

CAMPAIGN FOR YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

Campaign for Youth Justice Newsletter

July/August 2007

In This Issue

A "Capitol Offense" Released

Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition Holds Community Awareness Event

Wisconsin Taking Measures to Reduce Racial Disparities in Justice System

North Carolina Legislature Examines Study Bill on Raise the Age

Rhode Island: Budget Debate Continues

Justice Policy Institute Releases New Report Examines the 'War on Gangs'

Congress Examines the JJDPA

Pittsburgh Community-Based Alternative to Incarceration

Greetings!

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

A "Capital Offense" Released

On July 25, the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) released a report, *A Capital Offense: Youth in DC's Adult Criminal Justice System and Strategies for Reform*, examining the status of children in the District of Columbia's adult criminal justice system. As of May, the D.C. jail held 42 youth pre-trial, compared to 14 last year. Many of these youth - some as young as 15 years of age - were sent to adult jail without review by a judge or court hearing.

"This population is of incredible importance because they are often the most targeted or talked about group in policy discussion about juvenile crime," says Dr. Jennifer

Featured at July 12th
Congressional Hearing

Case of Jena Six Stirs Up
Questions of Disparate
Sentencing, Race and
Justice

Save the Date! New York
Juvenile Justice Coalition to
Host Forum

Act 4 Juvenile Justice
Campaign Urges Support for
the Reauthorization of JJDP

JDAI Help Desk: An
Informational Resource for
the Juvenile Justice
Community

[Join Our Mailing List!](#)

Quick Links

[Make a Donation](#)

[Read More About Us](#)

[Did You Know](#)

[Resources](#)

[See Our Recent Policy Brief
Series](#)

Woolard, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University. "Yet from a research perspective, we are only beginning to understand the developmental impact of incarcerating youth with adult offenders."

The report's findings show that youth in D.C. jail can spend up to 23 and a half hours a day locked up in their cells. Initial data as well as accounts from youth indicate that the experience of being confined in close contact with adults can have severe consequence on a young person's development. Youth detained in the D.C. jail do not benefit from the extensive reform measures currently under implementation at the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services. The report also sheds light on the lack of appropriate educational and rehabilitative programs and services available to youth in adult facilities.

Kelli Taylor, Executive Director of Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop meets every week with young male inmates and asserts that youth in D.C. jail are "at a crucial crossroads in their life. They may be facing big time, but they're also very young. Our focus is on these kids having access to education. It can mean all the difference."

Youth who go on to receive a sentence of incarceration in an adult prison, come under the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). These youth can be placed in facilities hundreds of miles from home, in states as far as Tennessee, North Dakota, and Wisconsin. Separated from their communities and families, and often subject to verbal, psychological, and physical abuse by fellow inmates and guards, youth confined in adult facilities are more likely to recidivate and lead unstable lives.

"Kids leave adult facilities with poor social skills, poor coping skills, and very poor preparation to enter the labor market," says Dr. Donna Bishop, a professor at Northeastern University's College of Criminal Justice. She explains that "even if they don't go into adult correctional facilities, they must deal with the stigma of an adult conviction. Employers don't want to hire them. Without jobs, without support, and encountering a lot of resistance when they make efforts to improve

themselves, it's no wonder that they so readily return to crime."

The report calls for the end of pre-trial placement of youth in the DC Jail. The report also urges policymakers to consider key recommendations that include: 1) requiring that all transfer cases be decided by a judge; 2) providing a "reverse" waiver mechanism for youth in adult court; 3) encouraging the Federal Bureau of Prisons to contract with the Department of Youth Rehabilitative Services and; 4) collecting and analyzing data on youth tried and sentenced as adults on an on-going basis.

A copy of the report can be found at http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/national_reports.

Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition Holds Community Awareness Event

The Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition (JDCY) in partnership with the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) held a community event to coincide with the release of the report, *A Capital Offense: Youth In DC's Adult Criminal Justice System And Strategies For Reform* on the evening of Thursday, July 26. The event, which was held at HR57 Center for the Preservation of Jazz and Blues, brought together juvenile justice and youth advocates together for a night of food, music, and a just cause.

The Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition advocates for a fair and effective youth justice system in the District of Columbia that provides a comprehensive and effective continuum of community-based programs and reduces the reliance on incarceration as a response to juvenile crime.

The event featured the sounds of DJ 2 Tone Jones and progressive hip-hop group Asheru and the Els, and a live art presentation of on-the-spot painting by the AM Radio collective; that was later auctioned off. Additionally, the event showed a film screening of the campaign's, *Childhood Interrupted*, featuring interviews with current and formerly incarcerated youth, youth activists, parents, researchers and public officials who tell their stories and share their views, providing powerful arguments on why youth should not be tried, sentenced or incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system. A young male who was formerly at the Oak Hill Youth Center, the District's juvenile correctional facility, also recited one of his poems, entitled, *My Life*, telling the audience of the challenges he faced and his determination and will to overcome them.

The event also honored the accomplishments of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, State Representative Toni Walker, State Senator Toni Harp, and Judge William Lavery in Connecticut in light of their recent victory in helping to pass a law that will raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 18, a policy which will fully be

implemented by 2010.

Wisconsin Taking Measures to Reduce Racial Disparities in Justice System

On July 24, the Governor-appointed Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities in Wisconsin's Justice System hosted a public hearing in Madison in an effort to address the issue of racial disparities in the justice system.

This past January, the National Council on Crime and Delinquency (NCCD) released a report that revealed that Wisconsin leads the nation in the rate of overrepresentation of youth under 18 committed to adult prisons. Of the 176 17-year-olds who were sentenced to prison in 2005, 61 percent of those youth were minorities. In that same year, the overall population of 17-year-olds was nearly 90 percent Caucasian.

"The systemic exclusion of all 17-year-olds from juvenile court has myriad effects on those 17-year-olds who are in trouble with the law. While they might have had access to treatment and services in the juvenile system, the adult system is ill-equipped to meet the needs of these young offenders," said Wendy Henderson, a Policy Analyst for the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families.

Henderson who testified at the public hearing gave examples of the kinds of consequences an adult conviction can carry for youth under 18. "For example, if a 17-year-old is kicked out of her home, she can neither go to a homeless shelter nor rent an apartment (both require the individual to be 18 years old). This provides unique challenges for the community corrections workers in the adult system that must then help the young person find housing. Entering the adult criminal system a year prior to turning 18 can have significant life-long effects," she said.

The Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF) submitted two key recommendations to the Committee, first, to return 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system, and second, to require that data be collected by race and age at all points in the justice system, due to inconsistent data collection, particularly at the local and jail levels. WCCF believes these recommendations can help to keep young people out of the justice system all together. "The vast majority of kids who commit crimes will not go on to a life of crime, but by trying them as adults we impede their ability to gain further education and employment," Henderson says.

North Carolina Legislature Examines Study Bill on Raise the Age

In North Carolina, the House Rules Committee recently considered a bill that would have studied how to amend the law that requires state criminal courts to treat 16-and 17-year-olds as adults. This study bill directed the Governor's Crime Commission to study

how to raise the age in North Carolina. The Senate considered an identical measure also contained in a study bill.

While both the House and the Senate ultimately adjourned without passing either study bill, there is a possibility that the study will still take place as raising the age was to fall under the auspices of the Governor's Crime Commission and would not necessarily require a state appropriation. The state could apply for federal funds to conduct the study.

Currently, North Carolina is one of three states that automatically prosecutes youth as young as 16 through the adult system. Connecticut recently approved legislation raising the age to 18 and this change will take effect in 2010.

The Governor's Crime Commission has already released some of their findings, in *A Discussion of Incarceration and Its Alternatives in North Carolina: A Crime and Justice Perspective*, to view the findings please visit, <http://www.ncgccd.org/pdfs/pubs/ncincarceration.pdf>.

