

200

State Ratings Report

A Time for Hope

25



HUMAN RIGHTS
for KIDS

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our partners and generous funders without whom this report would not have been possible.

The Just Trust
Annie E. Casey Foundation
TOW Foundation
Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation
Stoneleigh Foundation
Abell Foundation

We also thank the advocates and policymakers who work alongside us – in a bipartisan fashion – to end human rights violations against children in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. We want to especially thank our 2025 Summer Law Clerks, Jamelia Robinson and Joe Rodri for their research contributions.

Author's Note: This report contains an analysis of state legislative actions through July 1, 2025. State legislatures in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin remain in session at the time of the publishing of this report. Any action taken in those states which would cause a state to gain or lose credit will be reflected in the 2026 edition of the State Ratings Report.

Introduction

A Time for Hope



After a tumultuous 2024 which saw advocates questioning whether or not we were in the midst of a pendulum swing back to the harmful policies of the 1990's, HRFK and our allies rallied to pass significant youth justice reforms in 2025 to put such concerns to rest. To paraphrase Mark Twain: "the rumors of the demise of the movement for youth justice reform have been greatly exaggerated."

This was HRFK's most successful year ever. Our advocacy team helped to get more than 25 bills introduced across the country, including 8 news laws that were enacted in Arkansas, Hawaii, and Vermont! All three states passed laws to help end the school-to-prison pipeline by removing elementary school-aged children from juvenile courts altogether. Hawaii

also eliminated mandatory minimum sentences for children and banned the practice of placing children in adult jails and prisons! Not to be outdone, Arkansas became the first state in the nation to pass legislation recognizing children recruited into gangs or coerced into committing crime as victims of human trafficking. The new law puts in place protections to ensure that no child can be prosecuted for non-violent offenses that were a part of their exploitation. Arkansas also passed reforms requiring adverse childhood experiences and childhood trauma to be considered during both transfer and sentencing proceedings.

In total, more than 50 bills were filed in states across the country seeking to improve human rights protections for children in the criminal justice system!

This is not a time for despair my friends. **This is a time for hope.**

Every year thousands of justice system-involved children are impacted by the human rights protections that have been passed in recent years. Together, we've banned practices like prosecuting children under 12, placing youth in adult jails and prisons, keeping children in solitary confinement, and imposing mandatory minimum and life without parole sentences on youth. We've codified the requirement that a child consult with an attorney before he or she waives their constitutional rights and have created pathways for formerly incarcerated youth to have their voting rights restored. Courts are now required to consider children's trauma history and victim status before sending a child to the adult system or sentencing them if they're convicted.

We are winning.

Dr. King famously said, "unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word." While we may experience temporary defeats in the years ahead, we are stronger than the forces that oppose us and we will prevail because we walk in light and carry the greatest weapon of all – love.

With hope and love,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Dold". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

James Dold
CEO & Founder

A Human Rights Framework

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) require the following human rights protections for children who come into conflict with the law. These protections are the foundation for our State Ratings Report and underpin each of the categories upon which states are graded.

CRC ARTICLE 37

- Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offenses committed by persons below eighteen years of age.
- Every child deprived of liberty shall be separated from adults unless it is considered in the child's best interest not to do so and shall have the right to maintain contact with his or her family.
- Every child deprived of his or her liberty shall have the right to prompt access to legal and other appropriate assistance.

CRC ARTICLE 39

- States shall take measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse; torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or armed conflicts.

CRC Article 40

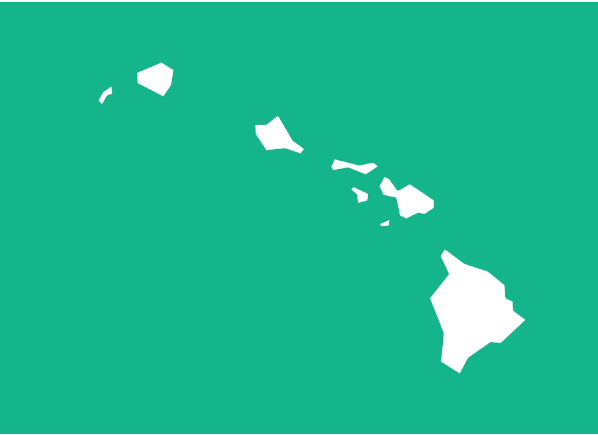
- Every child having infringed the penal law shall have the right to be treated in a manner which *takes into account the child's age* and the desirability of *promoting the child's reintegration* and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.
- Every child accused of having infringed the penal law has at least the following guarantees: (1) Not to be *compelled* to give testimony or to *confess* guilt; and (2) To be informed promptly and directly of the charges against him or her, and, if appropriate, through his or her parents or legal guardians, and to have legal or other appropriate assistance in the preparation and presentation of his or her defense.
- States shall seek to promote the establishment of laws that establish a *minimum age* below which children shall be presumed not to have the capacity to infringe the penal law.

ICCPR ARTICLE 10

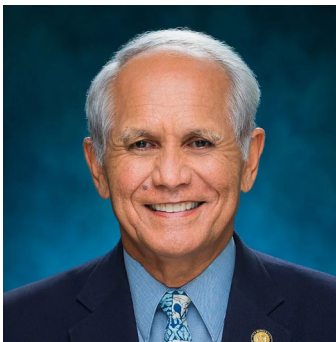
- Accused juvenile persons shall be separated from adults and brought as speedily as possible for adjudication.
- Juvenile offenders shall be segregated from adults and be accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status.

ICCPR ARTICLE 14

- In the case of juvenile persons, the procedure shall be such as will take account of their age and the desirability of promoting their rehabilitation.



