



HOW TO
Host
A HOUSE PARTY





I

CTJJA?

The mission of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) is to promote a safe, effective and equitable system of services designed to meet the needs of children and adolescents in or at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

Raise the Age CT believes that teenagers and adults are different and should be held accountable for their actions in different ways. Connecticut's 16 and 17 year-olds should not be automatically tried and incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system.



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What You Can Do!

HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN DO TO TAKE ACTION:

CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATOR:

Tell state legislators what you think about the policy of trying youth as adults. Give them the facts and let them know you can be a resource on the issue. Keep in touch with them.

GET OTHERS INVOLVED:

Start a postcard campaign or host a letter-writing party in your neighborhood.

HOST A PARTY:

Share the information with your friends, family, and neighbors. Ask your local community newspaper to print the facts from the fact sheet. Sponsor a 'take action' workshop in your neighborhood, school, or church.

JOIN THE "RAISE THE AGE CT" CAMPAIGN!

To get involved, contact Abby Anderson at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance at 203.579.2727.

WE NEED YOU!

TREAT JUVENILES AS JUVENILES

Thank you for your willingness to host a House Party to support the Raise the Age CT efforts.

CTJJA seeks to raise awareness about the impact of prosecuting youth in the adult criminal justice system. By hosting a house/dorm party you will be the catalyst for change. These parties are essential for raising awareness, recruiting volunteers, and educating legislators.

Hosting a party is easy, important and a great way to educate others about this atrocity. Our “House Party Kit” includes a sample invitation, a planning checklist, and ideas to make your party personal and fun.

In taking action, you will be joined by many other concerned CT residents in sharing your views on the failure of Connecticut’s policy of trying and sentencing 16 and 17 year olds as adults and why the law needs to be re-examined.

Together we can make a difference in the lives of Connecticut’s children and youth.

Sincerely,



Raise the Age CT Campaign



HOUSE PARTY

TIPS

The most effective way to get good attendance is to mail out invitations and follow up a week later with a personal phone call. Five to seven days before the party, make a second reminder call. It will greatly increase the attendance at your party. Having 10 people is great, but having 5 people over is just fine too – make it comfortable for you.

Be sure your invitations include the date, time, and address of the house party. Include good directions to your house (a map is very useful).

PLEASE INCLUDE YOUR PHONE NUMBER AND EMAIL.

Ask your guests to RSVP so you have an idea of how many people are coming.

Request a check from CTJJA for purchasing snacks.

PREPARATIONS

- Consider asking a few friends or colleagues to help you plan. You can even list them as a “host committee” on the invitation to attract more people who will recognize the names.
- Send invitations in advance and ask for an RSVP.
- Watch the video before the party.

BEING CREATIVE

- You could have a dinner or brunch; it can be a wine-tasting, chocolate-tasting, tea party, etc...
- Invite people over to watch the game and ask them to come 30 minutes early to hear about the campaign or see if you can use the first 30 minutes of your book club meeting.
- The event can be in your home, at a church or other community setting.

GETTING PEOPLE TO THE PARTY

- A week or so before the event, call people you haven't heard from to encourage them to come.
- A few days before the event, call those who have said they will come to remind them of the date and time and to make sure they have directions.

CALL TO ACTION

- Encourage people to get active. This house party kit will provide you with several options for people to get involved. You can also visit www.raisetheagect.org for up-to-date action alerts and sample letters.
- Make sure to provide people with samples for the above advocacy activities.
- Make sure to encourage people to write the letters or sign the petitions at your event. If they take the materials home, they will likely forget to take action. Taking 10 minutes to write letters will allow you to send them yourself and to know how many you generated!!



PLANNING
TIMELINE FOR

A HOUSE PARTY

To help you ensure a successful event, we've provided a sample timetable for a small to medium-sized house party. Keep in mind that depending on when your event takes place, its size and its type, your timetable will be different.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Name tags and markers
- A clipboard or two and pens for guests to sign in

CTJJA MATERIALS PROVIDED:

- DVD
- Fact Sheets
- Item for raffle (t-shirt, buttons, etc.)

