



Gray Area Youth / Youth in Crisis

Categories : [Criminal Justice System](#), [Legal and Protective Services](#), [Youth and Young Adults](#)

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What Are “Gray Area” Youths?

16 and 17 year olds in Connecticut who are beyond their parents control, have run away from home, or who fail to go to school had been known as “gray area youth” because they had not yet reached the “age of majority” (18) and because they were over the age eligible to be treated as delinquents. Legislation (Public Act No. 00-177) addresses this issue and became effective July 1,2001, and these youth are now called “youth in crisis.”

Under PA No. 00-177, the Juvenile Court now has the authority to provide services for these youth. A youth can be referred to the court through a petition by a parent, foster parent, or representative of the child; a selectman, town manager, police officer, or local welfare department; a probation officer; a school superintendent; a youth service bureau; or a child-caring agency licensed or approved by the Department of Children and Families.

The petition must state (1) the youth’s name, gender, birth date, and residence, (2) the parents’, guardians’ or responsible adult’s name and residence, (3) the reason for the referral, and (4) the action the petitioner wants the court to take.

What Action Can the Court Take?

When a Juvenile Court judge determines a youth is in crisis, he/she may make and enforce orders, including:

- prohibiting the youth from driving for a period the judge sets
- requiring him/her to work or perform community service
- requiring him/her to attend a court-approved local education program
- placing him/her in a court-approved, community-based residential facility
- requiring him/her to receive substance abuse or family counseling or mental health services.

The law specifies that a youth who violates a judge’s order cannot be considered a delinquent and cannot be sent to a state correction or detention facility. If a youth in crisis requires a probation officer’s services, the law requires the youth or his/her parents to pay a fee.

What Action Can the Police Take?

The bill requires police to look for a 16 or 17 year old whose parent or guardian reports he/she has run away. It allows the police, if they find the youth, to tell the parents where he/she is after an officer determines that doing so would not jeopardize the youth physically or emotionally.

Additional Resources:

Connecticut’s Judicial Branch Law Libraries, “Rights of Minors in Connecticut: <http://www.jud.ct.gov/lawlib/Notebooks/Pathfinders/RightsOfMinors.pdf>
Connecticut’s Judicial Branch Law Libraries web resources on “Connecticut Law About Rights of Minors”,
<http://www.jud.ct.gov/lawlib/law/minors.htm>

For additional information, see legislative research reports on “Background on Status Offenders”, [OLR Research](#)



[Report, 2003-R-0130](#) “Juvenile Review Boards and Youth in Crisis”, [OLR Research Report, 2004-R-0941](#), and “Youth-In-Crisis and Court Order Enforcement, [OLR Research Report, 2006-R-0832](#).”

SOURCE: State of Connecticut Public Act No. 00-177: An Act Concerning Youth In Crisis; Connecticut Judicial Branch Law Libraries

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CONTENT LAST REVIEWED: October2020