



Wisconsin State Public Defender

Kelli S. Thompson
State Public Defender

17 S. Fairchild Street, Suite 500
Madison, WI 53703
Phone: 608.266.0087/Fax: 608.267.0584
www.wispd.org

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Contact: Randy Kraft (608) 267-3587

SPD Supports Governor's Proposal to "Raise the Age"

(MADISON) The State Public Defender's Office (SPD) supports the inclusion in the budget of returning all 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system. Wisconsin is one of just four states in the nation to consider any person 17 or older as an adult in the criminal justice system.

"Treating 17 year olds as juveniles is not only better for the future of our kids, but it will also impact community safety by breaking the cycle of adult criminal justice system involvement. Children involved in the juvenile justice system receive access to services and treatment tailored to the underlying causes of their behavior," said State Public Defender Kelli Thompson.

Adolescent brain research has revealed that juveniles do not have the same cognitive ability as adults. By correcting behavior in the juvenile justice system rather than putting them through the full weight of the adult criminal justice system, we give them a better chance of finishing their education, entering the workforce, and becoming productive community members.

In addition, having youth in the juvenile justice system allows for the parents to be involved in the juvenile court case, and the parents and family to be involved in the treatment.

"This change will have a significant impact on the future of justice system-involved youth and Wisconsin's communities. I look forward to working with the Governor and the Legislature to address the significant impact that this change will have on the lives of hundreds of Wisconsin's youth every year," added Thompson.

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