Most Improved State **HAWAII**



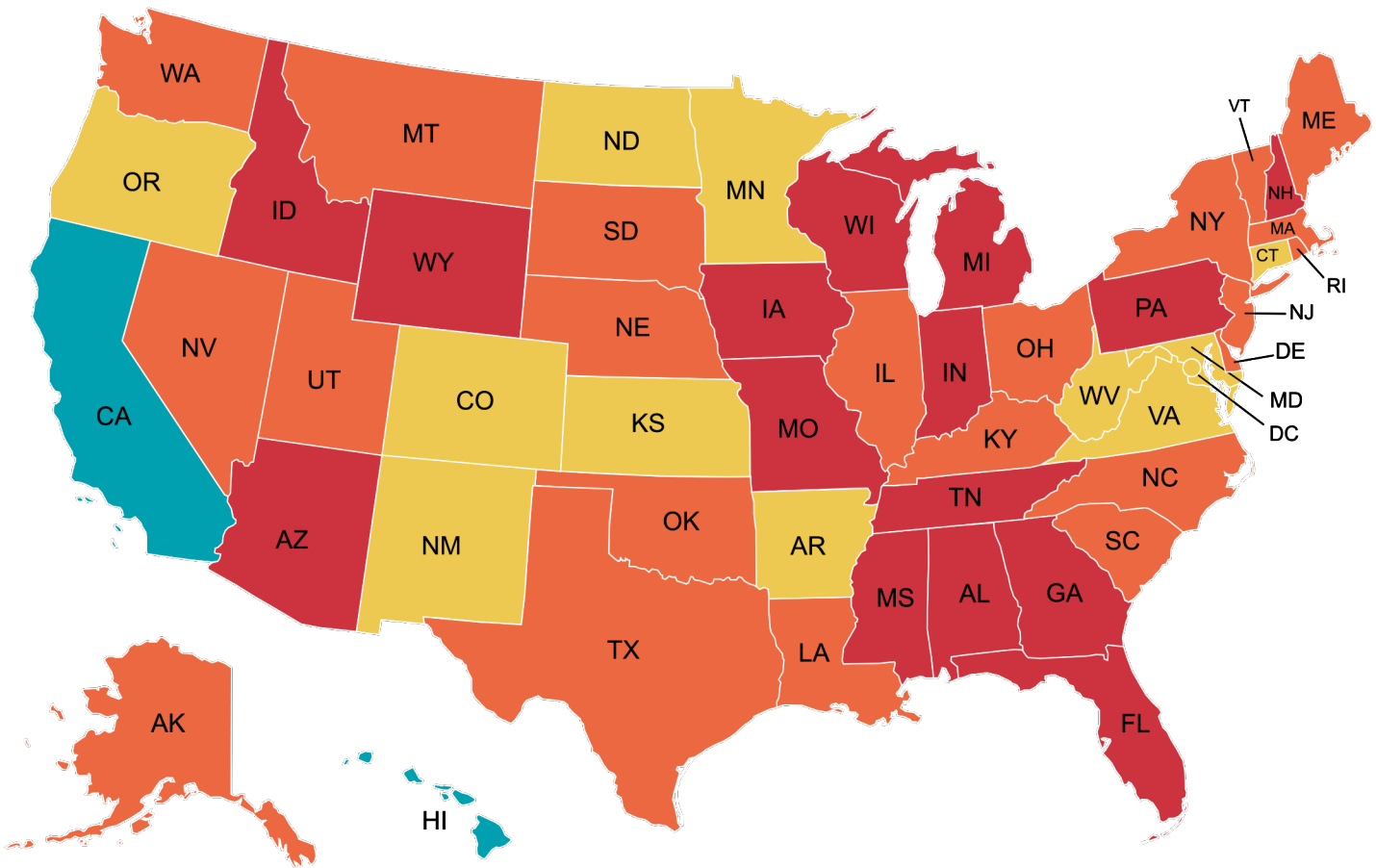
*State Senator
Michael Gabbard*

“These reforms recognize that all children deserve to have their human rights protected even when they make mistakes. For our youngest na keiki that means addressing behavioral issues with treatment and services outside of carceral settings. It also means that if incarceration becomes necessary for older youth, that they are treated in an age-appropriate and trauma-informed manner. These laws will ensure our keiki receive that grace and the opportunity to heal from the trauma that often leads to their system-involvement.”



Governor Josh Green, M.D.

“As a physician and public servant, I believe we have a moral obligation to protect the well-being of all children—especially those who have experienced trauma, abuse, or hardship. These new laws reflect Hawaii’s deep commitment to treating kids with compassion and dignity, not punishment. By keeping children out of adult jails and prisons, ending mandatory minimum sentences for youth, and ensuring judges consider the full context of a child’s life, we are creating a justice system that sees children as they are: still growing, still healing, and still full of potential.”



2 Tier One (10+ points)

State has created an impressive legal framework to protect the human rights of children in its justice system and has taken its obligation to defend human rights seriously.

13 Tier Two (7 - 9 points)

State has passed several laws to protect the human rights of children in the justice system and should take additional steps to improve and implement its burgeoning legal framework.

22 Tier Three (4 - 6 points)

State has made minimal efforts to protect the human rights of children in the justice system and should take immediate action to improve and implement its laws.

15 Tier Four (1 - 3 points)

State has made little to no effort to protect the human rights of children in the justice system and is likely in violation of international human rights standards.

Most Improved

Hawaii (10.5)

Worst Human Rights Offenders

Alabama (2)

Georgia (2)

Mississippi (2)

Tennessee (2)

Wyoming (2)

Categories



DUE PROCESS

States receive credit for this category if they have a statutory provision requiring children to consult with their parents or legal counsel before waiving their Miranda Rights or being subject to a custodial police interrogation. States will not receive credit if such protections are limited to children subject to delinquency proceedings. States may receive partial credit if they apply these protections to some children under a certain age (i.e. under 16), but not all children under 18.



MINIMUM COURT AGE

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily prohibit *all* children less than 10 years of age from being adjudicated delinquent in the juvenile court system, regardless of the charged offense. Children this young who come into conflict with the law should be provided treatment and services in the child welfare system in compliance with human rights standards. No exceptions can be permitted to receive credit for this category.



MAXIMUM COURT AGE

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily permit children less than 18 years of age to be adjudicated in the juvenile justice system and have not excluded teenagers under the age of majority. No exceptions can be permitted to receive credit for this category.



LIFE WITHOUT PAROLE

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily ban life without parole sentences from being imposed on all children under 18 years of age. No exceptions can be permitted to receive credit for this category. States that permit judges to review and modify a child's sentence, including life without parole, after a term of years will receive full credit for this category.



ADULT COURTS

(A) States receive credit under this subsection if they statutorily prohibit the transfer of children under 14 years of age into the adult criminal justice system. No exceptions can be permitted to receive credit for this subsection, which includes exclusions based on the type of crime committed. For example, if a child under 14 may be transferred to the adult system on a charge of homicide, the state does not receive credit for this category.

(B) States receive credit under this subsection if they require a mandatory child status hearing in all cases involving children less than 18 years of age before allowing transfer to adult criminal court. In this hearing, a judge must have the discretion to consider a child's status and determine whether a child's case should proceed in juvenile or adult court. States that allow children to be subject to direct file in adult court or statutorily exclude certain children from the jurisdiction of the juvenile court, may receive full credit only if they require an immediate child status or reverse waiver hearing in adult criminal court. No exceptions can be permitted to receive credit for this subsection.

States may receive partial credit for this category if they meet the requirements of either subsections (A) or (B).



MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

States receive credit for this category if judges, masters, magistrates, or others with sentencing authority are authorized to depart from *all* mandatory minimum sentences when sentencing children in adult criminal court. States will only be awarded credit if they allow discretion at the time that a sentence is being imposed and not if they "theoretically" allow a judge to later suspend the sentence. Nor will states receive credit for allowing greater judicial discretion under 'youthful offender' laws. States may receive partial credit if they authorize sentencing authorities to depart, up to a certain percentage, from any mandatory minimum sentence for any offense in adult criminal court.