Rhode Island: Budget Debate Continues

Earlier this summer, the Rhode Island General Assembly approved a plan to automatically try all 17-year-olds as adults and incarcerate them in the Adult Correctional Institutions (ACI) a decision based on achieving cost savings to meet the state's financial crisis. Shortly after the budget was approved, prison officials noted that the move would not result in the anticipated cost savings, estimated to be \$3.6 million. This figure was based on the fact that it costs \$98,000 to house a youth at the Rhode Island Training School (RITS) as opposed to the \$40,000 it costs to house an inmate at the ACI. This estimate, however, was based on the cost of housing an adult inmate. Inmates under the age of 18 are housed in the most expensive "Super Max" unit, the highest security building available at the ACI, at an average cost of \$100,552 per year. These inmates are only allowed outdoors for two hours per day, although they are let out of their cells for several more hours to eat, socialize, and shower.

This new law negatively impacts 17 year olds: most youths of this age are still in high school and, as Teny Gross, Executive Director of the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence, points out, a harmless high school scuffle can escalate into criminal charges that could potentially change a young person's life forever. Voting rights and the ability to finance a college education through student loans, among other seemingly basic rights, would be revoked permanently.

Governor Carcieri and House Finance Committee Chairman Steven M. Constantino predict that, rather than sentence youths to the ACI, judges will likely place them on probation. To place an adult on adult probation costs around \$900, whereas placing a youth on probation costs \$4,000. If this does, in fact, happen, the state could save

money in the short term. However, the individual youths affected by such a law change will still be adversely affected: *any* charges, regardless of the sentence imposed, will result in an adult criminal record, which severely limits future opportunities for young people. Additionally, research shows that youth prosecuted as adults are more likely to reoffend.

The Providence Streetworkers Program, run by the Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence and employing 13 street workers, works to find jobs for at-risk kids, as well as help young people find community programs to keep them off the streets and to mediate neighborhood conflicts. Through the program, 33 previously incarcerated workers have been hired, twelve of them with serious charges on their criminal records. These workers are now respected and contributing members of society. If more money was invested in programs like Streetworkers that aim to prevent youth's problems from escalating through education and early intervention, the cost savings would be significant and positively impact youth involved in the justice system.

Justice Policy Institute Releases New Report Examines the 'War on Gangs'

A groundbreaking new report released by the Justice Policy Institute on July 18 finds that the billions of dollars spent on traditional gang suppression activities have failed to promote public safety and are often counterproductive. The report is released as lawmakers in Washington and various state capitols consider legislation to stiffen penalties for gang-related crime and increase funding for gang suppression.

Gang Wars: The Failure of Enforcement Tactics and the Need for Effective Public Safety Strategies, written by Judith Greene and Kevin Pranis, undertakes an extensive review of the research literature on gangs to clarify persistent misconceptions and examine the effectiveness of common gang control strategies. According to the report, in cities like Los Angeles where gang activity is most prevalent, more police, more prisons and more punitive measures haven't stopped the cycle of gang violence. Most surprising are conclusions that gangs are responsible for a relatively small share of crime; gang activity has not grown in the U.S.; whites make up a large - if largely invisible - proportion of gang members; most gang-involved youth quit before reaching adulthood; and heavy-handed suppression tactics can increase gang cohesion while failing to reduce violence.

The report is available on the Justice Policy Institute website, www.justicepolicy.org.

Congress Examines the JJDPA

On July 12, the U.S. House of Representatives held a joint hearing on the

reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP). The Education and Labor's Subcommittee on Healthy Families and Communities along with the Judiciary's Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security hosted the hearing in an effort to gather information and recommendations as Congress is scheduled to reauthorize the JJDP, originally established in 1974. Juvenile justice advocates and juvenile justice practitioners have called on members of Congress to strengthen the core protections in the act.

