

OPM - Criminal Justice Policy & Planning Division

Juvenile Detention in CT

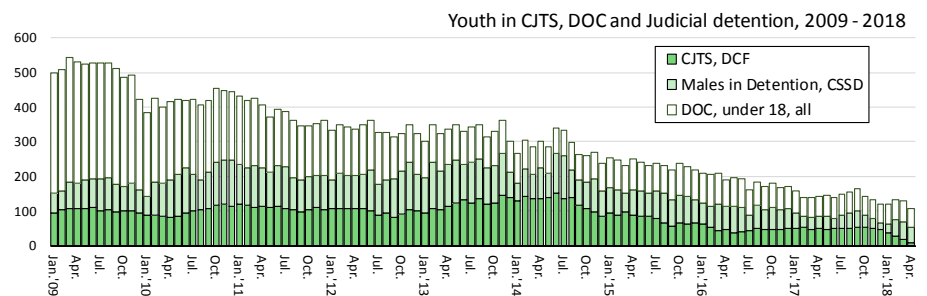
Highlights

- During the last 10-years, the number of youth entering the criminal justice system has plummeted in the state (see chart on page 2).
- Between 2009 and 2016 – the latest year for which data is available – arrests involving people under the age of 18 dropped by a dramatic 56%.
- Between 2009 and 2017, the number of inmates under the age of 18 incarcerated by the CT DOC dropped by almost 85%.
- The state's raise-the-age legislation transferred most youth under the age of 18 out of the adult criminal justice system by July, 2012. Although there was a measurable spike in the number of juvenile caseloads and in the number of youth housed at CJTS due to raise-the-age, these increases proved to be ephemeral.
- According to CSSD, 47 youth (42 males and 7 females) were housed in juvenile detention facilities on April 12, 2018. The state currently has a total detention-bed capacity of 172; 129 beds for males and 43 beds for females.
- At a cost of \$53 million, the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) opened in 2001. It was intended to house 240 youth and was modelled on a high-security juvenile prison in Marion, Ohio, which closed in 2009. Controversial since its inception, the facility stopped accepting new admissions in January 2018.
- In its last two years of its operation, the population of CJTS dropped substantially. In 2016 and 2017, the daily population rarely exceeded 50 youth. On November 1, 2013, 145 young men were held at the facility.

CJTS and juvenile crime in CT

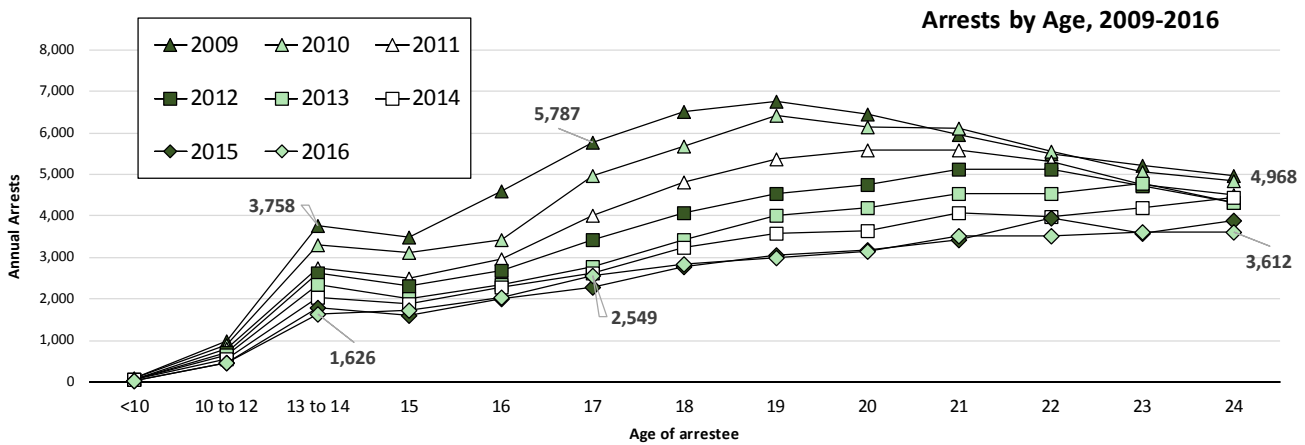
In January, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) halted admissions to the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) in Middletown. CJTS, the state's only high-security prison for young men and boys, had attracted significant controversy since its construction was fast-tracked by the Rowland administration in 1999. The facility, which opened 2001, was ordered closed last year by Gov. Malloy. In 2005, Malloy's predecessor, Jodi Rell, had promised to shutter the facility by 2008.

CT has experienced significant, positive change in the criminal justice/public safety sphere over a decades. Reported crime rates are down dramatically from their mid-1990s levels and fewer people are entering the state's criminal justice system. On the back of these developments, the state legislature raised the age at which most youth enter the adult criminal justice system from 16 to 18. When these raise-the-age reforms were first proposed, concerns were raised about a potential tsunami of new juvenile arrests that would quickly overwhelm the state's juvenile justice system. As the reforms went into effect, however, it soon became apparent that due to broader societal dynamics we would continue to witness significant reductions in the number of young people entering the criminal justice system.



