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New report shows youth of color disadvantaged in justice system

In almost every state in the union, youth of color are overrepresented in every stage of the juvenile justice system—from arrest and detention to adjudication and sentencing. In fact, the disadvantage “accumulates” as youth get more deeply involved; the disproportions we see in youth being tried and sentenced in adult court are even greater than those for detention in juvenile facilities and greater still than those for arrest.

This reality persists despite amendments to the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

- Nationwide, youth of color are disproportionately detained compared to White youth. African American youth are detained at 4.5 times the rate of White youth. Latino youth are detained at 2.3 times the rate of White youth.
- African American youth are more likely than White youth to be formally charged in juvenile court and to be sentenced to out-of-home placement, *even when referred for the same offense*.
- According to the latest available data, three out of four of the 4,100 new admissions of youth to adult prisons were youth of color.
- African American youth are confined on average for 61 days more than White youth, and Latino youth are confined 112 days more than White youth.
- African American youth are 16% of youth in the general population but 30% of juvenile court referrals, 38% of youth in residential placement, and 58% of youth admitted to state adult prison.
- Although just over 50% of drug cases involving White youth result in formal processing, over 75% of drug cases involving African American youth result in formal processing.

Due to a general decline in crime rates since the mid-1990s, the overall number of youth in confinement has also declined. However, between 1989 and 2003, despite significant governmental efforts, the problem of disproportionate minority incarceration has not improved. This report shows clearly that youth of color—especially African American youth—receive different and harsher treatment for equal offenses. Here is a document of the latest data showing the juvenile justice system to be “separate and unequal.”

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A copy of this report will be available on January 12th on NCCD’s website: www.nccd-crc.org