

MD ST §3-8A-02 outlines that Maryland's juvenile justice system must balance 1) public safety and protection of the community, 2) accountability of the child to the victim and the community, and 3) competency and character development to assist children in becoming responsible and productive members of society.

Protecting the community does not require punishment or a punitive approach. Holding youth accountable does not require punishment or a punitive approach. Competency and character development do not require a punishment or a punitive approach.

The community is best protected when the juvenile justice system collaborates with youth, families, schools, community partners, law enforcement, and other public agencies to coordinate services and resources to provide opportunities and supports so youth can thrive.

Research indicates that an overreliance on control and compliance monitoring is less effective in promoting long-term positive behavior change and reducing reoffending. Evidence shows that youth behavior change is more positively influenced by incentives rather than sanctions. Youth well-being is enhanced by effective, strength-based, and supportive community supervision practices. Thus, community supervision practices should not rely on compliance monitoring, but should focus on building positive relationships with youth and families to promote positive behavior change.

Accountability is achieved when a youth understands and takes responsibility for how their actions affect others and themselves. This can be a motivator for positive behavior change.

The juvenile justice system must ensure equal access to opportunities and supports for pro-social development for all youth.