WHEN YOU DECIDE YOU WANT TO HOST AN EVENT:

- Get in touch with CTJJA to request assistance (and request a check for supplies).
- Determine the where, when, who, why and what of the event.
- Write out an action plan and a to-do list.
- Create invitation list.
- Arrange for a friend to help or develop a committee.

TWO WEEKS BEFORE:

- Mail invitations with directions and a request for RSVP.
- Reserve any necessary equipment.

ONE TO TWO WEEKS BEFORE:

- Plan the meal or refreshments.
- Prepare your remarks.
- Make sure all guests have directions.

ONE TO FIVE DAYS BEFORE:

- Make follow-up calls to those who responded to invitation.
- Purchase beverages and supplies.

DAY OF EVENT: *THE PARTY!*

- Welcome guests, allow guests to mingle for a few minutes.
- Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes).
- Icebreaker activity (10 minutes).
- Show DVD (10 minutes).
- Q&A (10-20 minutes).
- Call to Action: Ask guests if they are interested in becoming a spark plug (15 minutes).
- Ask for additional house party hosts, volunteers, endorsements (5 minutes).
- Make sure everyone has signed in/pass around sign in sheet again.
- Pick a name randomly from the sign-in sheet and give raffle prizes.
- Thank guests for coming, wrap up (5 minutes).

FOLLOW UP

- Mail your completed Evaluation form and your Sign-in Sheet to CTJJA.
- Send thank you notes to your guests.

SAMPLE

INVITATION

Dear Friends,

You are cordially invited to a house party being hosted by _____ and sponsored by the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. We will be screening a video about trying youth as adults in Connecticut.

This event/meeting is an educational and network-building project for the CJJTA Raise The Age Campaign. Bring your questions, ideas, and your willingness to take action.

WHERE: _____

WHEN: _____

WHAT: people, food and beverages, a video, discussion of the issues, and a request to help spread the word about CTJJA efforts.

I CAN'T COME, BUT I CAN OFFER MY ASSISTANCE WITH:

- Phone Calls
- Letters
- Spark Plug

PLEASE RSVP TO:

DIRECTIONS: Visit MapQuest to include a map to your house party.

IO

FREQUENTLY
ASKED
QUESTIONS
ABOUT

YOUR HOUSE PARTY

I AM NOT AN EXPERT ON THIS ISSUE. WHAT SHOULD I DO TO GET READY FOR THE HOUSE PARTY?

We don't expect you to be an expert. The video and the campaign literature speak for itself. You are a concerned citizen and concerned about our children. While we have some background information for you, please don't feel you have to know everything about the CTJJA campaigns to host a party.

TO FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF, THINK ABOUT THESE FEW THINGS:

- Review the house party guide.
- If you need more information on a specific issue, visit www.raiseage.org.
- Think about why you support the work of the CTJJA and write a few paragraphs so you can share your passion and excitement with those who attend the party.
- If someone asks a question that you do not know the answer to, don't worry about it. The concerned person can contact us.

HOW CAN I KEEP TRACK OF ALL THE QUESTIONS MY GUESTS HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT?

If you have a "helper" have them take notes, so people's questions are answered to the best of your ability. Also, if there are funny moments or stories that really move you, your team member can make sure these are jotted down so they can be shared with us in the evaluation.

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ICEBREAKERS,
ACTIVITIES AND

DISCUSSIONS

INTRODUCTIONS

HOST INTRODUCTION:

Briefly explain why you are involved in the Raise the Age Campaign. If you are comfortable you can use the CT fact sheet as talking points and select the top three issues most important to you.

GUEST INTRODUCTIONS:

Have guests give their name and how they know the person who invited them. Have guests share why they were interested in coming to the event and if they have personal experience or concerns with the current CT law that automatically tries 16 and 17 years olds in the adult criminal justice system.

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO:

Survey your guests using the questions on page 12. Let your guests know that there will be a quick discussion after the video.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION

What does it mean to be tried as an adult? When a young person is tried as an adult it means that they appear in the adult court, in front of an adult judge and will serve any sentence in an adult jail or prison. This usually means that the youth is not eligible to receive any of the services or treatment available through the juvenile justice system.

PRIOR TO THE VIDEO

TAKE A QUICK SURVEY OF YOUR GUESTS WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

- At what age can you see a rated R movie without an adult?
- At what age can you obtain a drivers license?
- At what age can you legally drink alcohol?
- At what age can you enroll in the armed forces?
- At what age can you register to vote?
- At what age can you be tried as an adult?

