



SPONSOR: Rep. J. Johnson & Rep. Longhurst & Rep. Heffernan &
Rep. Lynn & Rep. Potter & Sen. McDowell & Sen. Henry
& Sen. Townsend
Reps. Baumbach, Brady, Kowalko, Paradee

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
149th GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE BILL NO. 307

AN ACT TO AMEND TITLE 10 AND 11 OF THE DELAWARE CODE RELATING TO JUVENILES.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF DELAWARE:

1 Section 1. Amend § 1009, Title 10 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
2 redesignating the remaining subsections accordingly:

3 § 1009 Adjudication; disposition following adjudication; commitment to custody of Department of Services for
4 Children, Youth and Their Families; effect.

5 ~~(e) Subject to the provisions governing amenability pursuant to § 1010 of this title, the Court shall commit a~~
6 ~~delinquent child to the custody of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families under such~~
7 ~~circumstances and for such periods of time as hereinafter provided:~~

8 ~~(1) Any child who has been adjudicated delinquent by this Court of 1 or more offenses which would constitute a~~
9 ~~felony were the child charged as an adult under the laws of this State, and who shall thereafter within 12 months commit 1~~
10 ~~or more offenses occurring subsequent to the said adjudication which offense or offenses would constitute a felony were the~~
11 ~~child charged as an adult under the laws of this State, and thereafter be adjudged delinquent of said offense or offenses, is~~
12 ~~declared a child in need of mandated institutional treatment, and this Court shall commit the child so designated to the~~
13 ~~Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families for at least a 6-month period of institutional confinement;~~

14 ~~(2) A child committed to the custody of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families~~
15 ~~pursuant to this subsection shall not be released from institutional confinement on pass, on extended leave or to aftercare~~
16 ~~during the first 6 months of said commitment unless the Director of Youth Rehabilitation Services, in the Director's~~
17 ~~discretion, determines that it is in the best interest of the child's treatment to participate in programs which may require the~~
18 ~~child to leave the institution; thereafter, a child committed to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their~~
19 ~~Families pursuant to this subsection shall not be released from institutional confinement on pass, on extended leave or to~~
20 ~~aftercare, unless the Judge of the Family Court who originally executed the commitment order or a Judge of the Family~~
21 ~~Court designated by the Chief Judge shall, upon a petition filed by the Department of Services for Children, Youth and~~
22 ~~Their Families (or its duly authorized representative), the child, the parent(s) or guardian of said child, or by the Court's~~

23 own initiative, with notice to the Attorney General, determine by a preponderance of the evidence presented at a hearing
24 that the child has so progressed in a course of mandated institutional treatment that release would best serve both the
25 welfare of the public and the interest of the child or unless the Director of Youth Rehabilitation Services, in the Director's
26 discretion, determines that it is in the best interest of the child's treatment to participate in programs which may require the
27 child to leave the institution;

28 (3) Where a child has been declared in need of mandated institutional treatment in accordance with paragraphs
29 (e)(1) and (2) of this section, and the child is subsequently charged with having committed 1 or more offenses which
30 offense or offenses occurred subsequent to the child having been declared a child in need of mandated institutional
31 treatment, the Court shall conduct a hearing to determine whether the child is amenable to the rehabilitative processes of the
32 Court pursuant to § 1010(e) of this title. "Offense" in this paragraph shall mean all offenses which would constitute a felony
33 were the child charged as an adult under the laws of this State, with the exception of a charge of escape pursuant to subpart
34 E of subchapter VI of Chapter 5 of Title 11;

35 (4) Whenever a child appears before the Court on charges which would constitute a felony were the child charged
36 as an adult under the laws of this State, said child and any parent, guardian or custodian of said child who is present shall be
37 specifically advised of the operation of this subsection;

38 (5) Nothing hereinbefore provided shall be construed as prohibiting the Court, upon petition and recommendation
39 of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families, from securing for any child otherwise subject to the
40 mandatory commitment provisions of this subsection such care and treatment as it deems necessary for diagnosed mental
41 disorders or incapacities, or intellectual disabilities, provided that the provisions for such treatment shall not deter the Court
42 from imposing such mandatory term of commitment as is applicable under this subsection unless the same shall be sooner
43 suspended in accordance with paragraph (e)(6) of this section;

44 (6) As used in this subsection, "child" shall mean any juvenile who is charged with an act or course of conduct
45 occurring on or after the child's 14th birthday which causes this subsection to be applicable;

46 (7) A copy of each and every order or disposition of the Court respecting a child committed pursuant to this
47 subsection shall be made available to the victim or victims of the delinquent acts giving rise to the commitment upon
48 written request to the Court therefor. [

49 (k) Subject to the provisions governing amenability pursuant to § 1010 of this title, the Court shall commit a
50 delinquent child to the custody of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families if the child who has
51 been adjudicated delinquent by this Court of 1 or more offenses which would constitute either possession of a firearm
52 during the commission of a felony or robbery first degree (where such offense involves the display of what appears to be a

53 deadly weapon or involves the representation by word or conduct that the person was in possession or control of a deadly
54 weapon or involves the infliction of serious physical injury upon any person who was not a participant in the crime) were
55 the child charged as an adult under the laws of this State. Such child is declared a child in need of mandated institutional
56 treatment, and this Court shall commit the child so designated to the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their
57 Families for at least a 12-month period of institutional confinement.

58 Section 2. Amend § 1448, Title 11 of the Delaware Code by making deletions as shown by strike through and
59 redesignating the remaining subsection accordingly:

60 (f)(1) Upon conviction, any person who is a prohibited person as described in paragraph (a)(5) of this section and
61 who is 14 years of age or older shall, for a first offense, receive a minimum sentence of 6 months of Level V incarceration,
62 and shall receive a minimum sentence of 1 year of Level V incarceration for a second and subsequent offense, which shall
63 not be subject to suspension. Any sentence imposed pursuant to this subsection shall not be subject to §§ 4205(b) and 4215
64 of this title.

65 (2) The penalties prescribed by this subsection and subsection (g) of this section shall be imposed regardless of
66 whether or not the juvenile is determined to be amenable to the rehabilitative process of the Family Court pursuant to §
67 1010(e) of Title 10 or any successor statute.

SYNOPSIS

United States Supreme Court case law and scientific research has changed how we think about juvenile delinquency. We know now that an adolescent's brain is not fully developed until his/her mid-twenties which makes juveniles especially prone to making poor choices. In the landmark case of Miller v. Alabama, wherein the United States Supreme Court prohibited mandatory life sentences without parole for juveniles, the Court wrote: "Children are constitutionally different from adults for sentencing purposes."

This proposed legislation would repeal and remove all minimum-mandatory sentencing schemes for juveniles adjudicated delinquent in Family Court because children are different than adults. Family Court judges and commissioners would still be able to impose a commitment to a DSCYF secure placement, but would now have the ability to exercise their judicial discretion to fashion an appropriate sentence for an individual juvenile.