits a criminal offence, the priority is to educate him or her. This belief justifies the introduction of a structured procedure, more protective provisions, but also the setting-up of specialised educational professionals and services to provide the minor and his/her family with care and support while taking into account his/her development.

A photograph of two men in a kitchen setting. The man on the left, with a beard and short hair, is wearing a white t-shirt and a black apron. The man on the right, with curly hair, is also wearing a white t-shirt and a black apron. They are both looking down at a small onion that the man on the left is holding. The man on the right is using a knife to peel the onion. In the background, there is a brick wall and a potted plant. A green stylized logo is visible in the top right corner of the image.

PART 2

## **TAKING CARE OF MINORS**

Follow-up at the service of  
educational action, integration  
and the fight against reoffending

Judicial Youth Protection Services implement the judicial decisions taken against minors to enable them to better understand their difficulties and help them integrate socially. The objectives are to :

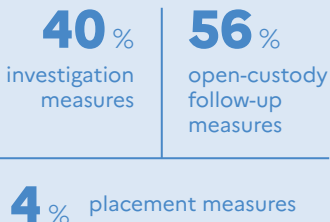
- help the young person understand the court's decision,
- take into account their personal, family, social, school, professional and health situation,
- promote the understanding of the offence committed and its inclusion in a process of empowerment and consideration of the victim.

There is a range of judicial decisions, commensurate with the severity of the offences committed, and adapted to the minor's personality. The same young person may be subject to educational measures or penalties adapted to his/her profile, background and needs. He/she can be taken care of in open-custody services, integration services, but also in placement institutions. Judicial Youth Protection Services professionals intervene at various stages in the minor's judicial path.

### The judicial measure of educational investigation : court ruling support system

The MJIE consists of an in-depth and cross-disciplinary assessment (special needs educator, psychologist, social service worker) of the personality and overall situation of the young person and his/her family. It makes it possible to assess the situation of vulnerable minors or facing justice. Assessing of the environment of the young person and his/her family makes it possible to recommend judicial and educational responses to magistrates according to his/her specific needs.

#### Distribution of measures monitored by Judicial Youth Protection Services\*



\*provisional 2024 data

### The open-custody educational mission : assess young people's situation to support their development and integration projects

Judicial Youth Protection Services implement the measures ruled by the judge based on « custodial openness » services where professionals intervene in the family and social environment of young people.

In this context, each minor supervised is accompanied by a primary special needs educator throughout his/her care, and a multidisciplinary team of professionals (psychologist, nurse, social service worker).

The objective of this team is to set up an educational project adapted to the needs and resources of each young person by involving their family and to work on the young person's position in relation to the facts constituting the offence and with regard to the victim.

The open-custody service reports to the magistrate on the young person's path in accordance with the actions of other departments, establishments and institutions.

## FQCUS

### Custodial openness monitoring of minors and their integration pathway

Open-custody educational services and court educational services monitor minors sentenced to custody :

**The educational mission to the court** (MEAT, *mission éducative auprès du tribunal*) : in the context of a referral, through a one-off intervention, it shares with the magistrates the information essential for the reading of the sentence of individualised measures adapted to the situation of the young people implicated in a criminal case. Depending on the activity of the court and the number of youth court judges, the MEAT is implemented by an education service to the Court (SEAT, *service éducatif auprès du tribunal*), an education unit to the Court (UEAT, *unité éducative auprès du tribunal*) or an on-call education team to the Court (PEAT, *permanence éducative auprès du tribunal*).

**Open-custody educational units** (UEMO, *Unités éducatives de milieu ouvert*) : they ensure long-term monitoring of minors sentenced to custody. UEMO special needs educators work closely with families and local partners with a view to implementing appropriate educational measures.

**Daily activity educational units** (UEAJ, *Unités éducatives d'activités de jour*) : they offer drop-in educational activities for minors under the supervision of Judicial Youth Protection Services in order to develop their psychosocial skills, cognitive acquisition and pre-professional skills to prepare the young person to return to traditional or specialised vocational training or employment schemes.

### Legal placement : providing boundaries

Judicial Youth Protection Services may be requested to introduce placement measures aimed at providing structuring and protective boundaries to young people who have to be temporarily removed from their daily living environment – which may get them into an offending pattern and/or persist in this pattern. The diversity of care methods makes it possible to adapt the judicial response to the situations of minors referred, with the aim of individualising supervision and educational intervention.

