Children are less mature than adults. Most laws recognize this by requiring teenagers to wait until they are 18 to vote, join the military, or live independently.

But while the law says that 17-year-olds are not mature enough for those activities, it requires them to be punished as adults when they commit a crime.

Larceny-Theft 4,774
Possession of Marijuana 3,300
Liquor Laws & Drunkenness 1,626

The overwhelming majority of those arrested were for nonviolent and misdemeanor offenses.

In 2015, over 22,000 17-year-olds were arrested and subjected to Texas’ adult criminal justice system.

In the juvenile justice system, these offenses would most likely result in release back into the community with orders to attend rehabilitative treatment under supervision.

Instead, 17-year-olds in the adult system are subjected to dangerous conditions and a lifetime of collateral consequences.

Physical & Sexual Violence
Risk of Suicide
Solitary Confinement

Youth held in adult facilities are at higher risk of physical & sexual assaults. 2/3 of 16-17-year-olds held in U.S. adult facilities had been sexually victimized by other inmates.

Youth in adult facilities are 94% more likely to commit suicide.

In adult facilities, 17-year-olds spend up to 23 hours per day in solitary confinement, which may hinder development and lead to physical and psychological harm.

DANGERS OF HOUSING YOUTH IN ADULT FACILITIES

COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

Criminal Record
Risk of Recidivating

Having a criminal record can create barriers to furthering an education, gaining employment, securing housing, and joining the military.

Young people prosecuted in the adult system are 94% more likely to violently re-offend.

Why do we continue to subject kids who make mistakes to the harshness of the adult criminal justice system?

Texas is 1 of only 6 states that continues to send youth under 18 to the adult criminal justice system, making us out of line with the rest of the nation.

WHAT CAN THE TEXAS LEGISLATURE DO?

Recognize what every parent knows… a 17-year-old is still a kid.