



April 19, 2024

Juvenile Courts

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the CTAS website (ctas.tennessee.edu). This website is maintained by CTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee county government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with county government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other CTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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Juvenile Courts

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The general sessions court, except those with a special juvenile court established by private act, has juvenile court jurisdiction. T.C.A. § 37-1-203. Every court having juvenile jurisdiction must have a sign in a conspicuous place identifying it as "Juvenile Court." T.C.A. § 37-1-206. The general sessions court when acting as juvenile court has the Title and style of "Juvenile Court of _____ County." T.C.A. § 37-1-204. However, the legislature did not intend to make the juvenile court a general sessions court. The intent was to transfer juvenile court jurisdiction to the general sessions court and to make the general sessions court a juvenile court when the subject matter before the court was within the jurisdiction conferred upon juvenile courts. *State ex rel. Winberry v. Brooks*, 670 S.W.2d 631 (Tenn. Ct. App. 1984). Only general sessions judges who are licensed to practice law in Tennessee may order commitment of a juvenile to the Department of Correction. T.C.A. § 37-1-203. If the judge is not licensed to practice in Tennessee, a lawyer-referee is appointed to handle such matters. T.C.A. § 37-1-107. The juvenile court has concurrent jurisdiction with the circuit and chancery court of proceedings arising from the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. T.C.A. § 37-1-104.

Pursuant to T.C.A. § 37-1-702, juvenile judges are authorized to establish a teen court program. The teen court is given the authority to conduct proceedings, receive evidence, hear testimony related to the dispositional stage and recommend disposition of the case. For any particular case, the teen court consists of five teen members chosen from a panel of 12 or more teenagers appointed by the juvenile court judge.

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