A panel of witnesses testified before the two subcommittees, each bringing different perspectives on their experiences with the juvenile justice system. Witnesses included Derrick Johnson from the Arizona Juvenile Justice Commission; David Freed, a District Attorney from Cumberland, PA and a member of Fight Crime, Invest in Kids; Paul Lawrence, a judge from New Hampshire's Juvenile Court; Shannon Jones, a graduate of the Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP), a model community-based alternative to incarceration in Pittsburgh; Robert Shepherd, Jr., Professor at the University of Richmond School of Law, and Dr. Jennifer Woolard, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Georgetown University.

Judge Paul Lawrence stated that Congress "should strive to keep kids out of institutional settings" and rely more on community-based programs and alternatives to detention. Lawrence also called on judges and other key decision-makers in the juvenile justice system to pay attention to the growing body of research on adolescent brain development. Dr. Woolard also testified on recent research in this area. According to Dr. Woolard, "the research on developmental differences challenges policymakers and practitioners to sort and manage a young population that can appear simultaneously adult-like and immature." Due to incomplete maturation in certain regions of the brain, "adolescents are less able to control impulses, less able to resist pressure from peers, less likely to think ahead, and more driven by the thrill of rewards." Dr. Woolard emphasized that even if youth are capable of committing certain offenses, they are not "miniature adults" and require developmentally appropriate services and sentences once they become involved with the justice system.

Testimony from Shannon Jones brought a youth perspective to the hearing. Although Jones spoke specifically on his experiences with CISP, his comments reflected the need to invest in and replicate successful community-based alternatives to incarceration across the nation. According to Jones, "I'm not the only young person CISP has helped, and I think that similar programs will help other youth as well. I've come a long way in six months and I have a bright future ahead of me." He added, "Maybe, I would have gotten here without CISP, but I also know that being a part of CISP helped me become a positive force in my community. You have the ability to help other young people like me become more productive members of our communities, and I hope that you take this opportunity to help start and fund other programs like CISP."

Jones stated that his CISP placement was not too far from his own home, an aspect of the program that significantly influences a young person's chances of successful rehabilitation. Jones noted that his interactions with the staff at CISP, many of whom are

African-American males from his own community made it possible for him to envision a better life within his familiar surroundings.

Representative Clarke (D-NY) engaged Jones during the question and answer session, asking him, "What did it mean to be held accountable when you were in CISP?" Jones explained that the different programs, ranging from community service activities to job training and victim awareness, provided a comprehensive opportunity for rehabilitation, one which made him think not only about his own actions but his relationship to his family and community.

Professor Shepherd urged Congress to provide funding for evidence-based best practices through the JJDP, as a growing body of research continues to confirm what youth advocates and practitioners have long argued: youth are different from adults and therefore require a separate system of support and services.

Congressman Robert "Bobby" Scott, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security, who co-chaired the hearing along with Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy, stated emphatically at the beginning of the hearing that "research has shown time and time again that treating juveniles as adults doesn't work."

Over a dozen members from both subcommittees were present for the hearing and took the entire time allotted for the question and answer period with many asking a second round. Additional issues that arose during the hearing included rehabilitating youth sex offenders, fostering parental responsibility and involvement, and addressing mental health concerns.

To learn more about the JJDP, visit www.act4jj.org. For copies of the hearing testimony and to view the hearing, visit <http://judiciary.house.gov/Oversight.aspx?ID=350>.

Pittsburgh Community-Based Alternative to Incarceration Featured at July 12th Congressional Hearing

On July 12, 18-year-old Shannon Jones testified before Congress on the success he experienced in the Allegheny County Juvenile Court's Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP), a Pittsburgh community-based alternative to incarceration. CISP began in 1990 as an effort to reduce recidivism and promote public safety in a cost effective manner. The program serves male youths aged 10 to 18 who would otherwise be incarcerated for their offenses. Starting in January 1997, CISP has also functioned as an aftercare program for youth released from institutional placements. CISP is a viable alternative to sending youth to adult court. To read Shannon Jones testimony before Congress, visit <http://judiciary.house.gov/OversightTestimony.aspx?ID=1040>.