FELONY-MURDER RULE

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily eliminate the application of the felony murder rule to children less than 18 years of age. In cases where a child does not kill or intend to kill another person during the commission of a felony, they should receive a sentence based on their overall culpability, which takes into account the child's trauma history and potential for rehabilitation. States will receive credit for this category if they do not have the felony murder rule, have banned the felony murder rule for children, or have created an affirmative defense for persons who do not kill or intend to kill during the commission of the felony. States may receive partial credit if they place strict limits on the applicability of the affirmative defense or allow children who did not kill or intend to kill to still be prosecuted pursuant to the rule under other circumstances.



INCARCERATION

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily prohibit the housing of children under 18 years of age in adult correctional facilities, including local jails and state prisons. A child who has committed serious crimes or who may be subject to prosecution in the adult criminal justice system must continue to be housed in juvenile correctional facilities until they reach 18 years of age.



SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily prohibit the use of solitary confinement or administrative segregation on children for punitive and safety-related reasons. States are allowed to have individual confinement for children as a "cooling off" period, but such removal should be used only in extreme cases, and only for as long as reasonably necessary for the child to be reintegrated with the rest of the children in the facility. States may receive partial credit for this category if they ban the use of solitary/room confinement, isolation, or administrative segregation for children in juvenile detention facilities. However, in order to receive full credit, states must have protections in place for kids in both juvenile and adult correctional facilities.



POST-RELEASE SUPERVISION

States receive credit for this category if they statutorily authorize formerly incarcerated children serving lengthy terms of post-release supervision to be discharged from supervision at the discretion of the paroling authority or judge. States will receive credit if they have statutory provisions that apply to all formerly incarcerated individuals, including children. States may receive partial credit if they allow most formerly incarcerated children to be eligible for early discharge from supervision.



RELEASE SAFETY VALVE

States receive credit for this category if they allow either the parole board or judges to review all sentences previously imposed on child offenders after no more than 30 calendar years (end de facto life without parole). States may receive partial credit for this category if they have statutes permitting sentencing review for nearly all offenses committed by children. However, to receive full credit states must allow children serving multiple sentences of any duration and for any offenses to be eligible for review.



VOTING RIGHTS

States that have eliminated voting rights for persons convicted of serious offenses will receive credit for this category if they statutorily require or permit the restoration of voting rights for formerly incarcerated children who have been released from prison. States will not receive credit if they require Gubernatorial action before voting rights can be restored. If a state allows for the reinstatement of voting rights upon completion of the person's sentence, which includes parole or supervision, the state must allow formerly incarcerated children to seek discharge from parole or supervision at a reasonable point after they have been released in order to receive credit for this category. A state may receive partial credit if the vast majority of formerly incarcerated children can have their voting rights restored without executive action. However, a state will not receive any credit if it permanently disenfranchises formerly incarcerated children convicted of certain offenses.

State Ratings Chart

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- Solitary Confinement
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- Felony-Murder Rule
- Incarceration
- Maximum Court Age
- Life Without Parole
- Post-Release Supervision
- Adult Courts
- Release Safety Valve
- Voting Rights

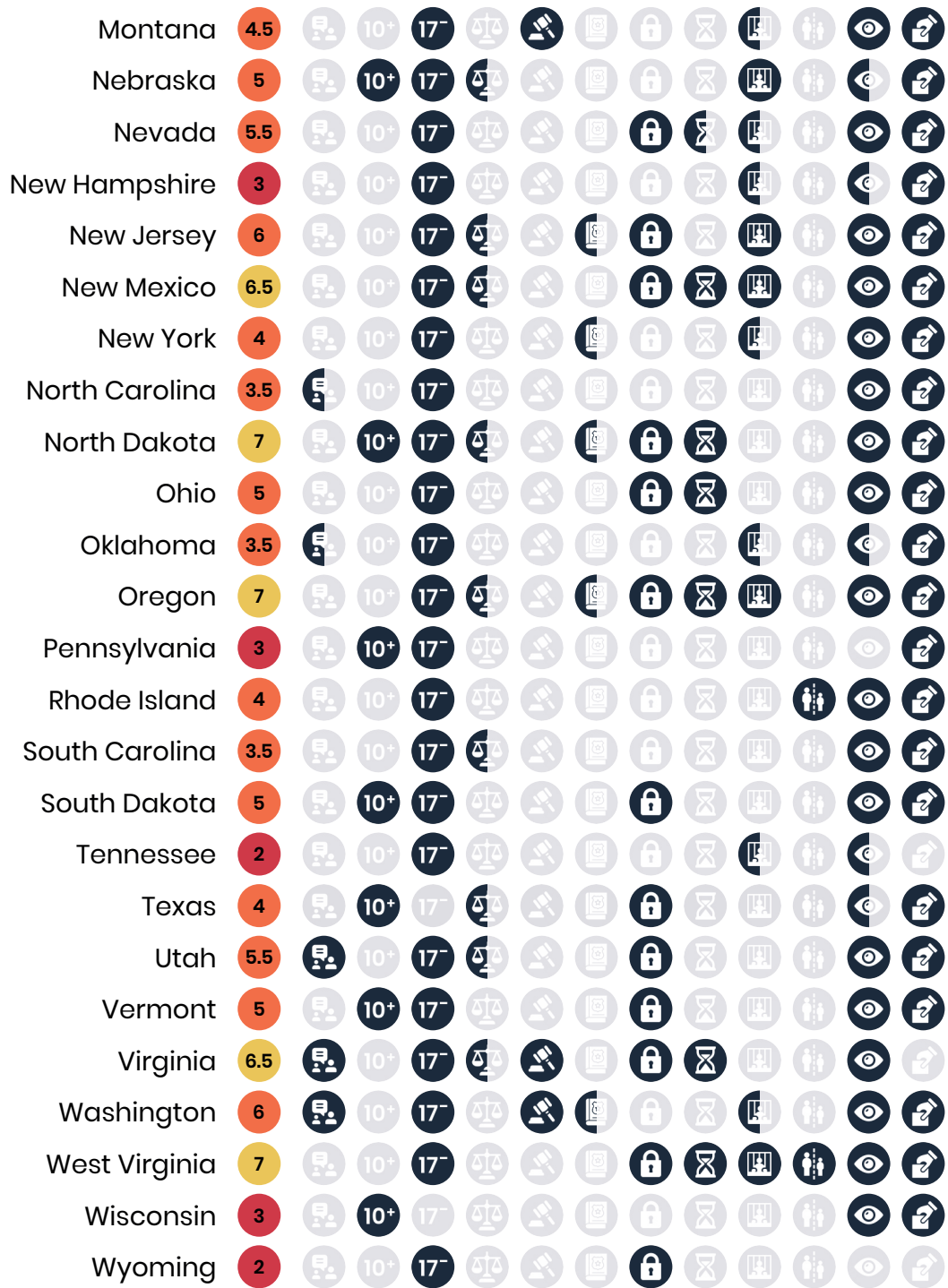
State	Score	Due Process	Minimum Court Age	Maximum Court Age	Adult Courts	Mandatory Minimum Sentences	Felony-Murder Rule	Life Without Parole	Release Safety Valve	Solitary Confinement	Incarceration	Post-Release Supervision	Voting Rights
Alabama	2	No Credit	10+	17-	No Credit	Partial Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	Partial Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Alaska	4	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Arizona	2.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Arkansas	7	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
California	9.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Colorado	6.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Connecticut	8	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Delaware	3.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
District of Columbia	7	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	Partial Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Florida	3	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Georgia	2	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Hawaii	10.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Idaho	3	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Illinois	5.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Indiana	3	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Iowa	2.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Kansas	6.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Kentucky	3.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Louisiana	3.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Maine	4	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Maryland	7.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	Partial Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Massachusetts	6	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Michigan	3	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Minnesota	7.5	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Mississippi	2	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit
Missouri	3	No Credit	10+	17-	Full Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit	No Credit

