

LET'S RAISE THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION!

Across the country, tens of thousands of children are prosecuted and incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system every year. The Raise the Age (RTA) movement is about changing this harmful approach by letting youth under 18 start in the juvenile system, because they deserve the chance to turn their lives around.

WHAT IS RTA?

- Raise the Age is a campaign that supports **raising the age of criminal responsibility** to 18 for youth throughout the country to improve outcomes both for them and public safety.
- In states that have raised the age, children accused of certain crimes can still be charged as adults by being transferred into the adult criminal justice system. Raise the Age does not ensure that all youth under 18 stay in the juvenile justice system, but requires at least that the majority start in this age-appropriate system.

WHY RTA?

- **Adolescents are not adults.** Research¹ shows that adolescents' cognitive skills are still developing, which makes them more impulsive and less aware of the consequences of their actions, and more responsive to the kinds of programming offered in a juvenile justice setting.
- Youth under 18 in the adult system are much more likely to commit **suicide** or to be the victims of **physical and emotional abuse** such as **sexual assault**,² and youth prosecuted in the adult system are **34% more likely to recidivate** and with more violent offenses.³
- Raising the age **does not cost more** nor have a negative impact on the juvenile system. Connecticut raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18 in 2007; between 2010 and 2013, the completion of juvenile probation without re-arrest rate increased by 22% among 16 year-old and older youth⁴.

WHO NEEDS TO RTA?

- 2 states, **NY** and **NC**, automatically prosecute **16 and 17 year-olds** as adults, regardless of their offense.
- **5 states** (GA, MI, MO, TX, WI) treat **all 17 year-olds as adults**, regardless of their offense.
- In these 7 states, most youth under 18 charged as adults are accused of **non-violent** crimes. For example in Michigan, about 60% of 17-year-olds were charged with non-violent offenses that did not include a weapon, and 58% of those entering the system at age 17 had no prior juvenile record⁵.

IS THERE MOMENTUM FOR RTA?

- Over the past decade, **6 states** have raised the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18. Some states like Connecticut are even pushing to **raise the age to 21**.
- **This is the fewest number of states since the juvenile court was created at the turn of the 19th century.**
- In the 2015-16 legislative sessions, there have been proposals to raise the age of criminal jurisdiction in 6 different states; two of those states – Louisiana and South Carolina – passed Raise the Age laws this year.

¹ <https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/us1012ForUpload.pdf>

² http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/images/policybriefs/policyreform/FR_YACJS_2012.pdf

³ <http://static.nicic.gov/Library/025555.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.raiseheagect.org/results-publicsafety.html>

⁵ <http://www.raiseheagemi.org/#!/the-facts/c10a3>