



TACIR

The Tennessee Advisory Commission
on Intergovernmental Relations

226 Anne Dallas Dudley Blvd., Suite 508
Nashville, Tennessee 37243-0760
Phone: (615) 741-3012
Fax: (615) 532-2443
www.tn.gov/tacir

MEMORANDUM

TO: Commission Members

FROM: Cliff Lippard
Executive Director

DATE: 18 September 2025

SUBJECT: Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025 (Housing Juvenile Offenders)—Panel

Public Chapter 418, Acts of 2025, directs the commission to study (1) the current availability of housing, detention, and treatment facilities across the state for juveniles who have been adjudicated delinquent and committed to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) or who have been detained by the juvenile court prior to an adjudicatory hearing and (2) whether there is need for additional capacity. Facilities for housing and treating juvenile offenders are important components of Tennessee's juvenile justice system, but if available capacity doesn't meet the need for placements, it could present risks to the welfare of youth in custody and the general public.

Youth detained prior to their adjudicatory hearing are placed in juvenile detention centers, which in Tennessee are operated by either local governments, including juvenile courts, or private entities. These facilities are intended for short-term placements—typically less than 30 days. There are at least three juvenile detention centers in each grand division of the state, but not every county has its own facility. In counties without their own juvenile detention centers, judges and sheriffs report having to transport youth across county lines—and sometimes, across the state—to find an available pre-adjudication detention bed.

Youth who have been adjudicated delinquent may, at the discretion of the juvenile judge, be committed to DCS custody. Once that occurs, DCS determines where to place the child based on the severity of the offense and the child's behavioral, medical, or other treatment needs. DCS has a network of providers, including one state-operated secure residential facility, that it uses to house and treat children in its custody.

Housing and treatment options for juvenile offenders in DCS custody range from foster homes to secure residential facilities. The latter are generally classified as either staff secure or hardware secure based on their operations—juvenile offenders placed in hardware secure facilities are typically those who have committed more serious offenses and require more security. There are times when DCS will place children in its custody in juvenile detention centers or other temporary placements, including assessment centers, until it can find an open bed for long-term placement in an appropriate secure facility.

For today's panel, you will hear from six stakeholders about the state of housing, detention, and treatment capacity for juveniles both pre- and post-adjudication in Tennessee:

- Andrew Brigham, General Sessions Court Judge, Stewart County
- Sheila Calloway, Juvenile Court Judge, Davidson County
- Christy Little, General Sessions Court Judge, Madison County
- Robert Philyaw, Juvenile Court Judge, Hamilton County
- Jim Layman, Executive Director of Legislation, Tennessee Department of Children's Services
- Invited, Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services

Staff invited TN Voices, a nonprofit which provides services to juvenile justice-involved youth and their families, to participate on the panel, but representatives for the organization were unable to attend because of a scheduling conflict. Staff plan to present a draft report for review and comment at the commission's next meeting.