Programs like CISP have proven that they are more cost effective than incarcerating a young person. When operating at full capacity, CISP's cost per participant is just \$64.00 per day. According to the CISP program, incarceration can cost an average of \$265.00 per day, depending on the facility used to jail or imprison a young person. In short, CISP has shown through its success that community-based alternatives to incarceration are more cost effective and help to rehabilitate youth.

Similar to Shannon Jones, Eric, 17, is just one of the many success stories that come from CISP. Before his commitment to CISP, he was placed in a juvenile center in Butler County, Pennsylvania. After talking to CISP counselors, however, he began to turn his life around. He says that CISP helped him to mature. The program's counselors pointed him in the right direction and set him on a positive path. CISP helped him to find a job and gave him the experience necessary to succeed. CISP also helped him with school through tutoring. Eric will graduate high school with the class of 2008, and is thinking of pursuing a career in the criminal justice field or helping youth involved within the court system. Although, first, he says he will get a college degree. Having already taken his SATs, he is off to a great start at least in part to his successful matriculation through CISP.

Youth who participate in the program must live within close proximity of the CISP office, since a key component of the program is to form bonds between the youth and the community. The understanding is that such bonds will make youth less likely to reoffend. Most of the youths involved in the program have committed property or drug offenses. Sex offenders and youths who have committed other violent offenses are not allowed to participate in the program.

While under the supervision of the program, youth are required to go to school, home, the CISP center, and a job if they have one. All travel times are closely monitored. The young men must remain inside their homes from 10:00 pm at night until 7:00 am every morning, and are tracked by an electronic monitoring bracelet. Youth involved in the program are held accountable 24 hours a day. They also receive drug and alcohol treatment, and are required to attend school daily, another closely watched aspect of the program.

To address the concerns of the communities the program operates in, CISP has tried to foster positive community relations by hiring staff members from the community, participating in community service activities, and creating contacts between local services and youths. Staff members for the program are selected from the communities they serve and are expected to function as role models for the youths they mentor. "Community Monitors," as program staff members are called, are not allowed to smoke tobacco or engage in any other activities that could negatively influence the young men. Typically, youths involved in the program must complete 100 hours of community service, however it is not unheard of for participants to perform upwards of 200 hours of service to their community while still involved in the program. In the year 2003, the program reached a grand total of 69,654 hours of

volunteer work coming from CISP participants since the program's inception. One of the institutions CISP works with, Glenshire Woods Personal Care Home, a residential senior center, has hired several graduates from the program as full-time employees. Clearly, CISP can and has changed many young people's lives for the better.

CISP was featured in a Models for Change publication, "Keystones for Reform" available online at <http://www.jlc.org/mfc/keystonesforreform.pdf>. For more information, contact CISP at (412)-350-0200.

Case of Jena Six Stirs Up Questions of Disparate Sentencing, Race and Justice

Last December, six African-American students at Jena High School in Central Louisiana were arrested after a school fight that left one white student with a concussion and several bruises. The six students were charged with attempted second-degree murder and conspiracy, facing up to 100 years in prison without parole.

The fight arose out of an incident that took place in early September of last year when an African-American high school student asked permission to sit under a tree in the schoolyard, a usual hangout for a group of white students, who make up 80 percent of the school's population. After being told by a school official to, "sit wherever you want," the student returned to the tree to find nooses hanging from the branches.

The display was not taken lightly by the African-American students and their parents, who expressed outrage over the incident. In a May article in the *Chicago Tribune*, Tracy Bowens, an African-American mother of two students at the high school, who protested the incident at a school board meeting said, "Hanging those nooses was a hate crime, plain and simple." After identifying the three white students responsible, the school's superintendent, Roy Breithaupt suspended them for three days.

