



When Kids Get Arrested: What Every Adult Should Know

Sandra Simkins

Rutgers University Press (Dec 20, 2009)

\$60.00 (224pp)

978-0-8135-4638-4

This is the book no parent wants to have any reason to read. But according to the FBI, nearly 1.4 million people under the age of eighteen are arrested each year for committing some offense (and that figure doesn't include minors arrested for their own protection, as for mental illness). To have a child arrested for any reason is a frightening experience, and most adults have no idea how to help a child in this situation.

Fortunately, Sandra Simkins, Esq., juvenile defense attorney and founder of the Children's Justice Clinic at Rutgers University, knows how the juvenile legal system works—or doesn't, in some cases—and she has written an invaluable guide to help parents through this traumatic event. Years of experience have given Simkins not only experience, but empathy, and her book reflects both. The opening, entitled "If you only have five minutes..." is a quick checklist of the most pressing tips parents will need to know right away. That alone is worth the price of the book, but the chapters that follow explain in greater detail what to expect and how to handle going through the legal labyrinth. Topics include basic information about custody, what to expect from interrogations, why girls need special legal help, and coverage on legal topics as diverse as school discipline, mental illness, race, and sexual offense charges.

Simkin doesn't try to sugarcoat the harsher realities, and while that occasionally makes for difficult reading (especially the material on institutional abuse and calling in help for a troubled child), it also gives the book a solid sense of authority. The author has witnessed a variety of cases, and she presents numerous real-life examples of things that went well and not-so-well, and she explains why. She's clear and blunt about what's important: when talking about why it's important to follow the rules of probation, she says, "Probation violations have a way of keeping you stuck in the system and positioning you to be an adult offender." Chilling words indeed—but with this book, Simkin provides keys to avoiding that future.

(November / December 2009)

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