

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS FACT SHEET

Status Offenses: Curfew



NATIONAL
HOMELESSNESS
LAW CENTER

What is a status offense?

Status offenses are activities that are illegal for people under the age of majority* but NOT illegal for adults. Examples include not attending school, running away from home, buying or drinking alcohol, and curfew violations.

What is a curfew?

A curfew is a law that requires people to remain indoors between specified hours, typically at night.

Do curfews only apply to young people?

Mostly! However, there are other types of curfews that apply to adults as well such as “emergency” curfews and curfews that apply to everyone in certain public areas (such as parks that “close” at night). Some countries around the world implemented curfew laws for people of all ages to try to stop the spread of COVID-19. In the United States, several cities implemented curfew laws for people of all ages to try to stop the protests that happened after the murder of George Floyd.

Is there a curfew in my city or state?

Seven states and DC have statewide curfew laws: Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Tennessee, Oregon, D.C.. And every other state allows cities and towns to set curfews if they want to. Here is a way to find out: [Curfew Laws by State](#).

What if my state and city doesn't have a curfew law for youth?

Then you have the right to be out at night... unless there is an emergency curfew or some other law that prohibits you from being in a certain place at a certain time.

What is the point of curfew laws?

Proponents of curfew laws think they help prevent youth from committing crimes and from becoming victims of crime. However, [a review of studies](#) about these laws found that curfews do not have any effect on youth and crime.

What is the problem with curfew laws?

When cities dig into the [data](#) around curfew laws, it quickly becomes obvious that there is clear evidence of racial bias in their enforcement. Also, unhoused youth are disproportionately impacted by these laws, which essentially criminalize homelessness. Some cities are adding [exemptions](#) to curfew laws for unhoused youth but youth may not know about these exemptions and law enforcement officers are unlikely to enforce these exemptions consistently and accurately.

*The age of majority is the age you are legally considered an adult. [Click here for more info.](#)

This is NOT legal advice. To find a lawyer in your state, click [here](#).