Pre-Adjudicated Juveniles

Information accurate as of September 2026

Executive Summary

Southern states use three broad approaches to pre-adjudication juvenile detention: state-operated systems, state-local hybrid systems, and local or regional systems. These structures differ in who operates facilities, how youth are placed when nearby beds are unavailable, who is responsible for transportation, and what alternatives to secure detention are available. Across all three models, limited local capacity can result in placement farther from a youth's home jurisdiction and additional transportation responsibilities for state or local agencies.

Research Methods

Review of state juvenile corrections statutes in the CSG South region.

Findings and Analysis

Pre-adjudicated juvenile detention is the temporary confinement or placement of a young person in a secure or restricted facility after they are accused of an offense, but before a judge has formally decided their case.[1] Youth detention systems vary across the South, differing in who operates facilities, how beds are allocated, whether youth can be moved across regional lines, and who is responsible for the transportation to other facilities.[2] A practical concern is that limited local bed capacity may require youth to be placed farther from their home jurisdiction, creating additional transportation demands for law enforcement, courts, and detention systems.[3] Southern states use a range of administrative structures to provide secure detention for juveniles awaiting adjudication, with responsibility divided differently among state agencies, counties, and regional entities.

For purposes of this review, the 15 CSG South states fall into three broad models based on the level of state and local responsibility for operating and coordinating detention facilities: state-operated, state-local hybrid, and local/regional systems. Although several states may be grouped, they may still differ in how they manage overflow placement, transportation, contracting, regional access, and alternatives to secure detention.

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State-Operated Systems Examples

- **Florida**: Utilizes a statewide detention and transportation network.[4]
- **Georgia:** Utilizes a clear, documented overflow strategy, where youth may be sent to the next-nearest facilities if the closest facility is full or cannot meet the youth's needs.[5]
- **Kentucky**: The Department of Juvenile Justice determines placement based on safety, security, staffing, and population.[6]
- **West Virginia**: Assigns initial transportation to the arresting or custodial law enforcement agency.[7]

Note: State operation of juvenile detention facilities does not imply that the state is responsible for all transportation of youths.[8]

Table 1. *Pre-Adjudication Juvenile Detention Approaches in CSG South States - State-Operated Systems*

State	Who Runs Detention?	When Local Beds Are Unavailable	Transportation	Release/Alternatives
Florida	State DJJ detention network[9]	Statewide network supports transfers; No specific full-bed assignment process identified in reviewed public sources.[10]	State detention transporters handle scheduled movements[11]	Supervised release, home detention, electronic monitoring, and shelter options[12]
Georgia	State DJJ Regional Youth Detention Centers[13]	Youth may be sent to the next-nearest facility if the closest one is full or cannot meet needs.[14]	State transports between DJJ facilities[15]	Home restrictions, electronic monitoring, wraparound services[16]
Kentucky	State DJJ secure detention system[17]	DJJ assigns placement based on safety, staffing, and population[18]	Sheriff or jailer transports unless DJJ agrees to do so[19]	Home detention, electronic monitoring, court resource homes, staff-secure shelters[20]
West Virginia	State juvenile detention system[21]	Statewide facility network; No specific full-bed assignment process identified in reviewed public sources[22]	Arresting/custodial law enforcement handles initial transport[23]	Release to parent, guardian, or custodian when detention is not required[24]

State-Local Hybrid Systems Examples

- **North Carolina**: Operates state detention centers and contracts with county-operated centers to keep youth near their home areas.[25]
- **Oklahoma**: Counties operate facilities under a statewide detention plan, and the Office of Juvenile Affairs may use supplemental contracts for certified beds during temporary increases in demand.[26]
- **South Carolina**: Operates a state pretrial detention complex, while some counties maintain their own detention centers.[27]

Table 2. *Pre-Adjudication Juvenile Detention Approaches in CSG South States - State-Local Hybrid Systems*

