

ACT 84

S.B. NO. 691

A Bill for an Act Relating to Family Courts.

Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Hawaii:

SECTION 1. The legislature finds that the United States is the only country in the world that has not fully established a minimum age for juvenile delinquency adjudication, in violation of Article 40 of the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, which requires nations to set a minimum age below which children are deemed incapable of transgressing the criminal law. In the United States, only a bare majority of states have established any minimum age of delinquency adjudication, and most states that have set a minimum age have set it at the low age of ten years old.

The legislature further finds that young children under the age of twelve do not have the ability to form mens rea or criminal intent, but should still receive services and treatment when they engage in what would otherwise be delinquent or criminal behavior. These children lack the intellectual capability and maturity to fully understand the consequences of their actions, as well as the proceedings in juvenile court.

Therefore, the purpose of this Act is to establish a minimum age of twelve before a child may be adjudicated for any alleged or attempted violation of law.

SECTION 2. Section 571-11, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

“§571-11 Jurisdiction; children. Except as otherwise provided in this chapter, the court shall have exclusive original jurisdiction in proceedings:

- (1) Concerning any person who is at least twelve years old and is alleged to have committed an act before achieving eighteen years of age that would constitute a violation or attempted violation of any federal, state, or local law or county ordinance. Regardless of where the violation occurred, jurisdiction may be taken by the court of the circuit where the person resides, is living, or is found, or in which the offense is alleged to have occurred;
- (2) Concerning any child living or found within the circuit who is:
 - (A) Neglected as to or deprived of educational services because of the failure of any person or agency to exercise that degree of care for which it is legally responsible;
 - (B) Beyond the control of the child's parent or other custodian or whose behavior is injurious to the child's own or others' welfare;

- (C) Neither attending school nor receiving educational services required by law whether through the child's own misbehavior or nonattendance or otherwise; or
- (D) In violation of curfew;
- (3) To determine the custody of any child or appoint a guardian of any child;
- (4) For the adoption of a person under chapter 578;
- (5) For the termination of parental rights under sections 571-61 through 571-63;
- (6) For judicial consent to the marriage, employment, or enlistment of a child, when consent is required by law;
- (7) For the treatment or commitment of a mentally defective or mentally ill child, or a child with an intellectual disability;
- (8) Under the Interstate Compact on Juveniles under chapter 582 or the Interstate Compact for Juveniles under chapter 582D;
- (9) For the protection of any child under chapter 587A;
- (10) For a change of name as provided in section 574-5(a)(2)(C);
- (11) Concerning custody or guardianship of an immigrant child pursuant to a motion for special immigrant juvenile factual findings requesting a determination that the child was abused, neglected, or abandoned before the age of eighteen years for purposes of section 101(a)(27)(J) of the federal Immigration and Nationality Act. For the purposes of this paragraph, "child" means an unmarried individual under the age of twenty-one years; and
- (12) Concerning emancipation of a minor pursuant to section 577-25."

SECTION 3. Section 571-21, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§571-21 Complaint; investigation; petition. (a) Except as provided in subsection (b), whenever the court is informed by any person that a minor is within the purview of section 571-11(1) or (2), the intake officer shall make a preliminary investigation to determine whether informal adjustment is suitable under section 571-31.4 or 571-31.5. The court may authorize the filing of a petition, may make whatever arrangement for informal adjustment that is suitable under section 571-31.4, 571-31.5, or 571-31.6; or may take ~~[sue]~~ action ~~[as]~~ that is otherwise allowed under this chapter. Efforts to effect informal adjustment may be continued ~~[not]~~ no longer than three months without review by the judge.

(b) In cases of violation of a law or ordinance by a child, the issuance of a citation or summons, when provided for by law or ordinance, shall be sufficient to invoke the jurisdiction of the court, which may proceed to dispose of ~~[such a]~~ the case with or without preliminary investigation and the filing of a petition.

(c) When a complaint or petition is made or sought to be filed against a member of the complainant's family, the court's staff may, when required by the judge or if requested by either party, process the matter under section 571-31.3.

(d) In children's cases under section 571-11(1) and (2), the petition and all subsequent court documents shall be suitably entitled so as to indicate that the proceeding is in the interest of, rather than against, the child or minor involved. The petition shall be verified and statements may be made upon information and belief. The petition shall set forth plainly the:

- (1) Facts that bring the child within the purview of this chapter;
- (2) Name, age, and residence of the child;

- (3) Names and residences of the child's parents; and
- (4) Name and residence of the child's legal guardian if there is one, of the person or persons having custody or control of the child, or of the nearest known relative if no parent or guardian can be found.

If any of the facts required are not known by the petitioner, the petition shall so state. In cases brought pursuant to section 571-11(2)(A) and (C), a certified copy of the child's school attendance records shall constitute prima facie evidence of the child's nonattendance at school or nonreceipt of educational services. ~~["Certified"]~~ For the purposes of this subsection, "certified copy" means a copy signed by the principal and educator of the child whose class the child did not attend.

(e) The family courts may, by suitable orders, provide regulations concerning the titles, filing, investigation, and the form and content of petitions and other pleadings in cases under this chapter, or these matters may be governed by the rules of court.

(f) A petition alleging violation or attempted violation of any federal, state, or local law or county ordinance pursuant to section 571-11(1) shall not be filed in a case involving a child under the age of twelve."

SECTION 4. Section 571-44, Hawaii Revised Statutes, is amended to read as follows:

"§571-44 Physical or mental examination and treatment. The court may order that a child or minor ~~[concerning]~~ for whom a petition has been filed ~~[shall]~~, be examined by a physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, or psychologist~~[-and #].~~ The court may order treatment[;] by [them;] a physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, or psychologist of a child or minor who has been adjudicated by the court. For either the examination or treatment, the court may place the child or minor in a hospital or other suitable facility. ~~[The]~~ After a hearing, the court~~[-after hearing;]~~ may order an examination by a physician, surgeon, psychiatrist, or psychologist~~[-]~~ of a parent or guardian whose ability to care for a child before the court is at issue.

~~[No child under the age of twelve shall be adjudged to come within section 571-11(1) without the written recommendation of a licensed psychologist or of a psychiatrist or other physician duly qualified by special training and experience in the practice of child psychiatry.]"~~

SECTION 5. Statutory material to be repealed is bracketed and stricken. New statutory material is underscored.

SECTION 6. This Act shall take effect upon its approval.

(Approved May 27, 2025.)