

## Trying Kids As Adults: Policies Are Changing

(NAPSA)—More than 20 states in the United States have changed or are considering changes to their policies on trying kids as adults, according to a new report, “State Trends: Legislative Changes from 2005–2010 Removing Youth from the Adult Criminal Justice System,” released by the Campaign for Youth Justice.

Most of the youths prosecuted in adult court are charged with nonviolent offenses, and young people kept in the juvenile justice system are much less likely to reoffend than those transferred into the adult system.

“State Trends” examines 27 pieces of legislation removing youth from the adult criminal justice system, as well as showcasing states currently contemplating reforms. In the past five years, 15 states have passed legislation and at least another nine have active policy reform efforts under way. The report presents an overview of the major problems that result from trying youth in adult criminal court and analyzes four distinct ways by which states and municipal jurisdictions are changing the politics of youth crime.

States included in these trends are Arizona, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Mississippi, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington. Other states mentioned in the report as on the horizon for reform: Florida, Maryland, Massachusetts, Missouri, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina, Oregon and Wisconsin.

“State policymakers are beginning to understand the research that kids are not adults and need educational and rehabilitative ser-



**Keeping kids out of adult jails can be a good way to keep them from reoffending.**

VICES,” said Neelum Arya, “State Trends” author and research and policy director for the Campaign for Youth Justice. “State Trends” documents the ineffectiveness of prosecuting youth in adult criminal court and tracks the trends of returning to the original promise of the juvenile court.”

In a rush to crack down on youth crime, states enacted harsh laws a generation ago, making it easier for youths to be prosecuted in adult criminal courts. Every state allows youths to be prosecuted as adults and an estimated 250,000 children are prosecuted as adults each year in the United States. In more than half of the states, there is no minimum age limit on who can be prosecuted as an adult. This means that in these states very young children, even a 7-year-old, can be prosecuted as an adult.

To get more information about this issue or to view the “State Trends” report, visit [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org) or call (202) 558-3580.