MARYLAND PARENT RESOURCE

A Parent's First 24 Hours Guide

What to do when your teen is arrested, detained, or charged in Maryland

The first hours can feel overwhelming. This guide gives parents a calm, practical place to start - what to learn, what to preserve, what to avoid, and what to ask next.

USE THIS GUIDE TO

- Get the basic facts without pressuring your child to explain the incident.
- Protect information that may matter later.
- Prepare for the first conversation with counsel.
- Understand why juvenile court and adult court are not interchangeable.
- Keep school, family, medical, and transportation needs organized.

Important

This is general educational information, not legal advice. Maryland juvenile and criminal cases are highly fact-specific. Laws and procedures may change. Have a Maryland attorney review your child's individual situation promptly.

Prepared by Cochran & Chhabra Law Group

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What to do first

You do not need to solve the case tonight. Your job is to locate your child, understand the immediate process, preserve information, and get qualified help.

- Write down the agency, officer, facility, case number, and every time or deadline you are given.
- Ask whether your child is being released, detained, or scheduled for a hearing.
- Tell staff about urgent medications, disabilities, mental-health needs, or safety concerns.
- Keep charging papers, notices, property receipts, school messages, and release documents together.
- Contact a Maryland attorney experienced with juvenile and criminal matters.

If there is an upcoming hearing, detention decision, interrogation, search request, school interview, or request to sign paperwork, treat it as time-sensitive.

A calm phrase parents can use

'We want to cooperate with the process, but we do not want our child answering case questions or signing anything until we have spoken with an attorney.'

What not to do

- Do not ask your child to post an explanation or apology online.
- Do not delete texts, photos, videos, location data, accounts, or school messages.
- Do not contact an alleged victim, witness, other parent, teacher, coach, or co-defendant to 'clear things up.'
- Do not discuss facts in group chats or on calls that others can overhear.
- Do not assume a school process is separate from the legal case.
- Do not promise a particular result or tell your child the case is 'only juvenile.'

Preserve - do not investigate

Save what already exists. Avoid creating new statements, reenactments, recordings, or witness interviews on your own. Give counsel a clean timeline and let counsel advise what comes next.

> **A parent's well-intended message can become evidence. Pause before texting, posting, apologizing, confronting, or deleting.**

Juvenile court and adult court

Where a case begins depends on age, the alleged offense, and other legal rules. A case that begins in juvenile court does not always stay there, and a case involving a teenager does not automatically remain confidential or minor.

A 2026 Maryland change

For qualifying offenses committed on or after October 1, 2026, certain cases involving 16- and 17-year-olds charged with first-degree assault or misdemeanor handgun/firearm offenses begin in juvenile court. Eligibility, exceptions, detention, and any transfer question require case-specific review.

Questions to ask counsel

- Where does this case begin and why?
- Could the case be transferred to another court?
- What happens before the next hearing?
- Could my child be detained, and what information may help at a detention hearing?
- How could the case affect school, driving, employment, athletics, immigration, or future records?

Primary public source for the 2026 reform: Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, SB 323 Youth Charging Reform Act.

Information to gather

- Child's full legal name, date of birth, address, school, and grade.
- Agency, officer, facility, case or incident number, and contact information.
- Charging documents, citations, summonses, release papers, and hearing notices.
- A simple timeline of what you personally know - separate from what others told you.
- Relevant texts, emails, photos, videos, social messages, and location information - preserved in original form.
- Medication list, treatment providers, IEP/504 plan, disability accommodations, and urgent health needs.
- School notices, disciplinary communications, attendance information, and upcoming deadlines.
- Names of possible witnesses or involved adults, without contacting them about the facts.
- Family logistics: transportation, caregiving, work schedules, and safe release plan.

Keep originals intact. Make a working copy for notes, and record where each item came from.

Questions for the first consultation

- What are the allegations, and what has actually been filed?
- What should my child say - or not say - before the next hearing?
- Are there court, school, probation, or agency deadlines right now?
- What release or detention issues should we prepare for?
- Could statements to school staff or other adults affect the case?
- What records should we preserve?
- What should we do about social media and electronic devices?
- What outcomes or collateral consequences should we understand?
- Who should communicate with the school, agency, or other family?
- What are the next three decisions we need to make?

Bring the guide

Use the final page as your one-page intake sheet. It helps counsel identify the immediate issues without forcing your family to reconstruct everything under stress.

The first 24 hours

- Locate my child and confirm who has custody or supervision.
- Record the case, incident, or intake number.
- Confirm the next hearing, appointment, release condition, or deadline.
- Share urgent medication, disability, or safety needs with the appropriate professional.
- Tell my child not to discuss facts, post online, delete anything, or contact involved people.
- Preserve papers, messages, photos, videos, and device information.
- Write a short timeline of what I personally know.
- Collect school, treatment, and family-support information.
- Call a Maryland attorney experienced with juvenile and criminal cases.
- Ask counsel what must happen next - and what can wait.

Need to speak with the firm? Call 410.268.5515 or visit cclaw.group. Contacting the firm does not create an attorney-client relationship; representation begins only through a written agreement.

Attorney reviewed

Reviewed and approved by Mandeep Chhabra, Managing Member, Cochran & Chhabra Law Group, October 2026.