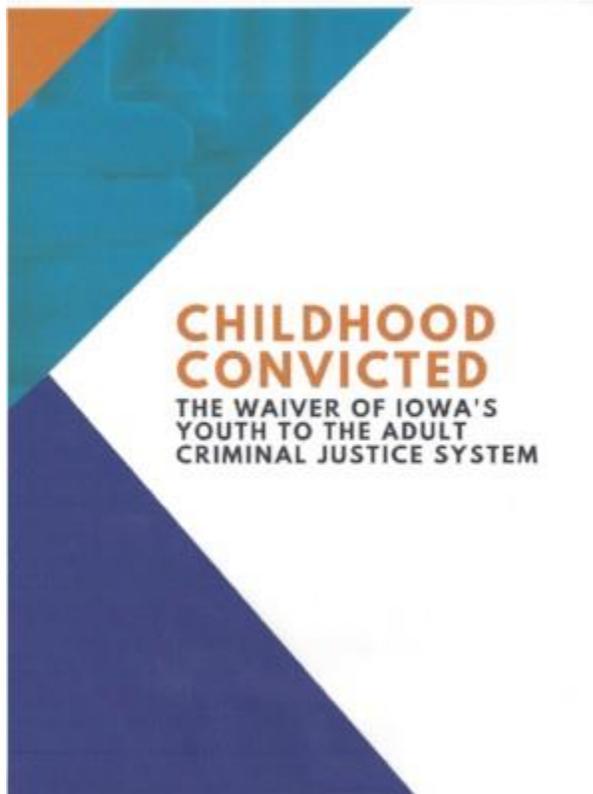


We can do better for Iowa kids.
Part of an effort to have a Children's Mental Health system.
Up to 70% of kids in the juvenile justice system have at least one
mental health diagnosis.

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Greater Des Moines



A Critical Report With Recommendations

**New Report Examines Why Iowa
Had Over 12,000 Adult Court
Convictions of Youth Under 18 in
2017**

IOWA CITY, IA (November 28, 2018)

- According to a [new report](#) released by the Campaign for Youth Justice in partnership with the University of Iowa, College of Law Community Empowerment Law Project, if Iowa's laws do not change, thousands of youth under 18 will continue to receive adult court convictions mostly for simple misdemeanors.

In 2018, the Campaign for Youth Justice partnered with the Community Engagement Law Project and LaTasha DeLoach, who currently serves as the co-chair of the Iowa Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System Subcommittee to research the state's treatment of youth under 18 in the adult criminal justice system. The

student researchers found some unexpected results including:

- 12,326 adult court convictions of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 in Iowa according to data obtained from the Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning. An overwhelming majority of the convictions were for simple misdemeanor offenses that are automatically excluded from juvenile court.
- 16 and 17-year-old youth are also automatically excluded from juvenile court for more serious offenses, but an overwhelming majority of those youth are deemed safe enough to be served by the juvenile justice system or in the community on adult probation.
- No one is collecting and reporting transparent data on the number of youth in Iowa's jails and the services that they receive while incarcerated.
- Racial disproportionality is significant among those youth transferred to adult court. While black youth are 6% of the at-risk population (youth between 10 and 17-years-old) they were 34% of the youth transferred by juvenile court judges.

According to Jeree Thomas, Policy Director at the Campaign for Youth

Justice, Iowa has an opportunity to do better by it's youth. "We know nationally that youth who go into the adult system are at least 34% more likely to recidivate than their peers. We also know that holding youth in adult jails and prisons is dangerous, ineffective, and has a negative impact on public safety in the long run. Small tweaks to Iowa's law could positively impact thousands of youth"

The report recommends four legislative changes to address the high number of youth convictions in adult court.

- Collect, analyze and publish data on all youth in adult courts, jails, and prisons. Include information on their age, gender, race, county, offense, sentence, length of stay in jail, and the services they receive while in adult facilities.
- Limit the types of offenses that may result in transfer from "any public offense" to specific offenses involving public safety concerns. ·
- End the statutory exclusion of youth from juvenile court. Allow juvenile court judges to decide whether a youth should be transferred to adult court. ·

- End the pre-trial detention of youth under 18 in adult jails.

Rachel Antonuccio, an Iowa City Public Defender, has seen the impact of these laws on her clients. “When we auto-matically treat children as adults we potentially expose them to devastating trauma even before they are convicted of anything. We need to look at each child as an individual and we need to treat them as the youth that they are. We shouldn’t be putting them in adult jails and prisons.”

Earlier this month, one of the report’s researchers and co-authors, Andrea Mallarino, coordinated an event at Iowa’s College of Law to highlight this issue for her peers and the broader community. “I don’t think the broader community knows how many kids are getting adult convictions and being sent to adult jails. When they find out there is generally a feeling that we can do better for Iowa’s kids. I hope our legislators feel the same.”

View report [here](#).

