

fact sheet



Implementation

Sometimes objections can be overcome by offering a staged implementation to demonstrate the success of raise the age and phase in its impact. Here are strategies used by three states:

Connecticut The bill passed in 2007 called for 16- and 17-year-olds to enter juvenile jurisdiction in 2010. That gave the state ample time to prepare the juvenile justice system to serve older youth. However, the financial crisis made the state step back from the reform because of cost.

The Alliance fought hard to safeguard on-time implementation for 16-year-olds in 2010, with an agreement to bring 17-year-olds under juvenile jurisdiction in 2012. The rollout for 16-year-olds went so smoothly (and at lower cost than projected) that it made it easier to argue in favor of adding 17-year-olds when the time came.

Illinois In 2010, Illinois added 17-year-olds accused of misdemeanors to the juvenile system. Even with the addition of 17-year-olds, the state saw fewer juvenile arrests than it did in 2008 and a 14 percent decline in violent crime. The Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission strongly recommended that the state include 17-year-olds charged with felonies in the juvenile system as well, and that reform was enacted in 2014.

Massachusetts Massachusetts raised its age of juvenile jurisdiction from 17 to 18 in 2013. The change took effect the day that Governor Deval Patrick signed the bill into law. The state was eager to make the change quickly in order to comply with the Prison Rape Elimination Act. The Bay State's rapid adoption of the reform shows that the logistical challenges of raising the age are often overstated. Where there is a will to do it, it can be done.