

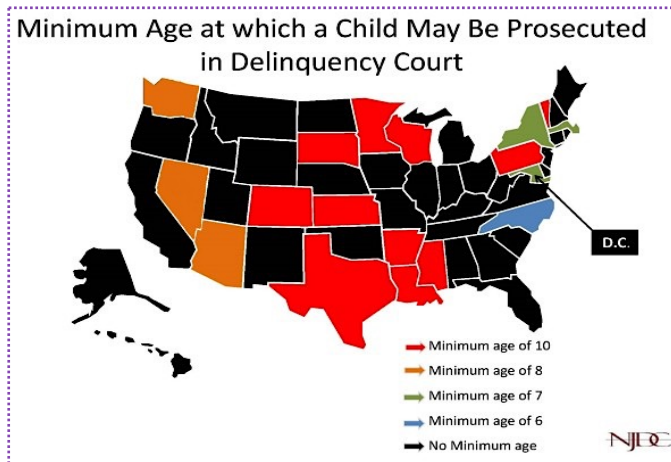
# Putting Justice in North Carolina's Juvenile System

The Youth Justice Project of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice has released a new issue brief outlining some of the major challenges facing North Carolina's juvenile system. This handout summarizes the key findings of the issue brief. Find the full issue brief and more information here: [www.youthjusticenc.org/our-work/](http://www.youthjusticenc.org/our-work/)

## The five major challenges facing North Carolina's juvenile system are:

### 1. Inappropriate Limits on Juvenile Court Jurisdiction

- Beginning in **December 2019**, Raise the Age will take effect and North Carolina will stop automatically charging all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults in the criminal system rather than the juvenile system. We are currently the only state that still does so.
- Still, for **more than two years**, thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds will continue to be treated as adults in the criminal system.
- Unfortunately, Raise the Age is **not an all kids, all crimes bill**. Despite growing evidence that it is better for the individual youth and the community to handle youth accused of crimes in juvenile court, certain felonies (class A-G) and all traffic offenses will continue to be handled in adult court for all 16- and 17-year-olds even after Raise the Age goes into effect.
- North Carolina still has **the lowest age (six) of juvenile court** jurisdiction among *all* states that specify a minimum age.



- The new law has some ambiguity. North Carolina has historically been known as a “once an adult, always an adult” state. Changes need to be made to ensure the new law will positively impact youth who are already in the adult system when the law goes into effect.

### 2. Dumping Grounds for Schools

- Juvenile court is too often used as a dumping ground for students that schools consider too difficult to serve.
- This burdens the court system and makes it difficult to serve youth who truly need services and supervision in juvenile court.

For more information, contact the Youth Justice Project at [youthjusticeproject@scsj.org](mailto:youthjusticeproject@scsj.org) or visit us at [youthjusticenc.org](http://www.youthjusticenc.org).

### 3. Inadequate Defense Representation

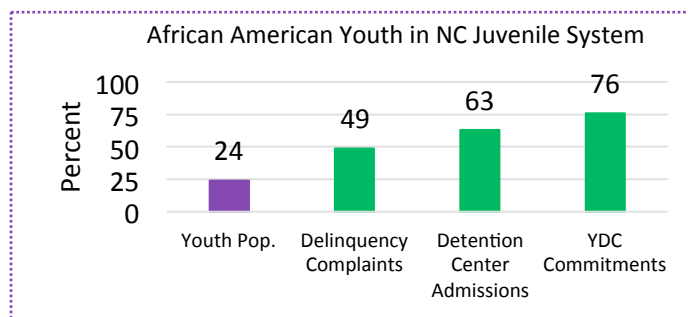
- Juvenile court systems vary **greatly** across jurisdictions in North Carolina.
- The same can be said for access to adequate resources, specialization, and accountability for the judges, district attorneys, defense attorneys, and court counselors working in juvenile courts across the state.

### 4. Harmful Collateral Consequences

- Youth still face many harmful collateral consequences in the juvenile system that need to be addressed. Some of those consequences include being:
  - **denied enrollment in school**
  - **deported for “bad acts”**
  - **evicted from public housing**
  - **suspended or expelled**
  - **unable to possess a driver’s license**
  - **ordered to register as a sex offender**, and
  - having to **disclose adjudications on college enrollment** or **prior arrests for job applications**
- Some juvenile adjudications may come back to haunt individuals involved in subsequent court proceedings and impact pre-trial release decisions, plea negotiations, and sentencing.

### 5. Large Disparities

- The juvenile system is plagued with **large racial and gender disparities**.
- In 2016, **African American youths** were 24% of the population under age 18, but subjected to **49% of delinquency complaints, 63% of detention center admissions, and 76% of youth development center (YDC) commitments.**



- **Males** are also disproportionately represented, making up 51% of the statewide youth population, but subjected to **66% of delinquency complaints, 78% of detention center admissions, and 96% of YDC commitments.**
- National data shows that across the country, **lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are disproportionately represented** in the juvenile system.