Total Score

- Tier 1 (10+ points)
- Tier 2 (7-9 points)
- Tier 3 (4-6 points)
- Tier 4 (1-3 points)

Credit

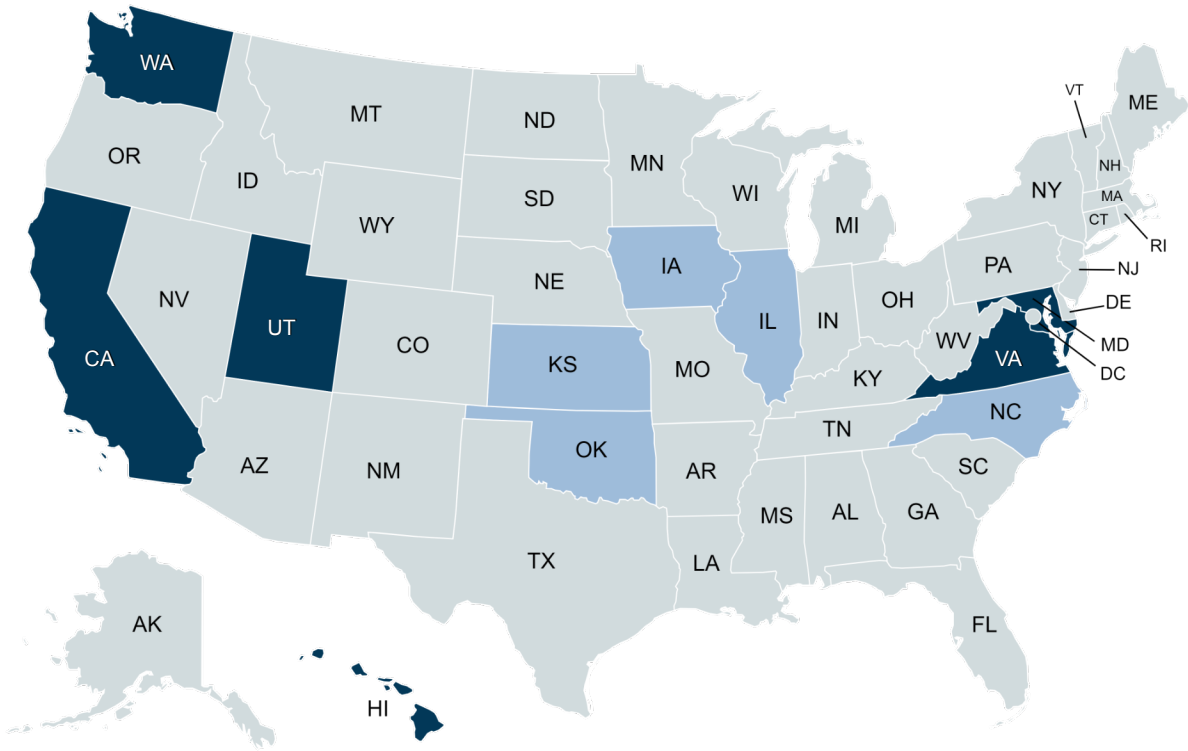
- Full Credit
- ◐ Partial Credit
- No Credit





Due Process

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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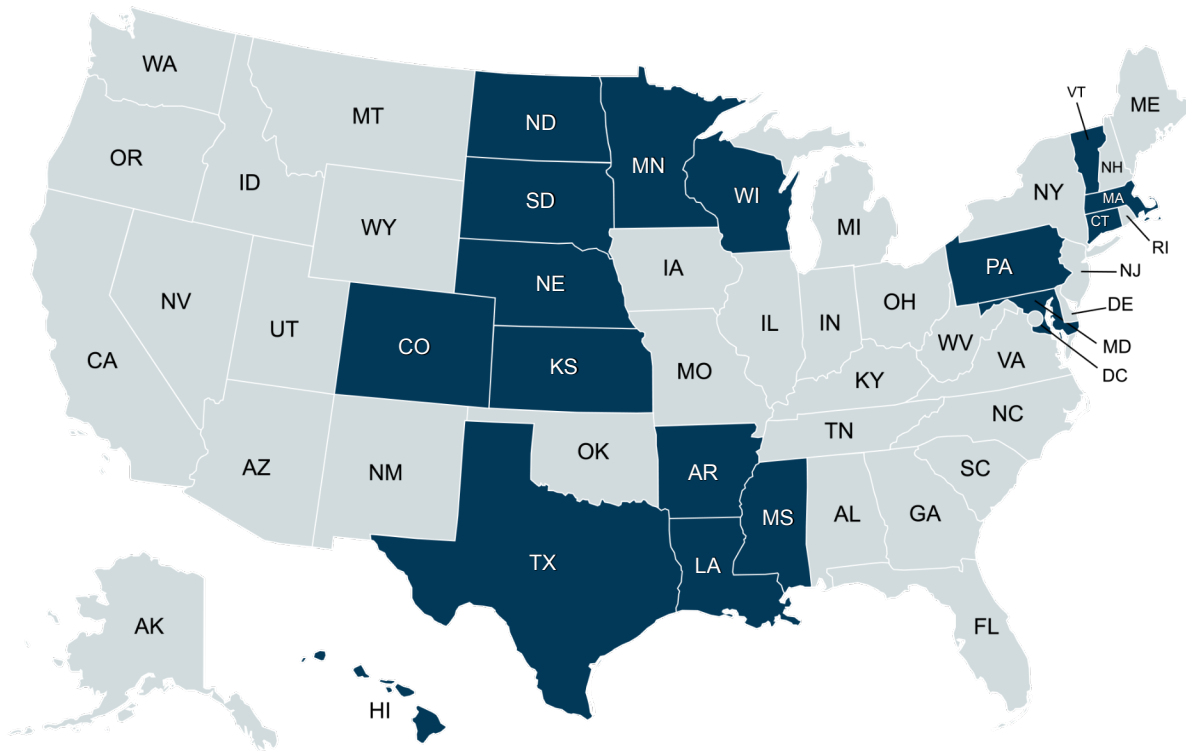
Due Process Protections at Point of Entry for Kids

Protecting the due process rights of children during custodial interrogations has been the strongest trend in the states that we have tracked since the inception of this report. While only 3 states received credit for this category in the first edition of our report, that number doubled by the next report’s publication in 2022, and in 2023, another state joined the list. While no states passed legislation to garner additional credit in this year’s report, at least 9 states considered legislation to strengthen the rights of children when they are questioned by law enforcement. States without protections should look to Maryland or Hawaii as a model for how best to protect children at the point of entry into the justice system.

