

fact sheet



Best messengers

Public safety and parental rights are among the most effective messages for a Raise the Age campaign. So find the people with the most authority to deliver those messages.

Public Safety Professionals These can include police, prosecutors and judges. Connecticut's Raise the Age campaign faced strongest opposition from The Connecticut Police Chiefs Association. Having judges on board as spokespeople helped counter that. There were also a couple of police chiefs from the urban centers who supported Raise the Age and could, if not testify publicly, speak with legislators behind closed doors.

Parents Several mothers who had children go through the adult system testified for Connecticut's campaign and spoke with reporters. They were amazingly powerful advocates. The mother of a 17-year-old who committed suicide in adult prison testified on the bill before the legislature and was extremely moving.

Youth We found it difficult to get youth spokespeople. There are barriers to getting kids directly affected by the system to speak in public because of their minor status. Often, those who are over 18 don't want to publicly discuss their record for fear it will get in the way of jobs or educational opportunities. See if you can provide ways for them to have a voice without disclosing their identity by sharing their stories through a blog or other vehicle. Any young person who does agree to speak with the press should be provided media training first.

Health care providers These are people who are generally respected and seen as apolitical, a real asset to the campaign. Physicians for Human Rights provided a strong boost to the campaign, as did several child psychiatrists. Some media training can be helpful to these professionals, too. It's important for them to speak succinctly and without jargon.

Advocates Advocates served as the primary contact people for Connecticut's Raise the Age campaign and were the experts on the issue and the bill. But they always made attempts to include others, particularly public safety professionals and parents who could offer a different voice and personal experience.

Legislators There were a couple of legislators who made Raise the Age their signature issue. They were respected, established leaders in positions of power and used their influence to educated their peers. After a particularly strong presentation, a Republican legislator, originally undecided about the policy change, became a strong, outspoken advocate, helping to move his Judiciary Committee colleagues from vocal opposition to support.