## FQCUS

### Placement programmes

The available foster care or foster family solutions are thus complemented by more intensive measures, such as reinforced educational centres (ERCs). Organised as breakaway stays, over a limited period of 3 to 6 months, these are organised around activities that promote the socialisation of minors. A placement in a juvenile detention centre (CEF, *centre éducatif fermé*), imposed as part of court-ordered supervision, a probationary suspended prison sentence or a sentencing reduction, is an alternative to detention for minors most heavily involved in delinquency, and as such is characterised by increased supervision and surveillance measures.

## A variety of placement programmes

**10 %**

of young people  
placed in reinforced  
educational centres

**21 %**

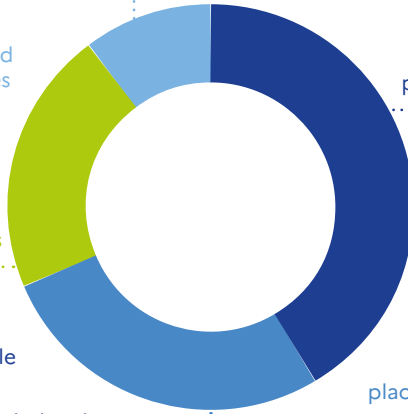
of young people  
placed in closed  
educational centres

**41 %**

of young people  
placed in foster care

**27 %**

of young people  
placed in foster families  
or drop-in centres

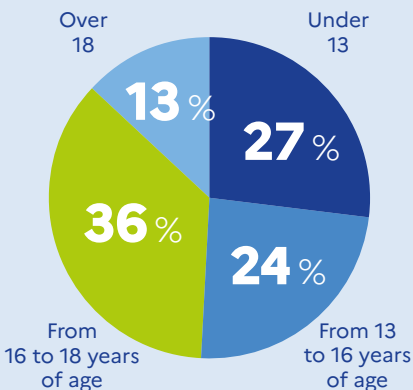


A minority of young people  
are put in custody :

1% of the total prison population, i.e.  
approximately **775 juveniles detained per  
month on average in 2024.**

They may be incarcerated in one of the 6  
juvenile detention centres, or most of them  
in one of the 43 juvenile units (QM) located  
in the penitentiary centres.

### Distribution of young people monitored by Judicial Youth Protection Services



### IN BRIEF.

Judicial Youth Protection Services take care of minors for whom a judge has ordered a judicial educational measure, a penalty or a sentencing reduction. Regardless of the nature of the ordered follow-up, Judicial Youth Protection Services professionals are responsible for supporting the minor as a multidisciplinary team (special needs educator, psychologist and social service worker) in order to take into account the young person's personality, his/her resources and difficulties, his/her actual environment and determine the necessary follow-up methods.



“

**France does not have enough children to have the right to neglect everything that can make them healthy.**

Preamble  
to the order  
of 2 February 1945

PART 3

# HISTORY OF JUDICIAL YOUTH PROTECTION SERVICES

Protecting and educating  
young people facing justice



Juvenile justice has undergone tremendous changes since the beginning of the twentieth century, from a primarily repressive approach to a desire to protect and educate young people facing justice. There are a number of landmarks in its history with several major steps that have gradually shaped the current system.

### Before the French Revolution : minors were judged as adults

Before the 1791 Penal Code, there was no specific justice for minors. Children and adolescents are tried and punished as adults.

### Nineteenth Century : The First Thoughts on Juvenile Justice

With the evolution of ideas on children and education, arguments were raising in favour of a differentiated treatment of juvenile offenders.

In 1810, the Napoleonic Penal Code again introduced the concept of age-related mitigation of liability. In 1840, the first prison agricultural colonies were created following the observation that prison cannot be the only solution for minors.

## in 1990

the Directorate of Supervised  
Education becomes the Directorate  
of Judicial Youth Protection

### 1906-1945 : the creation of a specific justice for minors

Juvenile justice was actually born at the beginning of the twentieth century, with the strong belief that there was a need to treat child offenders differently with alternative forms of detention. In 1912, a law created the youth courts, the principle of supervised freedom, for the first time, laid down a minimum threshold, 13 years, below which there could be no criminal measure. It also recommended the appointing of specific magistrates, but this would only happen with the order of 2 February 1945, for them to actually be put in place. It affirms that juvenile justice must focus primarily on protection and social reintegration, giving priority to educational measures over criminal sanctions. This founding text for juvenile justice restructures the courts with the institution of a specialised court, the youth court judge, and creates the supervised education directorate, responsible for implementing the decisions taken by the competent courts with regard to juveniles.

