

GLF
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JUVENILE JUSTICE CONSENSUS ADOPTED

After a two-year study, the League of Women Voters of Colorado has just adopted a new juvenile justice position. Sixteen Leagues throughout the state participated in the consensus meetings, which lead to the adoption of the position.

Our new position is as follows:

Support of a juvenile justice system that has as its primary purpose the rehabilitation, safety and well being of the offender.

Support of a system that promotes the juvenile's understanding of the harm done and his/her responsibility to make amends to the victim and the community, emphasizes alternatives to detention or commitment, and promotes the protection of the community and the juvenile's successful re-entry into the community.

The League believes the juvenile justice system should include the following features:

- Prevention and early intervention programs
- Fair and impartial treatment of all offenders
- Early assessment of the needs of the juveniles
- Programs that are age and gender appropriate
- A variety of services including mental health, counseling, and vocational and educational services
- Family and community involvement

Programs should be adequately funded, and staff should be appropriately trained.

Frequent and thorough oversight and evaluation of staff, programs and facilities – both public and private is important.

League has strong concerns about charging juveniles as adults, particularly the younger ones. This option should be reserved for the most heinous crimes and only as a last resort.

The new position allows the League to speak about juvenile justice issues, which arises in the Legislature. We have been concerned about the punitive direction toward juveniles that the Legislature has taken in the past few years.