



# Council for Children's Rights

## The Youth Accountability Act

### What is the Youth Accountability Act?

If passed into law, House Bill 1414, the Youth Accountability Act (referred to as Raise the Age) would raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction in North Carolina from 15 to 17 years old. North Carolina is the last state in the country to automatically charge, try, sentence, probate, and incarcerate youth in the adult criminal justice system. The Youth Accountability Act would require that 16 and 17 year olds be handled by the juvenile justice system.

### Why is the Youth Accountability Act important?

The Youth Accountability Act is important for several reasons, ranging from the health and development of juveniles to the economic impact and cost of tax-payer dollars.

- Decision-making abilities, impulse control, and peer pressure of 16 and 17 year olds is much lower than adults
- The juvenile justice system has more access to services than the criminal justice system. Services include age-appropriate therapy, behavioral modification, employment skills training, education, guidance, tutoring, guided growth programs, and mentors
- Federal Bureau of Prisons reports a direct link between education and low recidivism rates
- Youth in the juvenile justice system who receive rehabilitative services are less likely to be rearrested, reconvicted, and reincarcerated compared to youth in the adult criminal justice system
- Youths in the adult criminal system do not have required parental notification
- Effective programs for youth have the highest net benefit

### Important Statistics about Youth in North Carolina and Mecklenburg County

- In North Carolina, almost 86% of crimes committed by 16 and 17 year olds were misdemeanors; more than 28,000 youth misdemeanor cases were adjudicated in the adult system
- Last year there were 3,150 delinquent complaints in Mecklenburg County
- The delinquent rate for children age 6-15 is 25.67 per 1,000 youth in Mecklenburg County
- Last year, there were 719 detention center admissions in Mecklenburg County
- The average cost per youth for JCPC programs is \$1,441.69

### What is being done and how can you help?

- The Youth Accountability Task Force met for the first time in October of 2009 and continues to meet monthly until January when the Task Force will make final recommendations to the legislature for the 2011 session
- The language of the bill mandates that the shift in juvenile jurisdiction be phased in slowly, with the first alteration to the current system (raising the age of juvenile jurisdiction to 16.5 years) becoming effective in June 2012 and the final change (adding 17 year olds) becoming effective in June 2015
- Advocate for the passage of the bill and continue to help our community prepare for the changes it entails
- Educate the community about the importance of investing in and protecting our children

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