

# DMC and DSO are Priorities for GA

✘ [Disproportionate minority contact](#) and [detention of status offenders](#) are the core issues for Georgia's juvenile justice system, according to Joseph Vignati, Justice Programs Coordinator at the [Governor's Office for Children and Families](#). Vignati will testify at a hearing on reauthorization of the [Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act](#) in Washington D.C. this week. He speaks with a loud voice, because he's also the National Juvenile Justice Specialist for the [Coalition for Juvenile Justice](#), representing 56 states and territories.

Vignati says the JJDP Act requires states to focus on four core issues:

- Removing juvenile offenders from adult jails
- Separating juveniles from adults if they are held in the same lockup
- Disproportionate minority contact
- Minimizing the detention of status offenders

He believes the first two issues are less significant now than they were 20 years ago, because Georgia and other states have laws against housing children with adults, and separate detention centers for kids. Vignati points out, "In FY 2009 we had only 23 juveniles locked up as adults across the state, and 20 of them lied about their age. We track it. We feel like we've addressed it. So this is not really an issue for us. Let us focus where we need to."

At a time of shrinking resources, Vignati wants the federal government to allow states to focus on the current issues of DMC and DSO. "Our focus is on getting good data and using that data to help courts make changes." Vignati believes, "if you're tracking DMC in your state and you have a plan to

deal with it, that's not enough."

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Reauthorization Act of 2009 has been the subject of numerous hearings, and much research. Hearings set for Wednesday and Thursday are being conducted by the [National Academy of Sciences](#), which is doing a 2-year study for the Justice Department, to assess juvenile justice policies and practices. The study, announced on Monday, lists six goals:

- Assess OJJDP's activities to implement the JJDP Act
- Review the legislative history to ascertain congressional intent and identify major changes in the Act's core requirements
- Assess research on delinquency prevention and treatment and implications for public policy
- Review research on the transfer of juveniles to adult courts
- Evaluate data on the conditions of confinement for juveniles in juvenile and adult facilities
- Provide recommendations to improve federal and state policies.