State	Who Runs Detention?	When Local Beds Are Unavailable	Transportation	Release/Alternatives
North Carolina	State detention centers plus contracted county centers[28]	State and county networks generally seek placement near the youth's home area[29]	Court-directed officers and state transportation staff both play roles[30]	Release to parent/responsible adult; approved nonsecure placements[31]
Oklahoma	Locally operated centers under state plan and contracts[32]	The state may use supplemental contracts for certified beds during demand increases[33]	Sheriffs, peace officers, court officers, or OJA-contracted providers[34]	Electronic monitoring, youth shelters, and crisis intervention centers[35]
South Carolina	State detention complex plus some local centers[36]	Courts may use compliant local or contracted facilities[37]	Local law enforcement transports to and from detention; the state handles transfers between its facilities[38]	Release to parent/responsible adult, home supervision, less-secure placements[39]

Local/Regional Systems Examples

- **Alabama**: Local or private regional detention centers are licensed by the Department of Youth Services, but counties manage the facilities. Counties may use contracts with other counties when local detention capacity is unavailable, and law enforcement handles transportation at the juvenile court's direction.[40]
- **Arkansas**: Counties operate juvenile detention centers, with cross-county placements occurring through local arrangements.[41]
- **Louisiana**: Local and regional detention centers serve pre-adjudicated youth.[42]
- **Mississippi**: Local detention centers and contracted facilities provide detention capacity, but counties without a compliant facility may contract with another jurisdiction or facility.[43]
- **Missouri**: County or circuit detention facilities operate under juvenile court supervision, but shared facilities and intercounty agreements may be used.[44]
- **Tennessee**: Local governments and private operators provide detention services, but when nearby beds are unavailable, counties may contract for placement at another facility.[45]
- **Texas**: County systems and authorized private operators provide detention under juvenile board oversight. If no certified local facility is available, a jurisdiction may designate the use of another county's certified facility.[46]
- **Virginia**: Local governments and multijurisdictional commissions operate detention centers, while regional commissions allow participating localities to share facilities.[47]

Table 3. *Pre-Adjudication Juvenile Detention Approaches in CSG South States - Local/Regional Systems*

State	Who Runs Detention?	When Local Beds Are Unavailable	Transportation	Release/Alternatives
Alabama	Local or private regional detention centers licensed by DYS[48]	Contracts with other counties may be used[49]	Law enforcement transports at the juvenile court's direction[50]	Conditional release, activity restrictions, electronic or telephone monitoring[51]
Arkansas	County detention centers[52]	Cross-country placements occur through local arrangements[53]	Initial delivery by local law enforcement[54]	Release on recognizance, supervision, movement/activity restrictions[55]
Louisiana	Local and regional detention centers[56]	Regional placements allowed[57]	The arresting agency provides initial transport[58]	Alternatives to secure detention through government or nonprofit providers[59]
Mississippi	Local detention centers and contracted facilities[60]	Counties without compliant facilities may contract with other jurisdictions or facilities[61]	Facilities must maintain transportation procedures[62]	Release to parent/guardian/custodian unless continued custody is authorized[63]
Missouri	County or circuit detention facilities under juvenile court supervision[64]	Shared facilities and intercounty agreements may be used[65]	Transportation responsibility is not clearly specified in the cited statewide sources[66]	Conditional release to parent, guardian, or custodian[67]
Tennessee	Local governments and private operators[68]	Counties seek another willing facility, often by	Local sheriffs or other local	Release to family, electronic monitoring[71]

		contract; some centers limit out-of-county admissions.[69]	personnel handle transport[70]	
Texas	County systems and authorized private operators under juvenile board oversight[72]	Another county's certified facility may be used if no certified local facility is available.[73]	The arresting officer or authorized sheriff handles transport[74]	Conditional release with written conditions[75]
Virginia	Local and regional detention centers[76]	Regional commissions allow localities to share facilities[77]	Transportation duties vary by trip type and designated agency[78]	Conditional release, recognizance or bail, nonsecure shelter placement[79]

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