

# Tracking Movement of Kids Keeps Them, and Communities, Safer



**“Sometimes when you hear a child is on supervision you think the worst. Sometimes it’s kids that make one mistake and are now trying to make amends.”**

—Ashley Lippert  
executive director, Interstate Commission for Juveniles



When kids run away from home, there’s usually something going on.

“Kids don’t just run away because they’re mad at their parents,” said Ashley Lippert. “They run away because there’s some kind of abuse.”

A new agreement among states tries to help those children. The rules of the interstate agreement, of which 41 states are members, require an investigative process to make sure runaways are returned to safe homes, said Lippert, who was recently named executive director of the new Interstate Compact for Juveniles.

After years in the planning stages, The Council of State Governments saw the updated compact take flight when Illinois became the 35th state to adopt it in August 2008. The compact is an affiliate of CSG.

“The main focus of it is to help the juveniles ... make sure they get the help they need,” Lippert said.

But the compact also aims to ensure safety of communities and victims of juvenile offenders, according to Lippert. She said states must track what she calls “a striking number of child sex offenders” to make sure they don’t fall through the cracks.

The compact works to make sure any child placed in the juvenile system—and moves across state lines—doesn’t get lost in the administrative shuffle. “It ensures safety of the public. It ensures safety of the child,” Lippert said.

The old juvenile compact was administered through the Association of Juvenile Compact Administrators; but juvenile courts recognized problems with it. Because there was no way to enforce the compact and there was conflicting language in state laws and problematic rules for the juvenile justice system, it badly needed updating. So the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention partnered with The Council of State Governments to review and rework the compact.

That new compact is in effect today.

A new electronic tracking process to make the movement of those children quicker and more efficient is now in the works. Lippert is also working to establish a training program for juvenile compact administrators and a Web site for a repository of information about the compact and its rules.

The ultimate goal is to help troubled children, Lippert said, which in turn makes communities safer and reduces ultimate costs to states.

“Especially where kids are concerned ... They still have the chance to be rehabilitated. That’s the goal of the compact ... to provide the best environment for (kids in the system) to succeed,” she said.

“It’s really sad,” Lippert said. “Most of the time it’s troubled kids. The goal is to make sure they don’t go into the adult system. It’s that they get the help they need to go on to lead productive lives.”

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