10+

Minimum Court Age

● Full Credit ● No Credit

Partial credit is not available for this category.

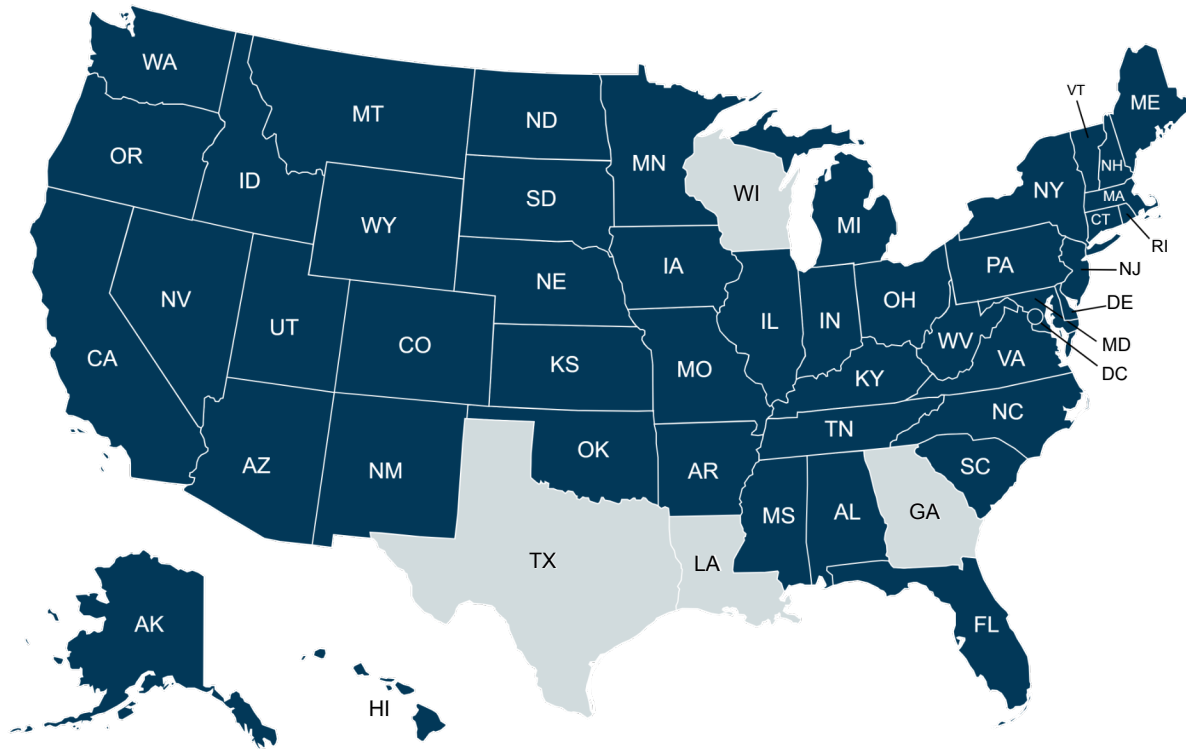
Set a Minimum Age of at Least 10 for Juvenile Court

One of the central pillars of human rights for children in the justice system is the establishment of a minimum age of criminal culpability in juvenile court. While international human rights standards encourage states to set the age at 14, our continued review of state laws found that only a minority of states set a minimum age of at least 10. This category has seen progress, however, with several new states gaining credit since our initial report including three states this year. Hawaii and Vermont now join Massachusetts to set a minimum age of 12 with no exceptions. Additionally, in 2025, minimum age legislation was introduced in at least 10 other states. The Virginia General Assembly passed legislation in 2024 and 2025 to set a minimum age of 11, but unfortunately, that important protection was vetoed by the Governor each time.

While states are encouraged to follow the example of Massachusetts in this category, they can also look to policies adopted in Louisiana and Texas which set the minimum age of responsibility at 10 without exceptions. Maryland also offers a workable alternative with a minimum age set between 10 and 13 depending on the offense. Minimum age laws are a basic human rights protection and are essential to ending the school to prison pipeline. Unfortunately, 33 states and the District of Columbia fail to meet this standard.

Maximum Court Age

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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Set a Maximum Age of at Least 17 for Juvenile Court

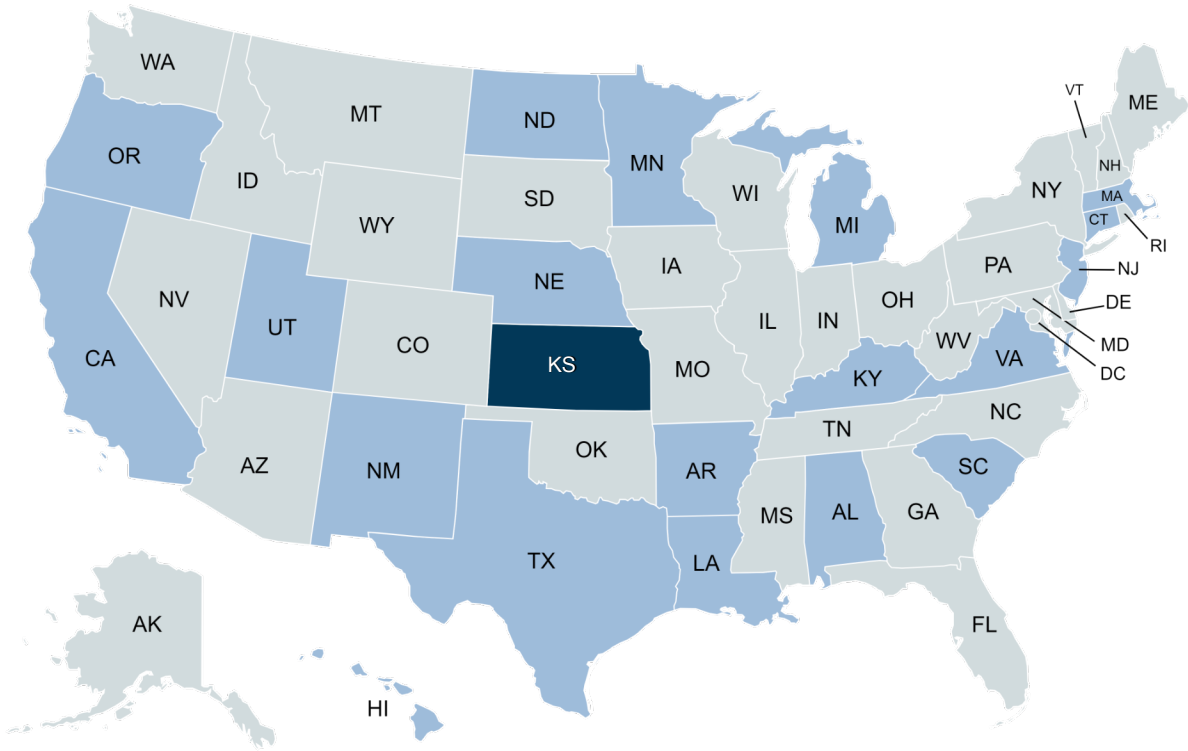
International human rights standards call for “every person under the age of 18 years at the time of the alleged commission of an offense” to be “treated in accordance with the rules of juvenile justice, in a specific and specialized system, different from the criminal one applicable to adults.” This category is best viewed as the second pillar of human rights protections for children, complementing the second category which requires the establishment of a minimum age of criminal culpability.

