

**The Crime Report** | (<https://thecrimereport.org/2017/10/11/study-finds-significant-increase-in-state-juvenile-justice-reforms/>)

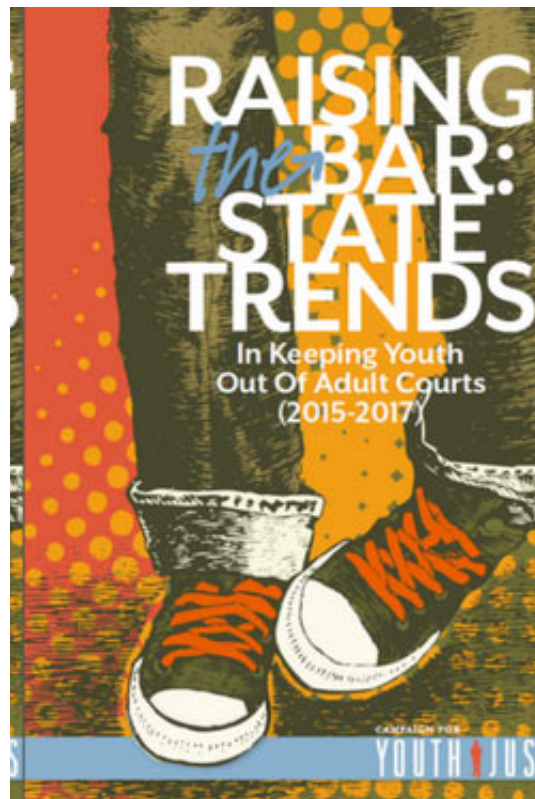
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# Study Finds 'Significant' Increase in State Juvenile Justice Reforms

By **TCR Staff** | October 11, 2017

At least 36 states have passed legislation to keep young people out of adult prisons or jails since 2005—and more states are on track to limit youth exposure to the adult justice system over the next two years, according to a study released Wednesday.

In its third “State Trends” report, the [Campaign for Youth Justice](#)



(<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/>) (CYJ) said reforms to the juvenile justice system aimed at treating children who ran afoul of the law “in a developmentally appropriate way” represented a “significant” increase over the past decade.

By 2014, for example, the number of young people under 18 who were automatically excluded from juvenile court had been cut in half to 90,900 from 175,000 in 2007.

Just in the past two years alone, some nine states and the District of Columbia passed laws removing young people from adult facilities or limiting their detention in such facilities, the report said.

At the same time, 19 states have raised the age at which youth are eligible to be tried or transferred in adult court or limited the types of offenses that would send them there.

“We are no longer giving up on our young people,” said Louisiana Gov. John Bell Edwards, who was quoted in the report. “Rather we are giving them a chance to get their lives back on track.”

Citing some 70 pieces of legislation to reform juvenile justice practices enacted by states since 2005, Campaign for Youth Justice CEO Marcy Mistrett said the measures represented “positive momentum.”

“These legislative victories are not just good for youth—they set an historic precedent in our country,” she said in a press release accompanying the report.

“Once New York and North Carolina fully implement their (raise-the-age) laws, it will be the first time since the creation of the juvenile court in the United States that 16-year-olds are not automatically treated as adult simply because of their age.”

Meanwhile California and Vermont restored the discretion of juvenile court judges to make “individualized determinations” on sentencing, thereby ending prosecutors’ ability to decide unilaterally whether a young person should be tried in the adult system.

The CYJ first began publishing state trends reports in 2011. The third update includes legislative achievements between January 2015 and August 2017.

But Mistrett said the newest “Raising the Bar” report still made clear that there was “still a lot of work to do”—especially under a new administration in Washington whose focus is on crime reduction and law enforcement rather than crime prevention.

She noted that five states still treat 17-year-olds as adults, and young people sent to adult facilities there suffer “physical and sexual trauma.” At the same time, racial disparities in the treatment of young people in trouble with the law have increased, she said.

“Advocates must be incredibly vigilant to ensure that legislative victories are fully implemented and preserved for ALL children,” she wrote in the introduction to the report.

At the same time, she called for “resisting legislation that does not reflect the overwhelming research in favor of serving youth in a developmentally appropriate, evidence-informed, community-based juvenile justice system rather than the adult system.”

“Further, we must embrace solutions that reduce, and don’t exacerbate penalties for youth of color.”

**For additional reading, see also, “Kids Kept in Solitary at LA’s Largest Juvenile Hall” (LA Witness) (<http://witnessla.com/several-kids-reportedly-kept-in-solitary-conditions-for-days-at-la-countys-largest-juvenile-hall/>)**

The full report can be downloaded here. (<https://kf4fx1bdsjx2as1vf38ctp7p-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/361229662-Raising-the-Bar-State-Trends-in-Keeping-Youth-Out-of-Adult-Courts-2015-2017.pdf>)

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