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ResearchReport

Use of Handcuffs on Young Children

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Issue

Can police officers restrain young children with handcuffs?

Summary

With specific exceptions (see below), a new law generally prohibits police officers from using handcuffs to restrain a child the officer knows is under age 14. This prohibition begins at the point of the child's initial contact with the police officer and applies as long as the child has not been adjudicated a delinquent. This law will take effect on October 1, 2025 (PA 25-163).

When is the use of handcuffs on young children allowed?

Under the new law, a police officer is allowed to use handcuffs to restrain a child under age 14 when it is:

1. necessary for public safety;
2. necessary because the child is using or threatening to use physical force on a police officer who is engaging with the child; or
3. ordered by the court in juvenile proceedings (CGS § 46b-122a, as amended by PA 25-163).

A summary of the new law is available here.

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