

Strategies for Youth

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First in the Nation: Strategies For Youth Applauds Massachusetts POST Commission's Steps to Protect Youth with Draft Juvenile Operations Standards

CAMBRIDGE, MA – JUNE 26, 2025 – A meaningful step forward in the pursuit of safer interactions between police and youth, Strategies for Youth (SFY) applauds Thursday's release of the Massachusetts Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Commission's first-in-the-nation draft Juvenile Operations Standards for certification of law enforcement agencies.

Under the 2020 state law creating the POST, each law enforcement agency must adopt eight (8) mandatory policies, one of which is Juvenile Operations. The [Juvenile Operations Standard draft issued Thursday](#) serves as the floor of each law enforcement agency's policies for its officers.

"This is a landmark day for Massachusetts," said Lisa H. Thureau, the Executive Director of [Strategies for Youth](#), a national policy and training nonprofit based in Cambridge.

"Massachusetts is distinguishing itself by being the first state in the U.S. to both require law enforcement agencies be certified and that they adopt juvenile operations standards. We thank the POST Commission for its leadership."

Strategies for Youth began supporting the work of the POST by proposing language and frameworks for the POST's guidance in 2021 for law enforcement interactions with youth based on developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, equitable principles. Since then, SFY has monitored the POST's monthly meetings, developed a model Juvenile Operations Standard based on SFY's [12 Model Policies for Law Enforcement Interactions with Youth](#), convened meetings of advocates, families, and providers to explain what the POST offers, and shared vital insights into youth experiences with police.

Among the most important policies adopted in the draft Juvenile Operations Standard involves regulating what constitutes appropriate and legally required behavior of law enforcement during interrogations of youth, including what behavior is not acceptable because it's explicitly perceived as coercive. While all confessions must be voluntary, informed, and knowledgeable, Thureau said, a different standard needs to be adopted for juveniles.

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The POST's draft Standard also addresses officer conduct, arrests, temporary custody, transportation of juveniles, collateral effects of policing on youths' caregivers, complaints, and training.

"The first draft of the Standard is really impressive and shows the POST is paying attention to the research on what works best with youth," said Shelley Jackson, SFY's Law Enforcement Policies Attorney. "These standards, which will next need to be formally translated into policies and adopted by each law enforcement agency, represent a major step forward to ensure officers recognize youth are not mini adults, and to protect young people's civil rights."

As observers of police reform efforts in jurisdictions where youth have been harmed, SFY notes that once a community loses faith in law enforcement due to its use of unreasonable and excessive use of force, it is very difficult for agencies to re-establish their credibility, legitimacy, and trust with their community.

"When so many are turning away from reforms to strengthen police/youth interactions, Massachusetts is demonstrating it can create accountability of law enforcement agencies and officers to protect youth and reduce justice by geography," Thureau said.

About Strategies for Youth (SFY):

Strategies for Youth (SFY) is a national policy and training organization dedicated to ensuring the best outcomes for youth interacting with law enforcement. By providing developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and equitable training since 2010, SFY aims to reduce juvenile arrests and enhance public safety, ensuring better outcomes for young people, police, and their communities. SFY's [12 Model Law Enforcement Policies for Youth Interaction](#) provide a foundational blueprint relied upon by experts and advocates nationwide. More information about the Cambridge, Mass.-based organization can be found online at: strategiesforyouth.org