

Sheriffs Say YES to Raising the Age of Juvenile Jurisdiction

Protecting and serving 17-year-olds in adult custody is a challenge to our departments, a risk to long-term public safety in our communities and a burden on taxpayers.

*Sheriffs therefore **support** legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction.*

Texas is 1 of only 9 states to consider all 17-year-olds as adults in the justice system.

When a 17-year-old lands in our adult jail, keeping him safe is costly for taxpayers.

To ensure the safety of 17-year-olds in our care, best practice tells us 17-year-olds should be separated from older offenders in correctional facilities. This means increased staff and building units on to or jails to house these youth.

For example, to keep 17-year-olds safe, the Dallas County sheriff had to open a facility, costing taxpayers **\$80,000 per week**. Many other counties will soon need to retrofit their jails to comply with safety standards for 17-year-olds – costing tax payers millions of dollars.

Keeping youth in the adult criminal justice system can hurt long-term public safety.

The adult system does not have the education and rehabilitative services or strict probation requirements that the juvenile system uses to hold teenagers accountable and keep them from committing future crimes. Research has proven youth in the adult system have higher rates of recidivism; therefore keeping all 17-year-old offenders in the adult system creates an expensive cycle of additional crimes and incarceration.

The juvenile justice system is designed to offer developmentally appropriate services and programming to youth.

The juvenile justice system has the operational and structural capacity to effectively manage programming that address the specific rehabilitative and safety needs of youth. Juvenile probation officers are able to mentor, counsel, and discipline youth in order to help them obtain the necessary social skills and education to prevent habitual criminal behavior.

96% of arrests of 17 year olds in 2013 were for non-violent offenses.

The top 5 offenses were larceny, possession of marijuana, other (simple) assaults, liquor law violations, and disorderly conduct. Such offenders do not require the increased security of adult facilities, and can be effectively housed in juvenile facilities or be on probation at home where we know they will have the best long-term outcomes.