

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/vera-launches-effort-to-keep-misbehaving-kids-out-of-court>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Every year, thousands of young people end up in courtrooms because they ran away from home, skipped school, or engaged in other risky behaviors that are not criminal in nature and only prohibited because of their ages. Responding to these cases, called status offenses, in court can lead to deeper juvenile justice system involvement, including detention or placement in a residential facility outcomes that are out of proportion to the young persons actions. While many practitioners and policymakers have recognized that community-based court alternatives are more effective and appropriate responses to these behaviors, they often don't know where to begin and lack the tools and resources to help facilitate the process. As a result, courtrooms and detention facilities continue to be the default option.

This week marks what we hope will be the beginning of a new era in how status offense cases are handled. On Monday, with support from the [MacArthur Foundations Models for Change Resource Center Partnership](#), Vera's Center on Youth Justice published [From Courts to Communities: The Right Response to Truancy, Running Away, and Other Status Offenses](#), a white paper aimed at raising awareness of status offenses and spurring conversations on effective reform.

And today, we launch the online [Status Offense Reform Center](#) (SORC) to help policymakers and practitioners develop effective community-based responses to young people whose behavior is problematic, but noncriminal in nature.

Whether you're just beginning to think about status offense system change or have been engaged in reform for some time, SORC has a range of tools, information, and guidance to help you in your work. Our library includes a wide range of materials including reports, fact sheets, and academic articles that can be searched by topic and resource type. We also encourage you to check out the original publications we developed for this site, including our Toolkit for Status Offense System Reform that guides readers through how to structure, plan, implement and sustain a reform effort; our Notes from the Field series, which profile county and state reform efforts across the country; and our Research Briefs on key status offense behaviors. Finally, you can visit our blog exploring the latest research and lessons learned from the field.

Ultimately, we believe that SORC and its resources can help create the effective and efficient reforms that these young people and their families need to build safe and healthy futures.

Transformative change, sent to your inbox.

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