

# AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CHILD & ADOLESCENT PSYCHIATRY

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April 7, 2009

The Honorable Patrick Leahy  
Chairman  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter  
Ranking Member  
Senate Judiciary Committee  
152 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Leahy and Specter,

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) commends Senate Judiciary Committee for the bipartisan effort in the reintroduction of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act (JJDPRA) that will help protect, prevent, and promote one of our most vulnerable populations—children.

This legislation outlines juvenile justice systems for states and communities to develop programs that will assist in reducing juvenile crime rates, keeping children out of the criminal justice system, and educating those kids who do enter the system to again become productive citizens.

Important aspects of this bill include a provision for funding that creates more centers for children under 18 to remain in juvenile justice institutions, promotes appropriate training for juvenile justice personnel, and refocuses attention on prevention programs to keep children from entering the criminal justice system.

Additionally, the Act specifically states the need to support a continuum of programs that include delinquency prevention, intervention, mental health and substance abuse treatments, and aftercare. By highlighting these areas, Senators Leahy, Specter, Kohl, and others have demonstrated a real understanding of the juvenile justice system.

Because JJDPRA also states that children should be treated in facilities dedicated to youth, AACAP hails the Senators for making a distinction in the management of juveniles in the criminal justice system.

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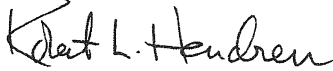
That the Senate recognizes there is a direct correlation between mental health and drug treatment will help in reducing recidivism. Ultimately, society is responsible for caring for its children. This bill allows for the discretion of law enforcement, the continuation of the government's commitment to preventing youth violence, and the appropriate treatment of children throughout the juvenile justice system.

AACAP is particularly pleased to endorse the introduction of the JJDPA and looks forward to the President signing the Reauthorization bill in the near future.

The mission of the AACAP is the promotion of mentally healthy children, adolescents and families through research, training, advocacy, prevention, comprehensive diagnosis and treatment, peer support and collaboration.

Again, on behalf of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, I thank you for your continued leadership on the juvenile justice issue. Your support for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act is a strong demonstration of our country's commitment to a brighter future for our children.

Sincerely,



Robert L. Hendren, D.O.  
President

CC:

Senator Herbert Kohl  
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