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## **7,500 Youth in Adult Jails: Report** *Young People at Risk of Assault, Suicide; Frequently Held Pre-Trial*

(Washington, DC) -- Despite a federal law designed to keep juveniles out of adult jails that has been on the books for over three decades, on any given day, 7,500 youth are in adult jails, according to a new report released today by the Campaign for Youth Justice.

*“Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America”* finds that on an average day 7,500 young people are held in adult facilities in the United States, and the yearly rate may be several times higher, resulting in the jailing of tens of thousands of young people. The report presents the latest research on the characteristics of youth incarcerated in U.S. jails and the risks they face, including:

- **Sexual Assault.** When youth are placed with adults in adult jails, they are at risk of physical and sexual assault. In 2005, 21% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence were under eighteen years old, even though youth make up less than 1% of the total jail population.
- **Suicide.** Youth have the highest suicide rates of all inmates in jails. They are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility, and 19 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than youth in the general population.
- **Damage to Communities and Public Safety.** Jailing juveniles is counter-productive from a community and public safety perspective. New evidence shows that placing youth in the adult criminal justice system increases their likelihood of re-offending. Children who are prosecuted in adult court are more likely to be re-arrested more often and more quickly for serious offenses.

*Jailing Juveniles* details how young people are frequently held in adult facilities and exposed to these dangers, even before they’ve had their day in court. Up to one half of all youth transferred to adult court who are held in jail are eventually sent back to the juvenile justice system or not convicted at all. Most youth who are detained in adult jails, but not convicted in adult court will have spent at least one month in an adult jail and one in five of these youth will have spent over six months in an adult jail. Among those youth eventually

sentenced to community supervision or given a juvenile sanction, more than 7 out of 10 were held in an adult jail pre-trial.

"We are counting on Congress to fix this 'loophole' in the federal law," says Liz Ryan of the Campaign for Youth Justice. "The law has worked for more than thirty years to protect youth from the dangers of adult jails and it should be updated to ensure that all children are protected."

*Jailing Juveniles* recommends a number of concrete steps that federal, state, and county policymakers can take to increase public safety while fulfilling their duty to protect youth in the justice system. Core recommendations include:

- **Congress:** Fix the loophole in the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) and extend its "jail removal" core protection for all children, and adequately fund juvenile justice research, data collection and state and county technical assistance programs.
- **State Legislatures:** Promote placement of youth in juvenile justice facilities as an alternative to adult jails for all youths detained pre-trial.
- **Counties:** Initiate results-based "model approaches" to removing youth from jails.

*"Jailing Juveniles: The Dangers of Incarcerating Youth in Adult Jails in America"* is available on the Campaign for Youth Justice Website:

[http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/national\\_reports.html](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/national_reports.html).

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