

610.010 District Court jurisdiction of juvenile matters.

- (1) Unless otherwise exempted by KRS Chapters 600 to 645, the juvenile session of the District Court of each county shall have exclusive jurisdiction in proceedings concerning any child living or found within the county who has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday or of any person who at the time of committing a public offense was under the age of eighteen (18) years, who allegedly has committed a public offense prior to his or her eighteenth birthday, except a motor vehicle offense involving a child fifteen (15) years of age or older. A child fifteen (15) years of age or older taken into custody upon the allegation that the child has committed a motor vehicle offense shall be treated as an adult and shall have the same conditions of release applied to him or her as an adult. A child taken into custody upon the allegation that he or she has committed a motor vehicle offense who is not released under conditions of release applicable to adults shall be held, pending his or her appearance before the District Court, in a facility as defined in KRS 15A.067. Children fifteen (15) years of age or older who are convicted of, or plead guilty to, a motor vehicle offense shall, if sentenced to a term of confinement, be placed in a facility for that period of confinement preceding their eighteenth birthday and an adult detention facility for that period of confinement subsequent to their eighteenth birthday. The term "motor vehicle offense" shall not be deemed to include the offense of stealing or converting a motor vehicle nor operating the same without the owner's consent nor any offense which constitutes a felony;
- (2) Unless otherwise exempted by KRS Chapters 600 to 645, the juvenile session of the District Court of each county or the family division of the Circuit Court shall have exclusive jurisdiction in proceedings concerning any child living or found within the county who has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday and who allegedly:
 - (a) Is beyond the control of the school or beyond the control of parents as defined in KRS 600.020;
 - (b) Is an habitual truant from school;
 - (c) Is an habitual runaway from his or her parent or other person exercising custodial control or supervision of the child;
 - (d) Is dependent, neglected, or abused;
 - (e) Has committed an alcohol offense in violation of KRS 244.085; or
 - (f) Is mentally ill.
- (3) Actions brought under subsection (1) of this section shall be considered to be public offense actions.
- (4) Actions brought under subsection (2)(a), (b), (c), and (e) of this section shall be considered to be status offense actions.
- (5) Actions brought under subsection (2)(d) of this section shall be considered to be nonoffender actions.
- (6) Actions brought under subsection (2)(f) of this section shall be considered to be mental health actions.
- (7) Nothing in this chapter shall deprive other courts of the jurisdiction to determine the custody or guardianship of children upon writs of habeas corpus or to determine the

custody or guardianship of children when such custody or guardianship is incidental to the determination of other causes pending in such other courts; nor shall anything in this chapter affect the jurisdiction of Circuit Courts over adoptions and proceedings for termination of parental rights.

- (8) The court shall have no jurisdiction to make permanent awards of custody of a child except as provided by KRS 620.027.
- (9) If the court finds an emergency to exist affecting the welfare of a child, or if the child is eligible for the relative or fictive kin caregiver assistance as established in KRS 620.142, it may make temporary orders for the child's custody; however, if the case involves allegations of dependency, neglect, or abuse, no emergency removal or temporary custody orders shall be effective unless the provisions of KRS Chapter 620 are followed. Such orders shall be entirely without prejudice to the proceedings for permanent custody of the child and shall remain in effect until modified or set aside by the court. Upon the entry of a temporary or final judgment in the Circuit Court awarding custody of such child, all prior orders of the juvenile session of the District Court in conflict therewith shall be deemed canceled. This section shall not work to deprive the Circuit Court of jurisdiction over cases filed in Circuit Court.
- (10) The court of each county wherein a public offense, as defined in subsection (1) of this section, is committed by a child who is a resident of another county of this state shall have concurrent jurisdiction over such child with the court of the county wherein the child resides or the court of the county where the child is found. Whichever court first acquires jurisdiction of such child may proceed to final disposition of the case, or in its discretion may make an order transferring the case to the court of the county of the child's residence or the county wherein the offense was committed, as the case may be.
- (11) Nothing in this chapter shall prevent the court from holding a child in contempt of court to enforce valid court orders previously issued by the court, subject to the requirements contained in KRS 610.265 and 630.080.
- (12) Except as provided in KRS 630.120(5), 635.060(4), or 635.090, nothing in this chapter shall confer upon the District Court or the family division of the Circuit Court, as appropriate, jurisdiction over the actions of the Department of Juvenile Justice or the cabinet in the placement, care, or treatment of a child committed to the Department of Juvenile Justice or committed to or in the custody of the cabinet; or to require the department or the cabinet to perform, or to refrain from performing, any specific act in the placement, care, or treatment of any child committed to the department or committed to or in the custody of the cabinet.
- (13) Unless precluded by KRS Chapter 635 or 640, in addition to informal adjustment, the court shall have the discretion to amend the petition to reflect jurisdiction pursuant to the proper chapter of the Kentucky Unified Juvenile Code.
- (14) The court shall have continuing jurisdiction over a child pursuant to subsection (1) of this section, to review dispositional orders, and to conduct permanency hearings under 42 U.S.C. sec. 675(5)(c) until the child is placed for adoption, returned home to his or her parents with all the court imposed conditions terminated, completes a disposition pursuant to KRS 635.060, or reaches the age of eighteen (18) years.

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History: Amended 2025 Ky. Acts ch. 160, sec. 3, effective April 4, 2025. -- Amended 2020 Ky. Acts ch. 35, sec. 11, effective March 26, 2020. -- Amended 2019 Ky. Acts ch. 73, sec. 4, effective June 27, 2019. -- Amended 2014 Ky. Acts ch. 132, sec. 35, effective July 1, 2015. -- Amended 2008 Ky. Acts ch. 87, sec. 3, effective July 15, 2008. -- Amended 2002 Ky. Acts ch. 257, sec. 12, effective July 15, 2002. -- Amended 2000 Ky. Acts ch. 60, sec. 2, effective July 14, 2000; ch 193, sec. 2, effective July 14, 2000; and ch. 306, sec. 2, effective July 14, 2000. -- Amended 1998 Ky. Acts ch. 443, sec. 13, effective July 15, 1998. -- Amended 1996 Ky. Acts ch. 358, sec. 18, effective July 15, 1997. -- Amended 1994 Ky. Acts ch. 226, sec. 2, effective July 15, 1994; ch. 318, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1994; and ch. 489, sec. 1, effective July 15, 1994. -- Amended 1988 Ky. Acts ch. 350, sec. 14, effective April 10, 1988. -- Created 1986 Ky. Acts ch. 423, sec. 20, effective July 1, 1987.