POST VIDEO DISCUSSION

YOU CAN ADDRESS THE GROUP BY REITERATING FACTS FROM THE VIDEO. PARTICIPANTS CAN DISCUSS WHAT THEY SAW IN THE VIDEO AND BRING THEIR OWN EXPERIENCES INTO THE FORUM. QUESTIONS SHOULD BE ADDRESSED BY BOTH THE HOST AND THE PARTICIPANTS.

- What were your immediate reactions to the presentation?
- What shocked you the most?
- What was the most interesting part of the presentation?
- Was there anything you learned?
- Did this presentation change your views? How?
- Would you reform these laws? How?



SAMPLE THANK YOU

Dear [first name],

Thank you for attending the house/dorm party to support the “Raise the Age” campaign.

I am supporting the CTJJA “Raise the Age” Campaign because I believe that teenagers and adults are different and should be held accountable for their actions in different ways. Connecticut’s 16 and 17 year-olds should not be automatically tried and incarcerated in the adult criminal justice system.

We hope you will continue to support the CTJJA “Raise the Age” Campaign by volunteering and spreading the word to your family and friends. If you need further information regarding volunteering or hosting a house party, please call the CTJJA Office at (203) 579-2727.

Looking forward to working with you in the movement!

Sincerely,
[Your name here]

HOUSE PARTY

EVALUATION FORM

HOST(S) _____
ADDRESS _____
DATE OF PARTY _____

YOUR FEEDBACK IS CRITICAL IN HELPING US IMPROVE OUR FUTURE HOUSE PARTIES!

_____ number of guests
_____ number of new volunteers enrolled
_____ number of new house party hosts recruited

Did you receive enough guidance in organizing your house party?
Yes _____ No _____
Please explain how it could have been better.

Did you find the campaign materials helpful in conducting your house party?
Yes _____ No _____
What other material would have been helpful?

What worked well?

Do you have any suggestions or advice for future house party hosts?

Do you have any stories or quotations to share with us?

Are you willing to do another house /dorm party for CTJJA?

Would you be willing to help someone else organize their party?

Please Send/Fax Completed form to:
Abby Anderson
2470 Fairfield Avenue
Bridgeport, CT 06605
phone 202-579-2727 • fax 203-333-9118

FACT

SHEET

CONNECTICUT: TRYING YOUTH AS ADULTS

Connecticut *automatically* tries and sentences all 16 and 17 year-olds as adults, regardless of their crime. This policy has failed and must be re-examined. Connecticut's policy towards youthful offenders is one of the worst in the nation.

Connecticut is one of only three states nationwide that automatically treats all children over the age of 15 as adults no matter how minor the offense. In 2005, Connecticut led the nation in the number of youth under 18 years old in adult prisons with 383 incarcerated youth – 71% more than any other state, and Connecticut alone confines more youth in adult prisons than at least 22 states combined.

Youth in adult prisons do not receive adequate rehabilitation or treatment. Simply locking these kids up will not change their behaviors or improve public safety. Youth sent to the adult criminal justice system in Connecticut are not eligible for the kinds of services that prevent them from re-offending, such as therapy, diversion, or alternatives to incarceration, that are available in the juvenile justice system.

This practice doesn't promote public safety or reduce crime.

