



PRESS RELEASE
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One Size FAILS All: Why Probation Doesn't Work for Young Adults in Texas

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition calls for practices that more effectively support 17- to 25-year-olds on adult felony probation, instead of policies that continuously drive them into prison or jail

AUSTIN, TX (August 2, 2018) – The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition (TCJC), a nonpartisan advocacy organization focused on justice policy reform, released its newest report today, which examines how Texas' probation system continuously fails young adults. The report, *Young Adults and Community Supervision: The Need for a Developmentally Appropriate Approach to Probation*, reveals that traditional probation practices are ineffective with 17- to 25-year-olds on adult felony probation.

"There are significant issues facing young adults between the ages of 17 to 25 in Texas," said Doug Smith, Senior Policy Analyst for TCJC and one of the report's authors. "Not only is this age group disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, but it is increasingly clear that standard probation practices that are effective with older adults simply don't work with younger adults. Those practices deprive younger defendants of the rehabilitative benefit of probation and set them up for failure."

Findings from TCJC's report show that, among young adults on felony probation in FY 2016, the majority of cases that had been terminated by the two-year point were due to a probation revocation rather than the successful completion of all probation conditions. Findings also show that, of the people who were terminated from probation in FY 2017, only 18 percent of 17- to 21-year-old felony probationers and 41 percent of 22- to 25-year-old felony probationers successfully completed probation, compared to 60 percent of felony probationers over age 25. Sadly, nearly 7,400 young men and women had their probation revoked in FY 2017, with 7,000 young people committed to prison or jail.

TCJC's report is part one of a four-part report series in their new **One Size FAILS All** campaign, which explores the failures of Texas' criminal justice system to address the needs of vulnerable and marginalized populations, particularly people with substance use and mental health issues, the LGBTQ community, people without stable housing supports, and teenagers and young adults, including young adults aging out of foster care. For example, as shared in TCJC's report, nearly 70 percent of young males in the foster care system are arrested after leaving foster care, a rate that is 23 times higher than the general population.

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“The unfortunate reality is that probation today is largely a lost opportunity,” said William R. Kelly, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Criminology and Criminal Justice Research at the University of Texas at Austin. “Intended as a way to avoid the negative consequences of incarceration while providing intervention and rehabilitation designed to reduce reoffending, the version we see in many jurisdictions today is simply supervision and control with little attention paid to the factors that lead to recidivism.”

TCJC urges policy-makers to adopt the report’s recommendations, which create taxpayer cost savings and keep families intact through more effective strategies: community-based collaborations and programming that deter young adults from prison; a reduction in high supervision fees, including by allowing participation in rehabilitative programming to satisfy financial obligations; more technical assistance for probation departments to implement best practices; shorter probation terms for low-risk defendants and an emphasis on early termination for higher-risk defendants who successfully complete rehabilitative programming; and a prioritization of vocational and life skills training.

For a copy of the report, visit www.TexasCJC.org.

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About the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition

The Texas Criminal Justice Coalition is a nonpartisan, nonprofit advocacy organization focused primarily on adult and youth justice policy reform at the state and county level. With a commitment to strengthening families and communities across Texas, the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition brings expertise and diverse perspectives to identify and advance solutions that help Texas spend money responsibly and ensure incarceration is rare and the last response after other, more appropriate interventions have been tried and have failed. To learn more, visit www.TexasCJC.org.