

News-worthy Trends

State Criminal Justice Systems Are Changing For Youth

(NAPSA)—There is hopeful news for young people held in the adult criminal justice system. A number of states are beginning to recognize that youths have developmental differences from adults and in many cases still possess great potential for rehabilitation. In addition, many states are now taking these factors into account at sentencing.

That's the word from advocates such as Jessica Sandoval, Vice President of an organization called Campaign For Youth Justice (CFYJ).

Sandoval says that over the past eight years, 23 states have enacted 40 pieces of legislation to reduce the prosecution of youths in adult criminal courts and end the placement of youths in adult jails and prisons.

She points to a report from CFYJ that documents four trends in justice reform efforts across the country:

- Eleven states (Colorado, Idaho, Indiana, Maine, Nevada, Hawaii, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Texas, Oregon and Ohio) have passed laws limiting states' authority to house youths in adult jails and prisons.

- Four states (Connecticut, Illinois, Mississippi and Massachusetts) have expanded their juvenile court jurisdiction so that older youths who previously would have been automatically tried as adults are not prosecuted in adult criminal court.

- Eleven states (Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Utah, Virginia, Washington, Ohio, Maryland and Nevada) have changed their transfer laws, making it more likely that youths will stay in the juvenile justice system.

- Eight states (California, Colorado, Georgia, Indiana, Texas, Missouri, Ohio and Washington) have changed their mandatory minimum sentencing laws to take



Photo credit: Richard Ross

Experts say that over the past eight years, 23 states have enacted legislation to end the placement of youth in the adult criminal justice system.

into account the developmental differences between youth and adults, and allow for post-sentence review for youths facing juvenile life without parole or other sentencing reform for a youth sentenced as an adult.

Said Carmen Daugherty, Policy Director for CFYJ, "We now have more evidence on what does work to reduce juvenile crime, which is rehabilitation and treatment over incarceration. Public opinion strongly favors rehabilitation and treatment over incarceration and judicial review over automatic prosecution in adult court."

CFYJ works to end the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

For a copy of "State Trends—Legislative Victories from 2011–2013: Removing Youth from the Adult Criminal Justice System," contact April Turner at (202) 558-3580 or aturner@cfyj.org.

To contact your elected officials and share your opinions on your state's policies, visit www.house.gov and www.senate.gov.