

Ensure that youth do not lose juvenile court jurisdiction due to a technicality.

Legislators: Support HB 2217 to close loopholes forcing youth into adult court.

What HB 2217 Does

HB 2217 expands juvenile court jurisdiction in the following ways:

- Ensures all non-decline offenses committed when a person is under 18 are charged in juvenile court until the person is 21;
- Expands prosecutors' ability to agree to return declined offenses to juvenile court following plea negotiations even after the youth has turned 18;
- Sets the age criteria for discretionary decline to adult court at the age the youth committed the offense; and
- Allows 14- & 15-year-olds adjudicated of Murder in the 1st and 2nd Degree and 15-year-olds adjudicated of Rape in the 1st Degree to serve their sentences in Juvenile Rehabilitation until they turn 23 and provides for an additional two years of juvenile parole.

Closing Loopholes that 'Lose' Juvenile Jurisdiction

Currently, youth can face very different outcomes based on when an offense is charged as opposed to when it happened. For example, a youth who commits a Theft offense at 17 and half could see their case filed in juvenile court while another youth could face an adult court prosecution if the case is filed after they turn 18 (possibly due to a delay in the prosecutor filing the case).

A juvenile court resolution is much more developmentally appropriate than an adult court conviction. Youth prosecuted in juvenile court are often placed on intensive probation supervision, which is typically lacking following an adult court conviction. Youth are also able to seal their adjudications and mitigate the collateral consequences of legal system involvement on future employment, housing, and higher education.

Reducing the Harm of Decline to Adult Court

For youth who have been declined to adult court or who are facing decline, the legislation provides more pathways to allow for a juvenile court case resolution if the prosecutor or judge agrees. Prosecuting and resolving cases in juvenile court ensures accountability while avoiding the devastating harms of an adult court prosecution. The legislation allows more cases to be prosecuted and resolved in juvenile court by:

- Allowing prosecutors more time to review mitigation materials and decide whether to offer a juvenile court resolution; and
- Increasing the maximum age of incarceration for certain very serious offenses committed by 14- or 15-year-olds so juvenile court has more options to respond to the most serious offenses.

Improving Public Safety and Youths' Lives

Numerous studies have shown that youth whose cases remain in juvenile court are less likely to commit additional crimes than those who face conviction in adult court. Washington can reduce recidivism and promote public safety by providing additional pathways for bringing cases stemming from conduct individuals engaged in when under 18 back to juvenile court and sentencing fewer young people in adult court.

Beyond avoiding further charges, research shows the reduced (though still significant) collateral consequences of an adjudication in juvenile court can lead to fewer health problems, better employment prospects, and stronger bonds with positive influences in youths' lives, such as family, friends, and mentors. Finally, avoiding adult court can limit damage to a youth's self-conception and mitigate the adverse mental health outcomes documented in youth convicted in the adult criminal legal system.



King County

Department of
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