

OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 19-135—sHB 5575
Committee on Children
Judiciary Committee

AN ACT CONCERNING THE SUSPENSION OF DELINQUENCY PROCEEDINGS FOR FIRE STARTING BEHAVIOR TREATMENT

SUMMARY: This act allows a child charged with a delinquency offense involving an “act of fire starting” to file a motion with the court for an evaluation to determine if he or she would benefit from participating in a fire-starting behavior treatment program. The motion must be filed within 10 days after the child enters a plea unless the court waives the requirement on its own or the parties agree to waive it.

The act defines an “act of fire starting” as (1) conduct that causes an explosion or a fire to start, regardless of whether any person or animal was injured or property was damaged as a result, or (2) planning or preparing to start a fire or cause an explosion.

The act permits the court to suspend the delinquency proceeding so the child may attend the program, and if he or she successfully completes it and complies with the suspension order, the court may dismiss the delinquency charges.

Under the act, a child is ineligible for the program if (1) the court previously ordered this evaluation and treatment or (2) he or she is charged with a serious juvenile offense (see BACKGROUND).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2019

SUSPENSION OF PROCEEDINGS FOR TREATMENT

Suspension Order

The court, upon the child’s motion, may suspend the delinquency proceedings for up to one year and order the child to participate in a fire-starting behavior treatment program. But it may only do so after it (1) considers information concerning the child’s fire starting and the evaluation results, (2) finds that the child requires and is likely to benefit from such treatment, and (3) determines that the suspension will advance the interests of justice. The court may use the evaluation results only to determine whether the delinquency proceedings should be suspended.

If the court denies the motion to suspend the delinquency proceedings, the prosecutor may proceed with the case. A court order granting or denying the suspension is generally not subject to appeal.

Suspension Period

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During the suspension period, the child must be supervised by a juvenile probation officer who must monitor the child's compliance with court orders. The child's parent or guardian must pay the evaluation and program costs unless the court waives the costs upon finding that the parent or guardian is indigent.

Under the act, at any time during the suspension up until one month before it ends, a juvenile probation officer must notify the court of the impending conclusion and submit a report on whether the child completed the program and complied with the other court-ordered suspension conditions.

Dismissal of Charges

If the court, on the child's or its own motion, finds that the child successfully completed the program and complied with the other suspension order conditions, it may dismiss the suspended delinquency charges. If it denies the motion and terminates the suspension, the prosecutor may proceed with the case.

BACKGROUND

Serious Juvenile Offense

Serious juvenile offenses include, among other things, murder, arson murder, manufacture of bombs, arson, most other class A felonies, many class B felonies, and running away without just cause from a secure residential facility in which the court has placed the child after adjudicating him or her delinquent (CGS § 46b-120(8)).