

LET'S GET CHILDREN OUT OF ADULT COURTS, JAILS, AND PRISONS

Our children are worth far more than the worst decision they have ever made. We cannot simply abandon them to the adult justice system. The practice of prosecuting youth in adult courts and incarcerating them in adult facilities is:

OVER-USED

- Every year in this country, as many as **200,000** youth are put into the adult criminal justice system, most of them for nonviolent offenses.
- In 22 states and the District of Columbia, children as young as **SEVEN** can be prosecuted as adults.
- Each year **95,000** youth are held in adult jails and prisons.

DISCRIMINATORY

- Although African-American youth make up 17% of the overall youth population, they account for 30% of those arrested and **62% of the youth prosecuted** in the adult criminal system.
- **1 in 8** African-American youth convicted of killing someone will be sentenced to life without parole, against 1 out of 13 for their white counterparts.
- African American youth are **9 times** more likely, Latino youth are **40%** more likely to receive an adult prison sentence as white youth.
- Tribal youth are **1.84 times** more likely than white youth to receive an adult prison sentence.

HARMFUL

- Even though only 1% of all jail inmates were under 18 in 2005 and 2006, they accounted for **21%** and **13%** of the victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails respectively.
- Many children behind bars are placed in isolation where they are locked down **23** hours a day in their cells.
- Youth housed in adult jails are **36** times more likely to commit suicide than youth in juvenile detention facilities.

CONTRADICTED BY SCIENCE

- Research into adolescent brain development shows that youth are more likely than adults to be **permanently traumatized** by the harsh realities of the adult system.
- Youth are also more likely to **respond positively to rehabilitation** available in the juvenile system.

NOT POPULAR

- In a 2011 national poll, **69%** of Americans opposed placement of youth in adult jails and prisons, while **89%** favored rehabilitation and treatment approaches for youth, such as counseling, education, restitution, and community services.
- A 2016 Louisiana poll found that **66%** of adults favored moving 17-year-olds charged with minor offenses to the juvenile justice system.

A FAILED POLICY

- Research tells us that youth who are prosecuted in the adult system are **34%** more likely to recidivate and with more violent offenses than those handled by the juvenile system.
- Youth sentenced as adults carry their criminal record their whole life, diminishing their chances to find jobs, access decent housing, obtain student loans and go to college, join the military, or even vote.

CHANGING

- In the past **10** years, **30** states have enacted **48** individual pieces of legislation to remove youth from adult jails and prisons, limit the prosecution of youth in adult court, or revise sentencing laws.
- Comprehensive and age-appropriate approaches receive a wide support all over the political spectrum, including from conservative groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council or the James Madison Institute.

To learn more, or get involved in changing things in your state, contact: Brian Evans, State Campaign Coordinator, Campaign for Youth Justice, 202-558-3580 ext. 1606 | bevans@cfyj.org