



Family Justice Act of 2010

H.R. 6361, The Family Justice Act of 2010, introduced by Representative Carolyn McCarthy (NY-4) on September 29, 2010, would better ensure the engagement of youth and their families in the juvenile justice system, and encourage greater oversight and accountability for programs, services, and policies in juvenile facilities. The bill establishes a demonstration grant program for nonprofit organizations to partner with juvenile justice agencies to monitor juvenile facilities, provide youth in the facilities and their families with increased positive engagement in the system, and help develop better practices to support youth's rehabilitation and reduce recidivism.

Funded organizations will create a monitoring panel with representation from a wide range of stakeholders including, incarcerated and recently incarcerated youth at the facility, families of incarcerated youth, youth/family-oriented non-profits with a criminal justice basis, state government, youth advocates, educational and mental health providers, and child welfare officials among others. The monitoring panel will be empowered to conduct a review and assessment of the juvenile facility, including confidential interviews of youth and facility staff, and will make recommendations to facility administrators to improve policies and practices, to increase communication, access and engagement between families, incarcerated youth and facility staff and to help youth successfully transition back into their community.

Key Provisions:

- Administrators of the monitored facility will create a implementation team who have the authority to make changes recommended by the monitoring panel;
- Increased access to the monitored facility to allow community based organizations to conduct visits, to office space for entities acting in the interest of youth in the facility, to court-appointed attorneys to speak with youth on regular basis about the facility;
- Improved visitation and contact policies with youth in facilities by reducing visitation restrictions and transportation barriers;
- Incorporation of panel recommendations in quality and effective after care plans for youth;
- Increased dialogue between facility administrators, staff, and families through regular updates on individual youth's status and integrating family input in medical, mental health, and educational decisions.