

How does NJPC support youth involved in the juvenile justice system and their parents, caregivers and family members?

NJPC provides youth, parents, caregivers, and family members with:

- On-going support
- Help in a time of crisis
- Assistance in understanding your rights and responsibilities in the juvenile justice system
- Opportunities to share information, ideas, and resources
- Free legal advice and representation from a qualified attorney
- Dedicated Advocate
- Youth Caucus
- Parent & Family Members Coalition

What can a NJPC Advocate do for you?

NJPC Advocates accompany parents, caregivers and family members to court appointments, probation meetings, attorney meetings, and transportation for family visits if necessary.

“Families have the potential to be the greatest source of positive change and support for youth involved in the Juvenile Justice System”

If your child is currently charged with a crime, please contact us at 908-994-7471.

The New Jersey Parents’ Caucus is a coalition of parents, family members and youth whose mission is to ensure that every family who has children with special emotional and behavioral needs is given an opportunity to play a strong and active role in the conceptualization, development & delivery of effective & timely services for their children in the mental health, juvenile justice, special education & child welfare systems. Since 1990, NJPC has worked diligently with parents, caregivers, family members, government agencies, legislators, interested professionals and other organizations to ensure that the needs of families raising children with emotional and behavioral challenges are met. NJPC provides information & referral services, outreach, training, educational programs, advocacy and evaluation in the Juvenile Justice, Mental Health, DCP&P and Special Education systems.



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***New Jersey Parents Caucus
Helping Parents Help Their Children***



NJ Youth Justice Initiative

“It’s important that people know that these are just kids, and young kids too.”

NJPC is collaborating with organizations throughout the state to reform the practice of juvenile waiver, solitary confinement, youth transfer and racial and ethnic disparities in New Jersey’s justice system. We support system-involved youth and their parents and caregivers through advocacy, support groups and educational training so they may better understand their rights and responsibilities.

Racial & Ethnic Disparities

In New Jersey's juvenile justice system, youth of color* are over-represented and often receive disproportionately punitive responses compared to their white counterparts, and *for the same crimes*. In fact, African-American youth are **26 times more likely** to be incarcerated than Caucasian youth. This is a direct result of crime policy and a combination of policy and practice in schools, police departments and juvenile courts.

Youth Tried, Sentenced & Incarcerated in NJ's Adult System **

- Of 472 Youth, ages 0-17, in the Adult Criminal Justice System
 - 71% are African-American
 - 18% are of Hispanic/Latin origin
 - 10% are Caucasian
- Of 472 Youth, ages 0-17, in the Adult Criminal Justice System
 - 15% are from Camden County
 - 12% are from Hudson County
 - 10% are from Atlantic County

New Jersey Juvenile Demographics and Statistics ***

- Of 304 *committed* youth
 - 72% are African-American
 - 20% are of Hispanic/Latin origin
 - 7% are Caucasian
- Of 304 *committed* youth
 - 63% are from Essex County
 - 56% are from Camden County
 - 34% are from Union County

*Defined as African American, Hispanic/Latino/Spanish origin, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and Native American.

** NJPC Data Brief- *The Incarceration of Children & Youth in New Jersey's Adult Prison System, 2015.*

*** New Jersey Juvenile Justice Commission – *“Juvenile Demographics and Statistics” – July 22, 2016*

Judicial Waivers

One of the ways in which youth are incarcerated in the adult system is through a *judicial waiver*. In New Jersey, kids as young as 15 can be waived. The process is initiated by the prosecutor by filing a waiver motion to the Court. The Court then determines probable cause and decides whether or not to waive.

If the accused youth is 15 years of age or older, they alone can make the decision to have their case waived to the adult court, without their family knowledge or permission.

If a youth is waived, they will be treated in the exact same manner and face the same punishments as an adult, which includes serving their sentence in an adult prison.

Statistics on Youth Sentenced as Adults**

- 34% more likely to commit crimes
- 5 times as likely to be sexually assaulted and abused
- Make up 21% of all substantiated sexual violence
- 36 times more likely to commit suicide in an adult jail than in a juvenile facility

** In a recent report published by the CDC and led by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services



Juvenile Transfers

It is not uncommon to find that a youth incarcerated in a juvenile detention center has been *transferred*, or moved, to an adult prison. While youth are provided right to counsel and other due process protections, once a youth in a juvenile facility reaches the age of 18, it is entirely possible that they can be transferred to an adult facility based on the recommendation of a correctional officer.

Solitary Confinement

Solitary confinement, “The Box,” or “BAU” is a form of imprisonment in which an individual is isolated from any human contact.

With the passage of S2003 in 2015, New Jersey has eliminated the use of solitary confinement except to protect health, safety or the operation of a facility. However, youth incarcerated in the adult system do not have any protections in reference to solitary confinement and may serve up to 1000 days or more in confinement.

The Effects of Solitary Confinement on Youth

The risk is real that young people in confinement - whether they are in an adult or juvenile facility - face new or exacerbated mental disabilities or other serious mental health problems. Solitary Confinement causes unimaginable stress, hallucinations, anxiety, and paranoia, and young people simply have fewer psychological resources than adults to deal with these conditions***.

“Nowhere is the damaging impact of incarceration on vulnerable children more obvious than when it involves solitary confinement.”

US Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence
***“Growing Up Locked Down”- ACLU, Human Rights Watch – October 2012