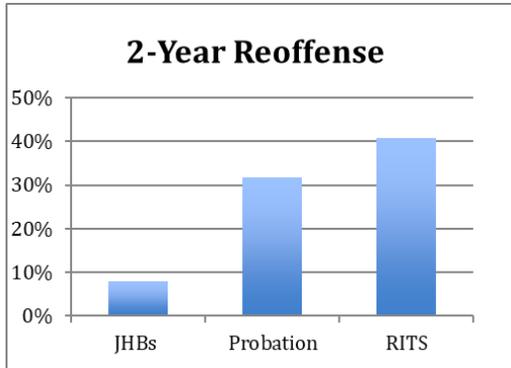


How can a Juvenile Hearing Board help?

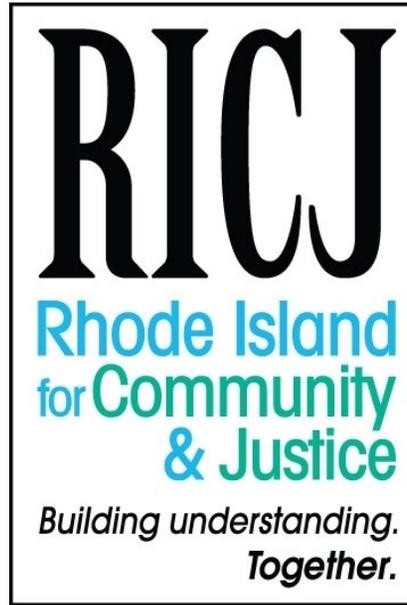
First and foremost, Juvenile Hearing Boards (JHBs) divert youth away from the formal justice system to a community-based alternative, helping them avoid the stigma of a juvenile arrest record. Youth who go before a JHB and complete the requirements will not have a juvenile record, and have shown remarkably lower rates of reoffending.



Everyone makes mistakes, youth are no exception. JHBs were designed to hold youth accountable for wrongdoings without the lifelong stigma of a criminal record. Through their sanctions, JHBs acknowledge the trauma that a youth may have experienced to find solutions that will both hold the youth immediately accountable for their offense and also address deeper issues in a youth's life.

How does a youth get to a JHB?

After a juvenile is arrested, a juvenile detective will decide if the offense committed is appropriate for a JHB, or if the case must proceed to Family Court. The detective will make the referral. If you think your child is eligible to be seen by a JHB, please contact your local juvenile detective and ask for your child's case to be considered.



Rhode Island for Community & Justice (RICJ) provides training and facilitation for JHBs across Rhode Island. RICJ also offers programs in youth leadership, diversity education, juvenile justice, and community advocacy.

Contact:

VISTA Juvenile Justice Reform Coordinator

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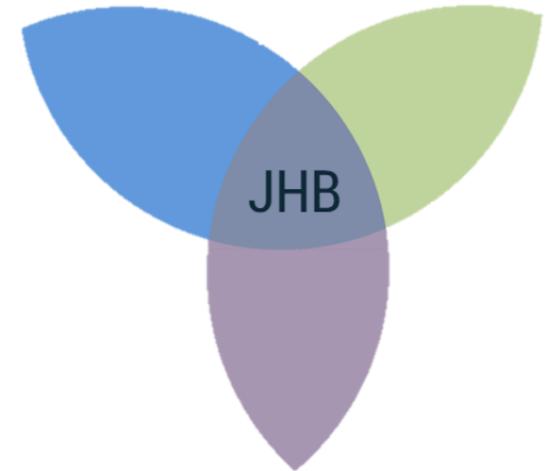
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Rhode Island for Community & Justice



Juvenile Hearing Boards

What is a Juvenile Hearing Board?

JHBs are panels of community volunteers who can review the circumstances of certain lower-level or first-time offenses committed by youth aged 17 and under, as an alternative to having cases referred to Court. There are JHBs in most communities in Rhode Island.

Who is eligible to go before a JHB?

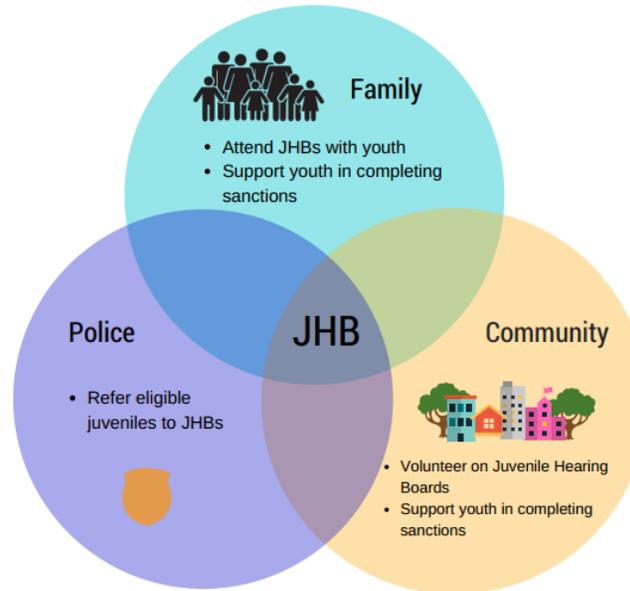
Youth aged 17 and under who have committed certain types of low-level misdemeanors are typically eligible to have their cases heard at a JHB. Types of cases heard by JHBs vary somewhat by city or town. Most see offenses such as disorderly conduct, shoplifting, trespassing or fighting. Some cases are ineligible; JHBs generally cannot see any felony cases or drug offenses (other than alcohol possession). JHBs cannot see youth who are under the care of DCYF, or youth previously found delinquent by Family Court.

What types of sanctions can a JHB set?

Sanctions vary and can include volunteering and community service, simple repairs of damaged property, an appointment with a counselor, a letter of apology and more. JHB members work to see that the sanction set for the youth is realistic, reasonable, and meaningful in the context of the offense they committed, and their individual background. In most cases, JHBs avoid setting sanctions that require financial contributions. They attempt to establish requirements that help to restore the juvenile as part of their community, and to heal both.

What happens at a JHB hearing?

The juvenile receives a date for their hearing, typically within weeks of the offense. The youth attends the hearing with a parent/guardian, and must admit to the offense they were arrested for. The JHB members ask questions to gain a better understanding of the offense committed in order to hold the youth accountable while also providing them with resources to prevent re-offending.



Youth have the opportunity to accept or reject the JHB sanctions. If they reject the sanctions, they proceed to Family Court. If they accept the sanctions, they receive a date by which the sanctions must be completed. Failure to complete sanctions may result in the youth being summoned to Family Court. Successful completion of the sanction results in no record of the youth having committed the crime, other than the arrest record. Because this effectively erases the matter, confidentiality is an important part of the JHB process.

Who is on my local JHB?

Board members are appointed by local governments. They are all unpaid community adult volunteers - dedicated parents, teachers, storekeepers, clerks, mental health professionals, retirees, and just plain people who are interested in helping youth and building a more welcoming community.

How do I find out about my local JHB?

As of 2017, Rhode Island has JHBs in 31 of our 39 towns and cities. The best way to find out if your area has a JHB is to contact your local city/town administration or police chief. You can also reach out to local School Resource Officers if they are present at your school. In addition, here at Rhode Island for Community & Justice, we are working to centralize information about JHBs. In the meantime, you can reach out to us by email or phone. You can also find more information on our website at www.ricj.org/juvenile-justice.