Only four states, Louisiana, Georgia, Wisconsin, and Texas, exclude 17-year-olds, making these four states extreme outliers in this basic protection for children.



Adult Courts

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



Ban Prosecuting Kids Under 14 as Adults AND Require a Child Status Hearing for All Kids 14+ Before Proceedings in Adult Court

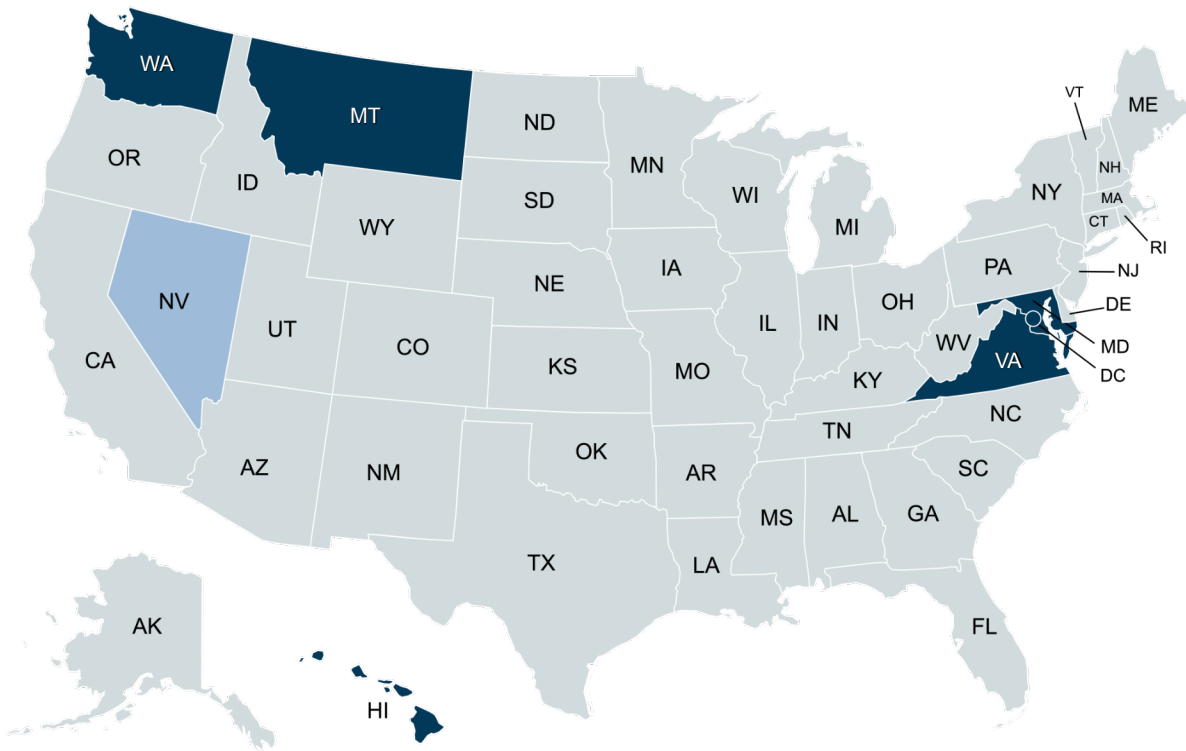
In a clear violation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the United States’ treaty obligations under the ICCPR, every state and the District of Columbia permit children to be prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system. This violation is the primary reason for why over 32,000 people are currently incarcerated in U.S. prisons for crimes they committed as children. To begin to respond to this human rights crisis, it is critical for the U.S. to establish a minimum age below which children cannot be prosecuted as if they were adults.

To accomplish this aim and to be as consistent with human rights norms as possible, we ask that states ban the prosecution of children under 14 in the adult criminal justice system. To earn full credit, states must also require a child status hearing for all children before proceeding in adult court. Kansas continues to be the only state to receive full credit for this category. Nineteen other states receive partial credit for prohibiting children under 14 from being prosecuted as adults.



