

Cases and Care

How Georgia handles young people accused of breaking the law

SS8CG5 "Explain how the Georgia court system treats juvenile offenders."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline court actions that protect a young person or support rehabilitation, and circle the sentence that explains when a case begins in superior court. These marks will help you compare Georgia's usual juvenile process with its serious-crime exception.

Georgia's Juvenile Court Process

- ① In Georgia, a person younger than 18 is generally handled in juvenile court when accused of breaking a law. The court calls this an alleged delinquent act, rather than simply treating the young person as an adult criminal. At an adjudicatory hearing, a judge decides whether the allegation is proved. The child has important legal rights, including notice of the charge, a lawyer, and a chance to question witnesses. These protections help the court make a fair decision.
- ② If the judge finds the act was committed, the court holds a disposition hearing to choose a response. Juvenile court can order probation, counseling, community service, or restitution for harm caused. In some cases, it can place a youth in the custody of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. The response is meant to hold the youth accountable while supporting rehabilitation and protecting the community. A juvenile adjudication is not the same as an adult criminal conviction.
- ③ Georgia law sends some serious accusations involving young people ages 13 through 17 to superior court, the court that usually hears adult felony cases. These accusations include murder, voluntary manslaughter, rape, aggravated sodomy, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sexual battery, and armed robbery with a firearm. This rule does not mean every youth accused of an offense is handled the same way. The charge and the youth's age help determine whether juvenile court or superior court begins the case.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE Use the passage

1 Which court generally handles a person younger than 18 who is accused of breaking a law?

2 What does a judge decide at an adjudicatory hearing? Name two legal rights the child has at that hearing.

3 After an act is proved, what is the purpose of the disposition hearing, and name one response the court may order.

4 When can a case involving a young person begin in superior court instead of juvenile court?

3 YOUR TURN Your own words

A 14-year-old is accused of spray-painting a fence. Write three sentences explaining which court would generally begin the case, one protection the youth would have, and one response the judge could choose if the act is proved.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline court actions that protect a young person or support rehabilitation, and circle the sentence that explains when a case begins in superior court. These marks will help you compare Georgia's usual juvenile process with its serious-crime exception. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Which court generally handles a person younger than 18 who is accused of breaking a law?	Juvenile court generally handles the case.
2	What does a judge decide at an adjudicatory hearing? Name two legal rights the child has at that hearing.	The judge decides whether the allegation is proved. Rights include notice of the charge, a lawyer, and a chance to question witnesses.
3	After an act is proved, what is the purpose of the disposition hearing, and name one response the court may order.	The disposition hearing chooses a response that provides accountability, rehabilitation, and community protection. Possible responses include probation, counseling, community service, restitution, or custody with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice.
4	When can a case involving a young person begin in superior court instead of juvenile court?	It can begin in superior court when a youth ages 13 through 17 is accused of one of the listed serious offenses, such as murder, rape, or armed robbery with a firearm.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The case would generally begin in juvenile court because the youth is under 18 and the accusation is not one of the listed serious charges. At an adjudicatory hearing, the youth has notice of the charge, a lawyer, and a chance to question witnesses. If the act is proved, the judge could order restitution and community service to provide accountability and rehabilitation.

Accept equivalent descriptions of juvenile court protections and disposition options from the passage. For the open response, accept juvenile court as the general starting court, a valid legal protection, and a reasonable listed disposition.