

Media Fact Sheet: Jails, Prisons, and Juveniles

Key Definitions:

- *Jail*: a locked facility usually reserved for adults who are awaiting trial. In many states, people are sentenced to serve time in an adult jail for misdemeanor offenses whose sentences are for one year or less.
- *Prison*: a locked facility usually reserved for people who have been convicted of felony offenses and serving sentences of a year or longer.
- *Status offense*: a behavior that is only prohibited to youth, such as running away, underage consumption of alcohol, breaking curfew, or truancy.
- *Adjudicated Delinquent*: a youth who has been found guilty by a judge of committing a delinquent act. In general, an adjudicated juvenile can be required to be placed in a juvenile correctional facility, community-based alternative to incarceration, or other non-incarceration program like probation or drug treatment.

Key Facts:

- An estimated 250,000 youth are tried, sentenced, or incarcerated as adults every year across the United States.
- On any given day, nearly 7,500 young people are locked up in adult jails.
- On any given night in America, 10,000 children are held in adult jails and prisons.
- The overwhelming majority of juveniles who enter adult court are not there for serious, violent crimes.
- Youth of color are over-represented at every stage of the juvenile justice system, and in the transfer process.
- 39 states permit or require that youth charged as adults be held pre-trial in an adult jail.
- 2 states currently try all 16 and 17 year olds as adults, regardless of crime (NC and NY).
- Youth housed in adult institutions are 36 times more likely to commit suicide than are youth housed in facilities for those under the age of 18.
- 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., though only 1% of jail inmates are juveniles.
- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, youth who are transferred from the juvenile court system to the adult criminal system are 34% more likely than youth retained in the juvenile system to be re-arrested for violent or other crime.
- As many as half of the youth tried in adult court will be sent back to the juvenile justice system or not convicted at all. Yet most of these youth will have spent at least one month in an adult jail, and one in five will have spent over six months in an adult jail.

For more national and state facts, please visit www.campaignforyouthjustice.org
or call Liz Ryan at 202.558.3580.