



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Children's Advocates Call on DOJ to Halt Placing
Youth in Adult Jails and Prisons
*Cite concerns over safety and well-being of youth***

Washington, D.C. – In a response released today, *Preventing the Sexual Abuse of Youth in Correctional Settings*, children's advocates called on the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to halt the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons to ensure the safety and protection of children in the adult criminal justice system. The response was authored by the Campaign for Youth Justice, the Center for Children's Law and Policy, the Children's Defense Fund, First Focus, the Juvenile Law Center, the Youth Law Center, and The Equity Project and issued in response to a call for public comments by May 10 on the National Prison Rape Elimination Commission Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape.

"In light of the overwhelming research demonstrating the extreme risks youth face in adult jails and prisons, we are calling on the U.S. Department of Justice to implement these standards without delay and to ensure that these standards ensure the removal of youth from adult jails and prisons," says Neelum Arya, Research and Policy Director for the Campaign for Youth Justice and one of the authors of this response.

The response cites research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics that shows that 21% and 13% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005 and 2006 respectively, were youth under the age of 18 (surprisingly high since only 1% of jail inmates are juveniles). Additionally the response cites research documenting that youth have the highest suicide rates of all inmates in jails. Youth are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility. According to testimony before the Commission, an expert testified that 80% of her youth clients sentenced to adult prison were sexually assaulted within the first year of their incarceration.

Among a compilation of carefully considered recommendations, the document's authors strongly support the adoption of the standards overall and also recommend improvements to the standards, noting that "the language in the Standards and discussion do not adequately protect youth in light of the available evidence about the high risk of sexual abuse of children in adult facilities." The authors urge that "the adult standards should be modified to remove youth from adult jails and prisons altogether."

The recommendations are consistent with long standing policies from adult and juvenile correctional professionals such as the Association of State Correctional Administrators, the American Correctional Association, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, American Jail Association, and the National Juvenile Detention Association that show their endorsement for keeping youth in separate facilities.

Although there is no national data system that collects data on youth transferred to the adult system, researchers estimate that as many as 200,000 youth are prosecuted as adults each year. According to recent reports from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Department of Justice, youth who are tried as adults are more likely to reoffend than youth retained in the juvenile justice system.

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The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

For more information, visit: www.campaignforyouthjustice.org.