



Explanation of Juvenile Justice Reinvestment Act

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation to “raise the age” of juvenile jurisdiction—a huge victory for North Carolina youth and families! **Beginning in December 2019**, the vast majority of 16 and 17 year olds in our state will no longer be treated as adults in the criminal justice system.

Who’s included in Raise the Age?

- Sixteen and seventeen year olds who are charged with **misdemeanor or lower-level felony (Class H or I) crimes** will now be adjudicated in the juvenile system (versus convicted in the adult system). This represents **94% of 16-17 year olds** who are involved with the criminal justice system.

So—some 16-17 year olds will continue to go through the adult criminal justice system?

- Yes. After a probable cause hearing or by grand jury indictment in adult criminal court, 16-17 year olds charged with **Class A-G felonies** will be transferred and prosecuted in the adult system. Additionally, under current law, a District Attorney can petition the court to transfer youth as young as 13 who commit felony crimes to the adult system—but before this can happen there must be a transfer hearing before a judge, who will consider several different factors—including the age of the juvenile, the seriousness of the offense, prior attempts at rehabilitation, etc.

What are School Justice Partnerships?

- Minor school based offenses can land students in adult court. Each year, **almost half** of the referrals to the juvenile justice system are for school-based offenses. A schoolyard fight that might have led to after school detention 10 years ago, now often leads to adult charges of assault. To address this growing school-to-prison pipeline, the Raise the Age law also directs the state Administrative Office of the Courts to set out procedures for local judges—in partnership with law enforcement and school boards—to establish “school justice partnerships.” The goal of these local collaborations will be to **decrease in-school arrests, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions that can funnel youth into the criminal justice system.**

When does the law go into effect?

- The new law will take time to implement, and most of it doesn’t go into effect until **December 1, 2019**. This means that even though the bill became law in 2017, 16-17 year olds who are charged with *any crime* between now and December 1, 2019 will continue to be prosecuted as adults. Some provisions of the law—including changes to the way information is shared with law enforcement officers and increasing victims’ rights to review whether a case goes to court —goes into effect on October 1, 2017.

What happens between now and December 1, 2019?

- The Juvenile Jurisdiction Advisory Committee will meet regularly to make recommendations on the implementation of the law, beginning in November 2017. Follow Raise the Age NC on Twitter--@raisetheage_nc--and Facebook—Raise the Age NC—for updates about the committee process and ways you can engage!

Want more information?

Contact Susanna Birdsong, ACLU-NC: sbirdsong@acluofnc.org or Kristen Powers, Southern Coalition for Social Justice: Kristen@scsj.org to get involved in ongoing advocacy efforts with the Raise the Age NC coalition.