

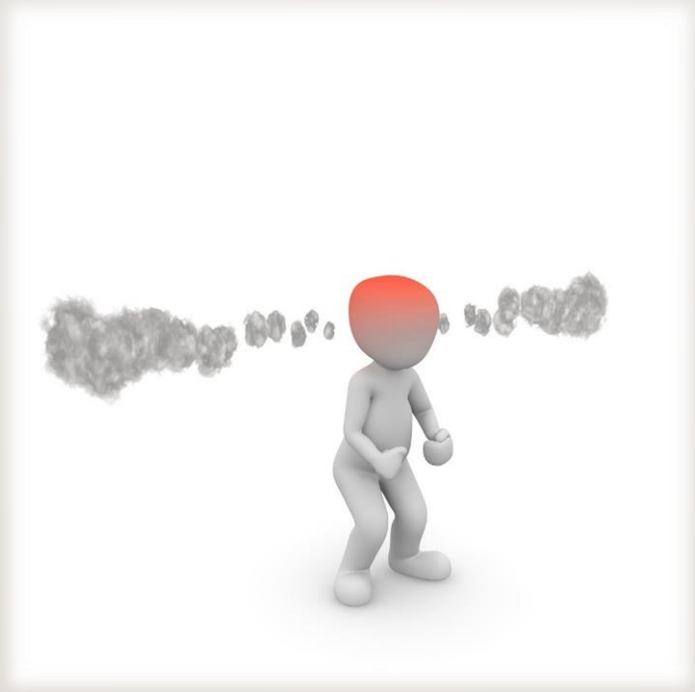


MANAGING MINORS WITH COMMUNICATION

OBJECTIVES

- To provide officers with additional tools to manage disruptive behavior by minors.
- Discuss ways to de-escalate negative behavior and outburst in a non-threatening manner.
- Discuss best practices and outcomes when force should be used.

WHY DO JUVENILES ACT OUT?



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- Acting out is one way that minors may cope with trauma. They may act out to feel in control of their environment or express the pain they're feeling inside and it has become a natural reaction to a tough situation.
- It can be also used to get attention
- To avoid a task they don't like or want to do.
- To get a specific item or get their way
- To search for containment from parents
- To express a need for more or less sensory stimulation

WHY DO JUVENILES ACT OUT?

- Juveniles aren't just miniature adults
 - Fundamentally different
 - Less life experience
 - Lower expectation of responsibility
 - Greater need for safety, guidance, and assistance
 - Brain is not completely developed
 - Juveniles lack full brain development, which isn't complete until late teens/early 20s
 - The final brain capabilities to develop are those that govern things like anticipating consequences of actions, making logical risk vs. reward decisions, controlling impulses, and delaying gratification

WHY DO JUVENILES ACT OUT?

- Traditional concepts of maturity
- As a result, adolescents are universally more impulsive, more immature, more emotionally reactive, less risk-adverse, and more focused on “what feels good right now”, compared to the average adult.

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOR

- Remember to use language that minors can understand, especially when explaining the inner workings of the justice system. Ask them (and adults) to repeat back the information in their own words, so you can assess if they understood fully.
- Keep in mind that you may have to provide the same information multiple times and/or in multiple ways (e.g., verbally and in writing).
- As much as you can, let them (and the adults) know what to expect each step of the way, so they can feel less anxious and more prepared.

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOR

- Remind them that there are people who support them, such as family members, friends, caseworkers, advocates, therapists, and lawyers; and name those people together.
- Make sure they are aware of any resources they may need now or may need in the future, including victim advocacy services and trauma-focused therapy.

RESPONDING TO BEHAVIOR

- When dealing with unruly minors in the courtroom, or jail settings, typically you should employ a combination of approaches, including warnings, temporary removal from the area. The primary goal is to maintain order while considering the child's age and the nature of the disruption, often aiming to address the behavior with a more rehabilitative focus rather than punitive measures.

Handling unruly minors:

- **Verbal warnings:**
 - Initially issue a verbal warning to the minor, reminding them of appropriate behavior and the consequences of further disruption.
- **Private consultation:**
 - Speak with the minor privately to address the behavior and attempt to redirect them.
- **Temporary removal:**
 - If the disruptive behavior continues, the minor may be temporarily removed from the area until they can compose themselves.

Handling unruly minors in court:

- **Court-appointed mediators:**
 - In some cases, a court-appointed mediator might be brought in to help facilitate communication and address underlying issues contributing to the disruptive behavior.
- **Consideration of age and development:**
 - The judge should take into account the child's age and developmental level when determining the appropriate response to their behavior.
- **Sanctions for repeated disruption:**
 - For persistent disruptive behavior, the judge may impose sanctions such as evaluations, or other treatment services.

Handling unruly minors in court:

- **Contempt of court:**
 - In extreme cases of egregious and defiant behavior, the judge could hold the minor in contempt of court, which could lead to more severe consequences.
- **Focus on rehabilitation:**
 - Juvenile courts are generally designed to focus on rehabilitation and addressing the underlying causes of a child's behavior rather than solely punishment.
- **Collaboration with social services:**
 - In situations where a child's behavior indicates deeper issues, the court may work with social services agencies to provide necessary support and interventions.

Handling unruly minors in court:

- **Parental responsibility:**
 - Parents or legal guardians are typically held accountable for a minor's behavior in court and may be required to attend hearings and participate in efforts to address the issues.
 - When dealing with disrespectful behavior from minors in court, the primary approach should be to calmly address the behavior directly, explaining why it's inappropriate and outlining potential consequences, while also considering the minor's age and developmental stage and potentially involving a guardian or court official if necessary; this can include reminding them of proper courtroom decorum, providing warnings, and potentially implementing sanctions like a recess or removal from the courtroom if the behavior persists.

Manage disrespectful behaviors in court:

- **Directly address the behavior:**
- Calmly point out the specific behavior that is disrespectful and explain why it is unacceptable in a courtroom setting.
- **Use clear language:**
- Avoid using overly complex language and instead, speak in a straightforward manner that the minor can understand.

Manage disrespectful behaviors in court:

- **Set expectations:**
 - Clearly communicate what is expected behavior in the courtroom, including appropriate body language and tone of voice.
- **Involve the guardian:**
 - If appropriate, involve the minor's guardian in the conversation to reinforce expectations and potential consequences.
- **Consider developmental stage:**
 - Adapt your approach based on the minor's age and maturity level.

Manage disrespectful behaviors in court:

- **Avoid public humiliation:** Do not embarrass the minor in front of the courtroom by loudly reprimanding them.
- **Maintain composure:** Stay calm and professional even when dealing with challenging behavior.
- **Identify underlying issues:** In some cases, disruptive behavior might be a sign of deeper issues, so consider if further support or intervention might be needed.
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ANY QUESTIONS



REFERENCES

- <https://ovc.ojp.gov/child-victims-and-witnesses-support/guides/practitioners>
- <https://reflections lifestyle.com/coping-mechanisms-why-children-and-teens-use-acting-out/#:~:text=Acting%20out%20is%20one%20way,reaction%20to%20a%20tough%20situation>