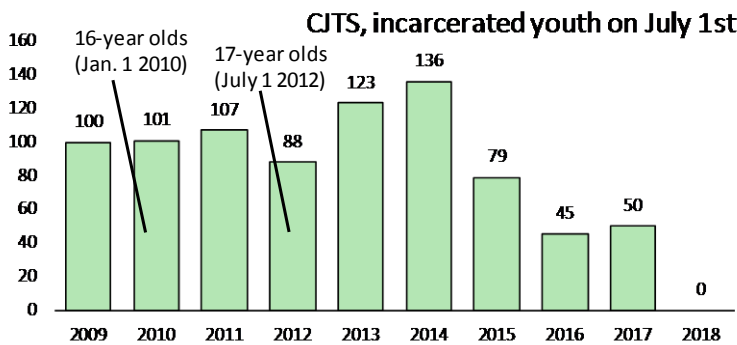
According to CT UCR data, the number of arrests involving persons under the age of 18 (combined adult and juvenile arrests) dropped by 56% between 2008 and 2016. Among 16-year olds and 17-year olds, those most effected by raise-the-age, arrests were down 61% during the same period. Since an arrest is the point-of-entry into the criminal justice system, arrest-trend data can be useful in predicting down-stream demand on the state's criminal justice system for years to come. As expected, diminished youth arrests have been followed by reductions in the number of youth held in custody in the state. While the state has not yet answered how it will address the need to detain some CJ-involved youth in a secure setting, the closure of CJTS has certainly forced that issue to the fore.

This short report is far from comprehensive. Instead, it is intended to draw together some information on youth involved in the state's criminal justice system over the last decade. The data cited in this report was provided to OPM by DCF, the CT Judicial Branch, the CT DOC and the State's Open Data portal.



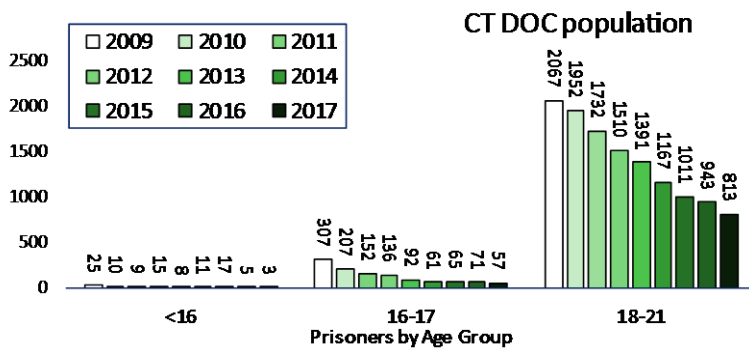
The chart, shown above, plots the annual number of statewide arrests involving persons under the age of 25 between 2009 and 2016. During those years there have been dramatic declines in the number of young people arrested.

Raise-the-age legislation in CT was implemented in 2 phases; 16-year olds were transferred to juvenile jurisdiction in January 2010 and 17-year olds were transferred two years later in July 2012. As the chart illustrates, declines in arrests pre-dated the legislation.



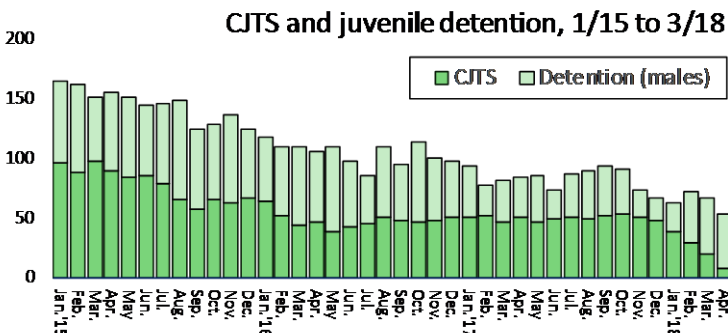
The transfer of 16- and 17-year olds to juvenile custody produced increases in the number of youth held at CJTS, particularly in 2013 and 2014. Within two years, however, the number of youth held at the facility were down substantially.

Shortly after the Governor announced the closure of CJTS, the CT Legislature voted to transfer the jurisdiction over juveniles involved in the criminal justice system from DCF to Court Support Services Division (CSSD) on July 1, 2018. CSSD which already oversees juvenile detention facilities in the state has been working with DCF to address its new responsibilities and manage the transition.



When DCF stopped accepting admissions to CJTS in January, the state had no existing alternative in place where youth who previously would have been sent to CJTS could be housed.

There appears to be wide-spread agreement that CT needs a secure facility for a small number of adjudicated youth. CSSD is currently in the process of identifying options for a locked facility in the state.



Despite these difficulties, the good news is that the number of youth detained in the state - either as juveniles or adults - is at its lowest point in recent memory. CJTS, which was initially intended to house 240 inmates never reached its design-capacity.