Mandatory Minimum Sentences

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



Ban Mandatory Minimum Sentences for Kids

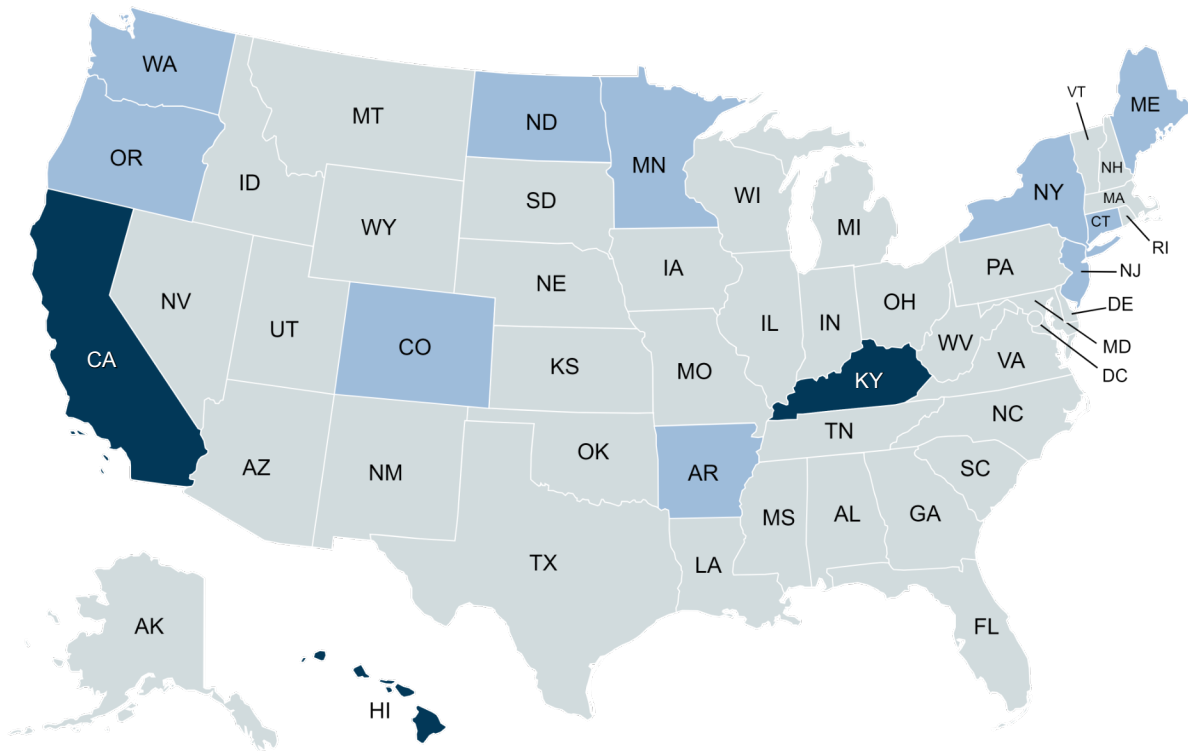
Because every state allows children to be prosecuted as if they were adults, it is vital for judges or juries to be given the power to sentence children differently than they would adult offenders. Considering children's diminished culpability relative to adults and increased prospects for treatment and rehabilitation, states must allow sentencers to depart from any otherwise applicable mandatory minimum sentence after a child has been convicted in adult court.

This category has seen promising progress since our initial report, with several states gaining new credit, including Hawaii in 2025. The case remains that most of the country has not enacted such policies, even though mandatory minimum sentences for children violate human rights standards. States should continue to look to the Commonwealth of Virginia for model provisions on how children should be sentenced if they are convicted in adult court.



Felony-Murder Rule

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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Ban Felony-Murder Rule for Kids

The brain science tells us that oftentimes, children fail to appreciate the unintended consequences of their actions. Nowhere is this more apparent than in felony murder cases where children can be criminally convicted of murder even though they did not kill or intend to kill anyone during the commission of a felony offense. To be consistent with human rights standards in treating children differently than adults and promoting their rehabilitation, states must ban the application of the felony murder doctrine to children who do not have the actual intent to kill another person.

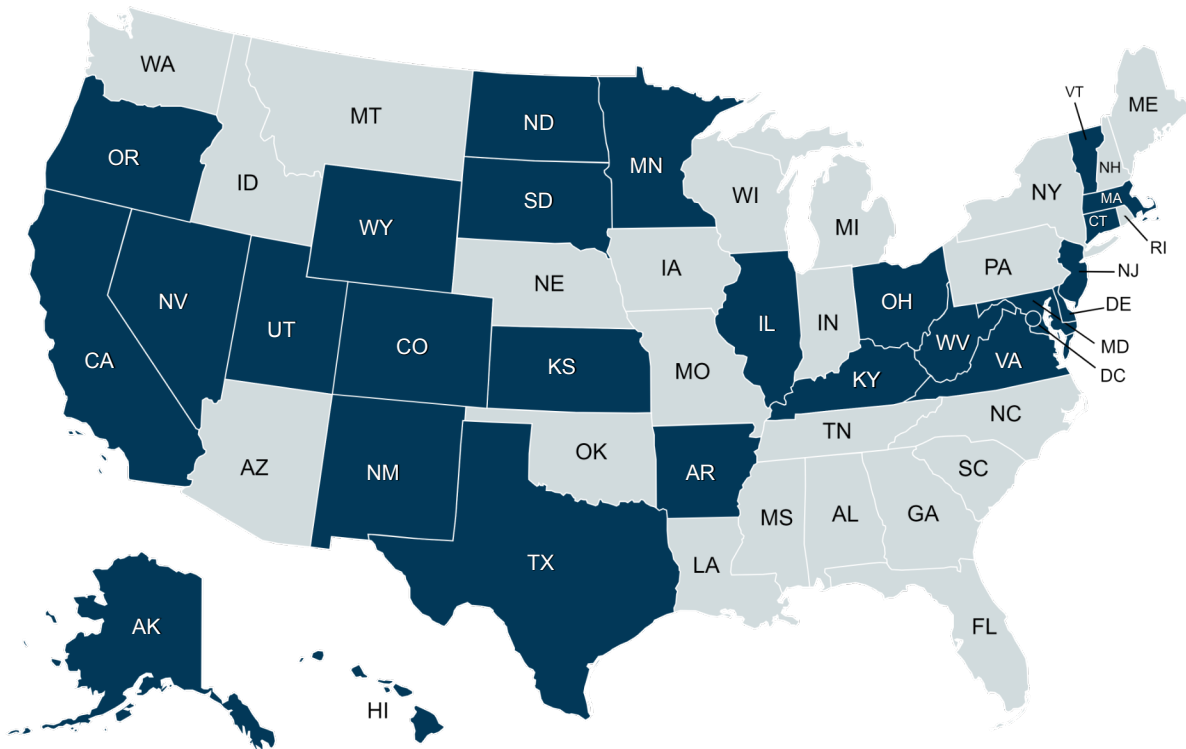
California, Hawaii, and Kentucky are the only states that received full credit for banning the application of the felony murder doctrine to children. While some states receive partial credit for creating an affirmative defense to felony murder, they do not receive full credit because their statutes had exceptions that could still lead to criminal liability for a child who did not kill or intend to kill during the course of a felony offense.



Life Without Parole

● Full Credit ● No Credit

Partial credit is not available for this category.



