

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/publications/language-barriers-and-disproportionate-minority-contact-in-the-juvenile-justice-system>

Policy Issue Resources

Publication

Without a parents active participation in a juvenile delinquency case, officials often believe they have little choice but to prosecute and detain a juvenile, both to address the child's best interests and to preserve public safety. With a growing number of immigrants residing in the United States and a growing number of immigrant youth entering the juvenile justice system, there is an acute need to better understand the relationship between parents' ability to speak English and their ability to participate in the juvenile justice process on behalf of their child. With support from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Vera Institute of Justice has begun to document how the language barriers faced by parents of court-involved youth contribute to the greater likelihood of their child being prosecuted for criminal offenses, detained while his/her case is pending, and, ultimately, being sentenced to prison. Given that many children of immigrants are of color, language barriers can also contribute to the disproportionate representation of minorities in the juvenile justice system.

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