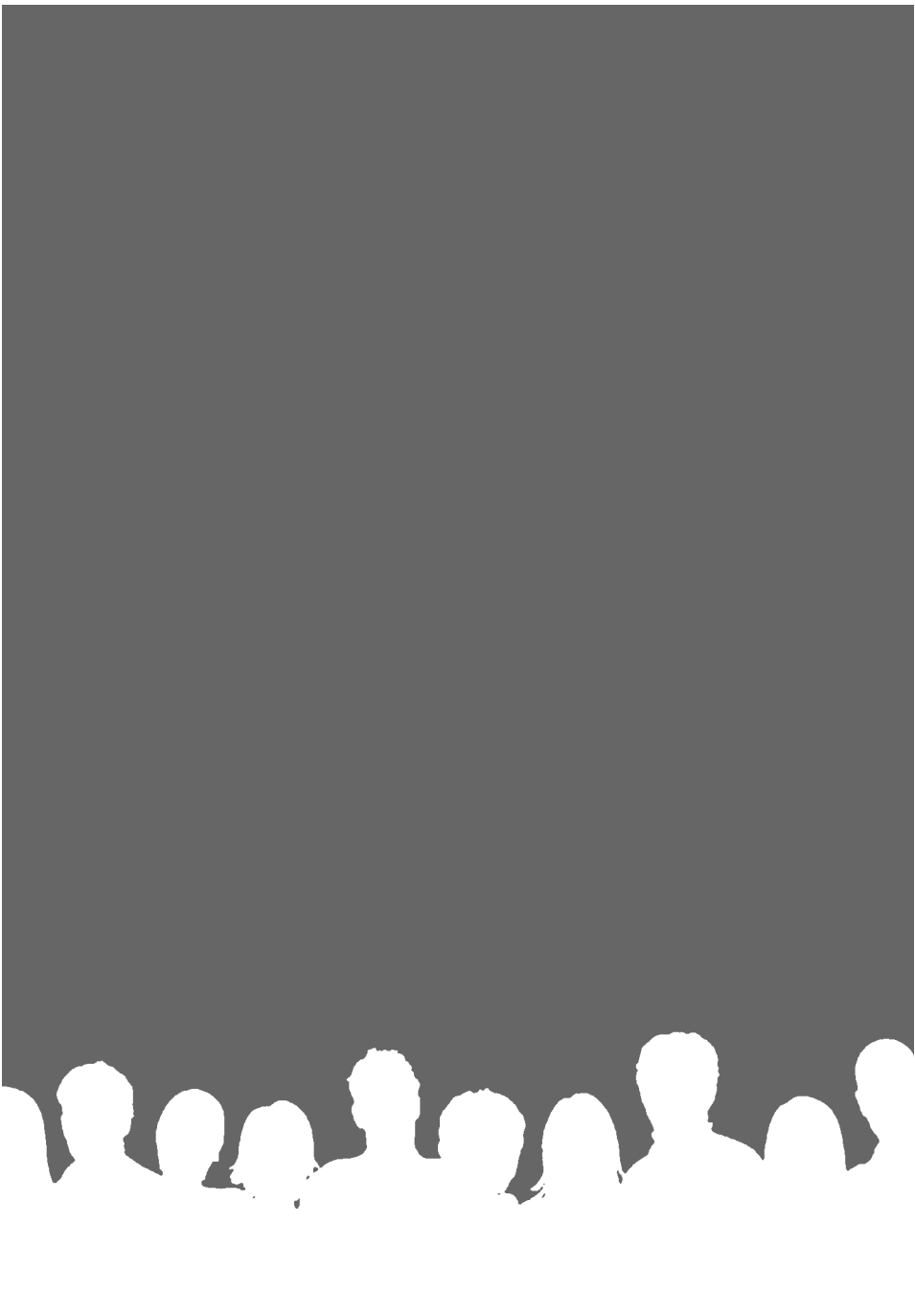
Trying youth in adult court increases crime. Research done by Northeastern University's Donna Bishop, PhD, shows that youths who are tried and incarcerated in the adult criminal system are more likely to re-offend, and re-offend more seriously and frequently than young people tried and treated in the juvenile system for the same crimes.

Adolescents are not adults and do not make reasoned, adult decisions.

"The scientific arguments do not say that adolescents cannot distinguish right from wrong nor that they should be exempt from punishment. Rather, they point to the need to consider the developmental stage of adolescence as a mitigating factor when juveniles are facing criminal prosecution. The same factors that make youths ineligible to vote or to serve on a jury require us to treat them differently from adults when they commit crimes." — "Less Guilty by Reason of Adolescence" The MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice's 2006 report based on of ten years of study.

The most serious and violent offenders will still go to adult court.

In Connecticut, any juvenile, aged 14 or older, charged with a Class A or B Felony, the most serious and violent crimes, is automatically transferred to the adult court. If 16 and 17 year-olds are returned to Supreme Court Juvenile Matters, this statute would mean that 16 and 17 year-olds charged with Class A or B Felonies would still go to adult court.



CAMPAIGN FOR
YOUTH JUSTICE
BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

