

---

**Juvenile Justice & Family Law  
Committee**

---

**SB 5809**

**Brief Description:** Revising jurisdiction of youth courts.

**Sponsors:** Senators Fairley and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Clarifies that youth courts may be permitted for traffic infractions, juvenile offender diversion matters, and violations of school rules.

**Hearing Date:** 3/23/05

**Staff:** Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

**Background:**

Youth court programs are designed to provide an alternative within the justice system for first-time offenders. In these programs, the appropriate sanction for a juvenile offender is determined by his or her peers. Juveniles participate in the youth court as jurors, lawyers, bailiffs, clerks, and judges under the supervision of the court.

Youth courts operate in three areas: 1) traffic matters heard in District court; 2) juvenile offender matters heard in juvenile court; and 3) student conduct violations within public or private schools.

Traffic and civil infraction cases involving juveniles over the age of 16 are heard in District Court. District Court is authorized by statute to establish a youth court and refer a case to the youth court if the juvenile does not have previous history involving other traffic infractions or driving offenses that would cause the juvenile to be ineligible. The youth court agreement allows the juvenile the opportunity to fulfill certain conditions imposed by a youth court in lieu of a determination that a traffic infraction occurred.

If the traffic offense involves a juvenile under the age of 16, or if there is a criminal offense in addition to the traffic offense, the matter will be heard in juvenile court. Juvenile court is authorized to create a youth court which is a type of a diversion unit. Diversion is a program that offers a first-time, non-violent offender the opportunity to fulfill certain conditions in lieu of prosecution.

The final area in which a youth court may operate involves student conduct violations within a public or private school. The youth court held in schools is called a student court and targets violations of school rules by students enrolled in public or private school.

**Summary of Bill:**

The bill clarifies that youth courts may be permitted for traffic infractions, juvenile offender diversion matters, and violations of school rules. Additionally, the bill permits youth courts to be supervised by either the court or an adult coordinator.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.