



BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

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U.S. Attorney General's Task Force Recommends Against Trying Youth As Adults

Cites recent Supreme Court Decision on Miller, Research on Recidivism

(Washington, D.C.) -- Today, after a year-long exhaustive study, the Attorney General's Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence issued comprehensive recommendations to the Attorney General on reducing childrens' exposure to violence, including a recommendation to abandon policies that prosecute, incarcerate or sentence youth under 18 in adult criminal court. According to the report, "We should stop treating juvenile offenders as if they were adults, prosecuting them in adult courts, incarcerating them as adults, and sentencing them to harsh punishments that ignore their capacity to grow."

"The Task Force's recommendation to remove youth from adult criminal court is grounded in the latest research on effective approaches to reducing juvenile crime," says Liz Ryan, CFYJ's President and CEO. "We look forward to working with Attorney General Holder and members of the Task Force to ensure that federal and state policies and budgets align with this recommendation."

An estimated 250,000 youth under the age of 18 are being handled by the adult criminal justice system each year and nearly 100,000 youth are cycled through adult jailed and prisons on an annual basis in the United States. According to research by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, 21% and 13% of all substantiated victims of inmate-on-inmate sexual violence in jails in 2005 and 2006 respectively were youth under the age of 18. Research also shows that youth are 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile detention facility.

Studies across the nation have consistently concluded that juvenile transfer laws are ineffective at deterring crime and reducing recidivism. U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have sponsored research highlighting the ineffectiveness of juvenile transfer laws at providing a deterrent for juvenile delinquency and decreasing recidivism.

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The Task Force's recommendation reflects the policies of all the major professional associations representing juvenile and adult criminal justice system stakeholders such as the American Correctional Association, the American Jail Association, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators, the National Partnership for Juvenile Services, and the National Association of Counties that highlight the harm youth are subjected to in the adult criminal justice system.

Additionally, the Task Force's recommendation is consistent with the latest state law reforms according to an August, 2012 report, "Trends in Juvenile Justice State Legislation 2001 - 2011" released by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), showing that numerous states have undertaken policy reforms in the last decade to remove youth from the adult criminal justice system and from adult jails and prisons.

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The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.