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## New rules soft on juvenile offenders

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CHILDREN IN conflict with the law will now be let off with community service, which they can perform while living with their parents or guardians, according to the new Juvenile Justice rules notified on Friday.

The rules allow Juvenile Justice Boards to order children involved in crimes with punishments of less than seven years to perform community service, including cleaning parks, serving the elderly in nursing homes, helping the local police, hospital or fire department and serving disabled children.

The police will not be allowed to arrest these children and can only record information. Soon after the apprehension of a child (defined as someone below 18 years of age), he or she has to be handed over to the special Juvenile Police Unit, which is then required to ensure the juvenile appears before a Juvenile Justice Board within 24 hours. Under the rules, policemen in uniform cannot apprehend such children.

The amended Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 also says primary responsibility of the child lies with the biological or foster parents, who have to ensure the child performs the required com-

### NEW PROVISIONS

- More powers on child care and protection has been granted to Child Welfare Committees, to be constituted in each district
- There will be a state and district child protection units to oversee implementation of the Act.
- Adoption of children, whose care cannot be taken by biological parents.
- Each home will have a children's committee, which would help in administering the home.

munity service. The boards will allow foster care with an individual or voluntary organization on a bond before they are adopted.

"The concept is similar to that in Western countries where the child can live with the family but with certain restrictions," said an official with the Ministry of Women and Child Development.

To check the rising number of street children involved in crime, the rules provides for repatriation and restoration to families, unless it is not in the interest of the child. Also, the past record of the child will have to be scrapped by the board, to be constituted in each district.

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