"Adolescents play pranks," said Breithaupt, the superintendent of the LaSalle Parish school system. "I don't think it was a threat against anybody."

On December 4, a school fight between six black students and one white student led LaSalle Parish District Attorney, Reed Walters to charge the six black students, now referred to as the "Jena Six," who range in age from 15 to 17 years old with attempted second-degree murder and conspiracy.

Seventeen-year-old Mychal Bell's sentence, one of the first of the Jena Six to go on trial was reduced to aggravated battery and conspiracy charges and could face up to 22 years in prison.

Trials for the other five students have been delayed.

"There's been obvious racial discrimination in this case," said Joe Cook, Executive Director of the Louisiana chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, who described Jena as a "racial powder keg" primed to ignite. "It appears the black students were singled out and targeted in this case for some unusually harsh treatment" he said in a recent *Chicago Tribune* article.

The Campaign for Youth Justice invites you and your networks to sign a petition against the charges that have been brought against the Jena Six. To take action, visit <http://www.colorofchange.org/jena/>.

Save the Date! New York Juvenile Justice Coalition to Host Forum

On October 2nd, the New York Juvenile Justice Coalition will host a forum entitled, "From Connecticut to New York?: A Look at Raising the Age of Juvenile Court Jurisdiction from 16 to 18." Joining the forum are Abby Anderson, from the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, and Christine Rapillo from the Connecticut Public Defender's Office, who will give a presentation on the successful Raise the Age Campaign in Connecticut. There will also be a panel discussion on the legal and political considerations regarding raising the age in New York. For updates on the forum, visit: www.correctionalassociation.org.

Act 4 Juvenile Justice Campaign Urges Support for Reauthorization of JJDPA

The Act 4 Juvenile Justice campaign of the National Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention coalition is urging both local and national groups to take action to educate their constituents and congressional representatives on the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA). A promising joint hearing of the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee and the Subcommittee on Crime, Homeland Security, and Terrorism was held last month that jumpstarted the reauthorization process, but your help is still crucial in this process. Contact your state Senators and Representatives today and urge them to reauthorize the JJDPA. You can also start a postcard campaign or set up an individual meeting with your congressional representatives. Visit http://www.act4jj.org/get_involved.html today for more ideas on how you can get involved!

JDAI Help Desk: An Informational Resource for the Juvenile Justice Community

The JDAI Help Desk is a practice-based, informational resource for juvenile justice practitioners, policymakers, advocates, and others interested in improving the detention component of their delinquency system and their juvenile justice system overall.

Since 1992, the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, has demonstrated that jurisdictions can safely reduce the use of secure detention while strengthening their juvenile justice systems and protecting public safety. JDAI helps communities develop strong outcome measures limited additional costs, and in some cases, reduces costs. With reform efforts in more than 75 jurisdictions in 19 states and the District of Columbia, JDAI is now operational in those places responsible for almost 75 percent of the country's detained youth population!

The past fifteen years of JDAI system reform efforts have produced key lessons and strategies. These strategies, innovations and model practices are now available to you at the JDAI Help Desk.

- Learn about key strategies, best practices, and innovations by browsing materials generated by juvenile justice reform experts and JDAI sites.
- Receive individualized technical assistance by submitting your questions online.

Log on now: www.jdaihelpdesk.org!

The JDAI Help Desk is operated by the Pre-Trial Justice Institute in partnership with the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information about JDAI, visit the Annie E. Casey Foundation website at:

<http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/JuvenileDetentionAlternativesInitiative.aspx>.

Jihan Madyun

Campaign for Youth Justice

[Forward email](#)

✉ SafeUnsubscribe®

This email was sent to jkudrna@campaign4youthjustice.org, by

imadyun@campaign4youthjustice.org

[Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Instant removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).

Campaign for Youth Justice | 1012 14th Street, NW, Suite 610 | Washington | DC | 20005

Email Marketing by

