IMPLEMENTING “RAISE THE AGE” IN MISSOURI

What is “raise the age”?

- In June 2018, the Missouri Legislature passed and the Governor signed Senate Bill 793 to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction so that 17-year-olds would no longer be automatically prosecuted as adults. Now all 17-year-olds will start in juvenile court.

When does “raise the age” go into effect?

- January 1, 2021 - Missouri will implement raise the age starting in January 2021. 17-year-olds who commit offenses before January 2021 will still be treated as adults because the law is not retroactive.

Can a youth under 18 years old still be prosecuted as an adult in Missouri?

- Yes, Missouri allows juvenile court judges to transfer youth as young as 12 years old to adult court if they are charged with certain offenses.

Can Missouri implement the law?

- The Missouri juvenile justice system can handle 17-year-olds. Juvenile crime rates have dropped dramatically over the last decade. In 2016, there were 29% fewer juvenile arrests including 17 year olds than there were in 2009 excluding 17 year old.


*For more information on Raise the Age Missouri, please contact Kristian Blackmon: kblackmon@cfvj.org*
What is happening to prepare for “raise the age” implementation?

- A Proposed Statewide Committee Was NOT Passed in the State Legislature. It would have:
  ✓ Created an “Interim Joint Committee on Juvenile Court Jurisdiction and Implementation”
  ✓ Consisted mostly of agencies and law enforcement
  ✓ Developed “a plan for full implementation of raising the age” by January 15, 2020
- A statewide committee or task force will be vital to ensuring Raise the Age is implemented effectively way possible. State leaders should establish such a committee as soon as possible.

Other States Created Implementation Committees. What Should A Missouri Committee Focus On?

- Work to **reduce the population** handled by the juvenile justice system:
  ✓ Raise the **lower age** at which a child can enter the justice system to 14 years.
  ✓ Ban the detention of **status offenders** (about 10% of detained population)
  ✓ End or reduce the commitment of **juvenile misdemeanants** (20% of population currently)
  ✓ Expand **diversion opportunities**, including for 17-year-olds
  ✓ Reduce **lengths of stay** for children committed
  ✓ Refer youth with mental health and/or substance abuse issues to community based treatment.

- Seek to reinvest savings from reduced commitments in **community-based alternatives to incarceration**, which are less costly and more effective

- Create school-justice partnerships in places where a lot of 17-year-olds are referred to law enforcement from school. This will help keep 17-year-olds out of adult court before “Raise the Age” is implemented.


What Needs to Be Done in Local Jurisdiction Across the State?

- Convene meetings and create educational materials for community members about the new law, addressing Frequently Asked Questions
- Convene stakeholders and community members to discuss what policy or budgetary changes are needed
- Gather and analyze local data (perhaps partnering with a local university) about justice-involved juveniles and 17-year-olds to see where the needs are and to address current or potential racial disparities
- Create a working group that includes community members, and develop an implementation plan that complements the statewide effort and addresses current or potential racial disparities
- Organize trainings on adolescent development and best practices for working with youth for:
  ✓ Law enforcement
  ✓ Judges
  ✓ Prosecutors & Defense attorneys
  ✓ Probation staff

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