### Since 1945 : a balance between protection and responsibility

Over the years, juvenile justice continued to evolve. Successive laws seek a balance between protecting young people and taking their responsibility into account.

In the 2000s, new reforms introduced stronger measures in reaction to new social fears over the rise of incidents in deprived neighbourhoods on the outskirts of major cities, while maintaining the primacy of education over sanction. In 2021, the Juvenile Criminal Justice Code was set up to simplify and speed up procedures while strengthening the educational monitoring of vulnerable young people.



PART 4

# ORGANISATION OF JUDICIAL YOUTH PROTECTION SERVICES

Coordination and territorial  
implementation of the policy  
for taking care of minors



The organisation of Judicial Youth Protection Services is based on a central administration, an interregional level, responsible for the main management acts and the implementation of national guidelines, and a territorial level, which ensures the management of institutions and services and the rolling-out of public policies.

### The Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection

At a national level, the Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection (DPJJ) is responsible for all issues pertaining to juvenile justice. It designs the standards and organisational frameworks in conjunction with the competent departments. It ensures the political and strategic guidelines of the judicial protection mission and supports its implementation at decentralised levels.

## FQCUS

### The role Judicial Youth Protection Services play in youth protection

The Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection is involved in the development of the public youth protection policy, alongside juvenile courts as well as all stakeholders working in child protection, whether institutions and associations, at national and territorial levels.

At the territorial level, it participates in prevention actions, governance and operational coordination bodies. It examines, on behalf of the prefect, requests to authorise institutions and services which take care of minors by way of warrants. It may conduct joint inspections with the departmental authority.

### DID YOU KNOW ?

Within the Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection, the “unaccompanied minors” mission (MMNA) coordinates the national sheltering, assessment and guidance system for minors of foreign nationality who are separated from their legal representatives on French soil. Created by the circular of 31 May 2013, this national system allows for a fair distribution of the number of unaccompanied minors (MNA) between departments.

In addition, the MMNA works to harmonise departmental practices so that anyone who describes themselves as an «unaccompanied minor» and any person recognised as an «unaccompanied minor» can benefit from the same conditions of reception, assessment and care.

## DID YOU KNOW ?

The Commission for the Supervision and Control of Publications for Children and Adolescents is the responsibility of the Directorate of Judicial Youth Protection. It checks the content of French and foreign publications intended for young people.

### Interregional directorates

The 9 interregional directorates of judicial youth protection mostly cover one or more administrative regions. These directorates are responsible for the coordination and implementation of Judicial Youth Protection Services policies in their territory. They ensure the consistency of the actions carried out and ensure that the systems are adapted to local specificities.

### Territorial directorates

There are 55 regional directorates of judicial youth protection, which are responsible for the operational implementation of the court-ordered educational and judicial measures. They coordinate the actions of the various departments and institutions of Judicial Youth Protection Services in their territory.

Minors are cared for in the **232 institutions** and services managed by Judicial Youth Protection Services or the **1,001 institutions**, services and drop-in centres of the authorised voluntary sector.

Roubaix

ENPJJ

### National School of Judicial Youth Protection Services (ENPJJ)

The National School of Judicial Youth Protection Services is one of the 4 schools of the Ministry of Justice. The academy is the only state apparatus for training and research in youth protection and juvenile justice; it provides initial and continuous training for all Judicial Youth Protection Services professionals. Through its expertise in the field of vulnerable adolescence, it is also involved in the professional training of youth protection stakeholders (youth magistrates, lawyers, professionals from the authorised voluntary sector and departmental councils). It develops research, documentation and publishing activities in support of professional practices.



Find out more :  
[www.enpjj.justice.fr](http://www.enpjj.justice.fr)

### IN BRIEF.

This organisation helps Judicial Youth Protection Services respond in an appropriate and reactive manner to the needs of minors facing justice, taking into account local specificities and ensuring consistent and coordinated care throughout the national territory.



# Protecting Educating Integrating

DIRECTORATE  
OF JUDICIAL YOUTH PROTECTION

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