



Mayor Michael Bloomberg announces weekend processing for juveniles at City Hall press conference.

Mayor Bloomberg Announces Weekend Court Processing So Youth Who Present Low Risk Can Be Returned Home Swiftly

On Monday, May 12th, Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg announced that beginning next month juvenile delinquency arrests in New York City will be processed on weekends, a first for New York State. Seven day per week juvenile processing, a standard already in place for those 16 years old and above, will reduce detention time for youth who can be safely released to the community and might otherwise be detained for up to 48 hours or longer. High-risk youth will also have access to weekend processing and a judge will determine whether detention is warranted. The new case processing begins on May 31st.

The Mayor also unveiled a new risk assessment instrument that will give judges critical data they need to make well-informed detention decisions. The instrument was developed by a task force led by the Criminal Justice Coordinator, in cooperation with the Departments of Probation and Juvenile Justice, the Administration for Children's Services, the Corporation Counsel, the Family Services Coordinator, the Office of Court Administration and the Vera Institute of Justice. At the announcement, the Mayor was joined by Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services Linda I. Gibbs; Criminal Justice Coordinator John Feinblatt; Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner Neil Hernandez; Department of Probation Commissioner Martin Horn; Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo; and The Legal Aid Society Attorney-in-Chief Steven Banks.

"It's not enough to be tough on crime, we also have to be smart about crime," said Mayor Bloomberg. "The 15-year old who snatches a video game from another youth on a Friday night should not be detained all weekend long when a 17-year old who does the same thing would see a judge within 24 hours. We already have weekend arraignment for adults; the kids we still have a chance to save are entitled to at least as much."

"Close to 12,000 kids are processed in our City's juvenile delinquency system each year," said Deputy Mayor Gibbs. "These are often youth who are disconnected from school or family and may face an uncertain future. When there is an encounter with the juvenile justice system, this can lead to further alienation. The addition of weekend court processing, and a more thoughtful assessment of the risk the young person poses following arrest, will enable us - when appropriate - to send as many as 800 young people home each year where they can receive supports to help them get on a more positive path."

Juveniles arrested on weekends will be processed by judges who currently arraign adults 365 days a year. Juvenile case processing will occur in a separate courtroom from adult arraignment. Family Court in New York City will remain closed on weekends. Weekend case processing for youth will be held in Manhattan Criminal Court at 100 Centre Street. On average, eight youth enter detention on each weekend day.

"For those youth not already reunited with their families as part of DJJs Release to Parent Initiative, this joint City-State effort promises to expedite the case processing times of recently detained youth and reduce reliance on detention," said Department of Juvenile Justice Commissioner Neil Hernandez.

The Mayor also introduced a new risk assessment tool, which is helping judges make well-informed decisions about detention and release. The tool collects information on factors associated with risk of flight and recidivism, including prior arrests and adjudications, prior warrants, and school attendance. Based on this information, youth are assigned a risk level of low, moderate or high. Judges have the option to place moderate risk children in the Alternatives to Detention program, which provides supervision and services to youth at moderate risk of re-arrest and failure to appear in court. The new tool is modeled on a similar instrument successfully in use in criminal court for decades.

In development for two years, the tool has already helped transform detention outcomes at arraignment in New York City Family Court, reducing the detention of low risk youth by 54 percent and increasing the detention of those who pose the highest risk by 53 percent. The tool was successfully tested during a pilot program in Queens beginning in June 2007. The tool will also be adapted by the Department of Juvenile Justice to help determine whether youth brought to detention on nights and weekends are eligible for release to parents through a Family Court Appearance Ticket.
