

Q: What is juvenile diversion?

Juvenile diversion, according to NH RSA 169B:10, is an alternative method of dispute resolution in which a minor may complete an individually designed program of services in lieu of court proceedings. The goal of diversion is to minimize a minor's contact with the traditional judicial system, providing an alternative outlet to remedy illegal behavior. Diversion of a minor may take place before contact with the court if an Assessment deems it the appropriate level of service, or if law enforcement otherwise refers the matter to Diversion.

Q: How do juveniles benefit from participation in a diversion program?

Minors who successfully complete a juvenile diversion programming contract can avoid having to come to court and avoid having the court make a delinquency finding against them for the conduct involved. The Programs hold youth accountable for disruptive behavior while ensuring they benefit from education and support services to improve their behavior and not end up in juvenile court. Youth learn from positive restorative justice practices and evidence-based education to develop life-long skills.

Q: How does the community benefit from juvenile diversion programs?

Juvenile diversion programs are designed to provide juveniles with a means to accept responsibility for their actions and to make reparations to their community and/or the victim. As a result, research shows that juveniles who have successfully completed a diversion program have decreased recidivism rates, or, rates of arrest for a subsequent offense. On average, 79.4% of youth who complete a diversion program in New Hampshire remain arrest-free one year after completing the program. This rate is significantly better than the one-year arrest-free rate of traditional justice involvement, at 58.7%. In addition, diverting eligible juveniles from the traditional justice system allows the courts to devote their resources to cases in which a more formal sentence is needed.

Q: How is a youth referred to a diversion program?

Referral of a youth to a diversion program may be directly from police officers or prosecutors, prior to making a referral for Assessment; or from an Assessment worker under the recommendations of a Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS) assessment. Parents or guardians who believe that their child may benefit from a Diversion program, should reach out to their local program to see if they provide prevention services. (See the last page of this document for a link to local programs.)

Q: What are the eligibility requirements?

The criteria for referral to a juvenile diversion program include: the facts of the case warrant a delinquency charge, then the youth is referred to Diversion following a CANS Assessment or directly from law enforcement. Some individual programs may see a youth prior to formal law enforcement contact as a prevention measure but you must contact them individually.

Q: What services and resources are offered?

When a minor is accepted into a juvenile diversion program, the youth will partake in an assessment to identify areas of strength and need. The youth will then meet with a panel of volunteers or staff members to develop an individualized program of activities and services for the youth to complete over an average period of three to six months, also known as a Contract. Actual resources offered by each program vary, but may include services such as: alcohol and other drug education, anger management classes, community services, mediation, restitution, alcohol and other drug treatment, family/participant educational classes, community reparation, or victim participation.

Q: Where can I find more information, including locations of Diversion programs?

[Home - NH Juvenile Court Diversion Network \(nhcourtdiversion.org\)](http://nhcourtdiversion.org)