



BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**New National Poll Shows Strong Public Support for  
Rehabilitation and Treatment of Youth Over Incarceration**

*More than 80 percent of people feel that a judge should make the ultimate decision of trying a kid in the adult criminal justice system*

Washington, D.C. – Today, a new national poll highlights critical and timely information on youth in the justice system, showing overwhelming public support for treatment and rehabilitation of youth over incarceration and automatic prosecution in adult criminal court. This survey, a sample of 1,000 American adults, was commissioned by the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) and conducted by GBA Strategies.

“This survey shows the vast majority of Americans believe youth in the justice system can take responsibility for their actions and, through rehabilitation and treatment, make better decisions and positive contributions to society,” said Mike Bocian, Founding Partner at GBA Strategies.

**Highlights of Poll:**

- Public strongly favors rehabilitation and treatment approaches, such as counseling, education, treatment, restitution, and community service (89%);
- Americans strongly favor involving the youth's families in treatment (86%), keeping youth close to home (77%), and ensuring youth are connected with their families (86%);
- Public strongly favors individualized determinations on a case-by-case basis by juvenile court judges in the juvenile justice system than automatic prosecution in adult criminal court (76%);
- Americans support requiring the juvenile justice system to reduce racial and ethnic disparities (66%);
- Public supports increasing funds to provide more public defenders to represent youth in court (71%);
- Public supports independent oversight to ensure youth are protected from abuse while in state or local custody (84%); and
- Public rejects placement of youth in adult jails and prisons (69%).

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"This public opinion research demonstrates Americans' strong support for rehabilitation and treatment for court-involved youth, over incarceration and automatic prosecution in adult criminal court," stated CFYJ's President & CEO Liz Ryan. "In light of this research, it is urgent that state officials accelerate youth justice reforms to reduce the incarceration of youth and prosecution in adult criminal court, and that Congress and the Administration reject deep cuts to juvenile justice funding."

A few states have started to move away from the punitive approach that relies on incarceration as well as prosecution in adult criminal court. On October 4, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released a new report, [No Place for Kids](#), on the roughly 60,500 U.S. youth – disproportionately young people of color – who are confined in juvenile correctional facilities or other residential programs on any given night. The report documents that youth prisons do not reduce future reoffending, waste taxpayer dollars and frequently expose youth to dangerous and abusive conditions. The Casey report highlights an emerging trend in which states have substantially reduced their juvenile correctional facility populations in recent years, and that at least 18 states have closed more than 50 juvenile corrections facilities over the past four years.

Earlier this year, CFYJ released [State Trends: Legislative Changes from 2005-2010 Removing Youth from the Adult Criminal Justice System](#) on the estimated 250,000 youth who are tried, sentenced, or incarcerated as adults every year across the United States. Over 10,000 youth are at risk in adult jails and prisons on a daily basis, and youth in adult facilities are at the greatest risk of prison rape of all inmates. The report documents more than 20 states in the United States that have changed or are considering changes to their state policies on the prosecution of youth in adult criminal court.

As thousands of juvenile justice stakeholders convene this week for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's [\(OJJDP\) national conference](#), experts will discuss these juvenile justice trends and solutions for decreasing the inappropriate detention and incarceration of youth, reducing racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system, increasing family engagement, and removing youth from the adult criminal justice system.

Counter to this public opinion research and state trends, Congress unfortunately is considering deep cuts to juvenile justice programs. In the coming days, Congress is in the process of making important decisions about funding critical programs that prevent delinquency, protect children from the dangers of adult jails and prisons, and keep communities safe. They are considering cuts of 60-90% that will result in increases in the inappropriate use of detention and incarceration of children, including placement of children in adult jails and prisons.

**For more information or to view this poll, please visit [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org).**

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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.*