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Ban Life Without Parole Sentences for Kids

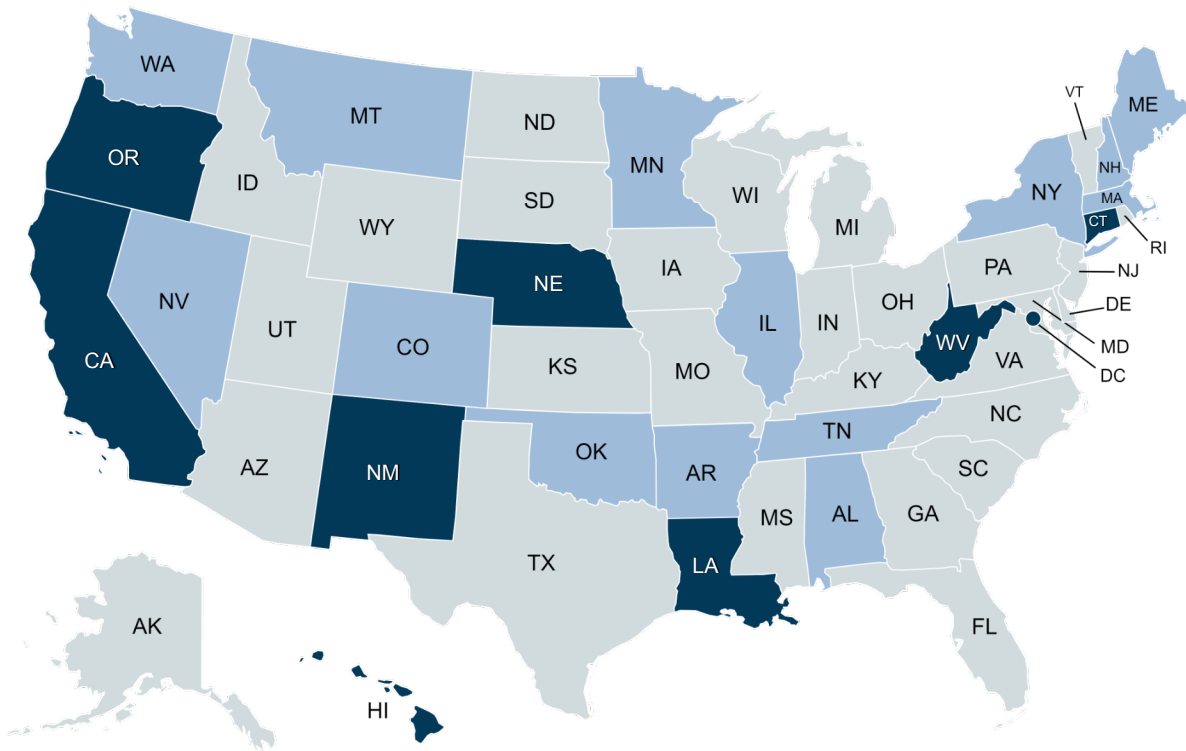
The use of life without parole sentences on children has been deemed cruel, degrading, and inhumane punishment by international human rights standards. Inflicting such a sentence on a child casts them as irredeemable and unworthy of ever living in free society again. What we know, however, is that children have a unique ability to grow and change due to their underdeveloped brains, and that science must be reflected in our state laws by outlawing the use of life without parole sentences on children.

States must ban life without parole altogether – with no exceptions – in order to receive full credit. Today, 26 states and the District of Columbia have enacted statutes banning the practice of sentencing children to die in prison. States that have active parole systems should look to Utah or Nevada for model language on banning juvenile life without parole. States without parole systems can look to North Dakota or the District of Columbia for model language. In 2025, no new states enacted bans on life without parole sentences for children, but at least 3 states considered such legislation.



Solitary Confinement

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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Ban Solitary Confinement for Kids

Placing children in solitary confinement of any kind is strictly prohibited as a form of cruel and inhumane treatment under international human rights standards. Sadly, only 8 states and the District of Columbia received full credit for banning solitary confinement for children. While some states receive partial credit for their statutes protecting children in the juvenile facilities, children in adult jails/prisons remain vulnerable to this human rights abuse. Protecting children in adult facilities is a crucial part of this protection, as children held in adult jails or prisons are often at greater risk for being subject to solitary confinement. States that only received partial credit should enact legislation expanding such protections to children held in adult jails or prisons, or, better yet, ban children from being incarcerated in adult correctional facilities altogether.

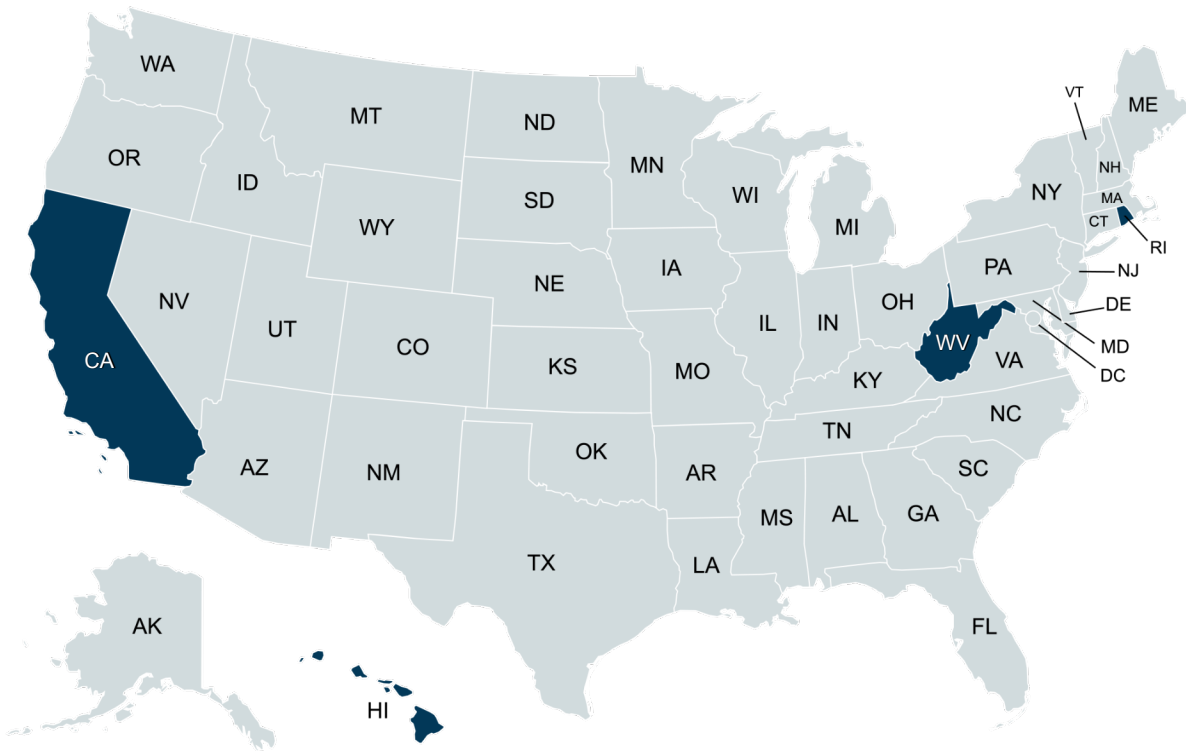
California, West Virginia, and now Hawaii, have the best laws in the country as they ban solitary confinement for children in juvenile facilities and prohibit kids from being incarcerated in adult jails or prisons. In 2025, at least seven considered new laws to protect children from this harmful practice.



Incarceration

● Full Credit ● No Credit

Partial credit is not available for this category.



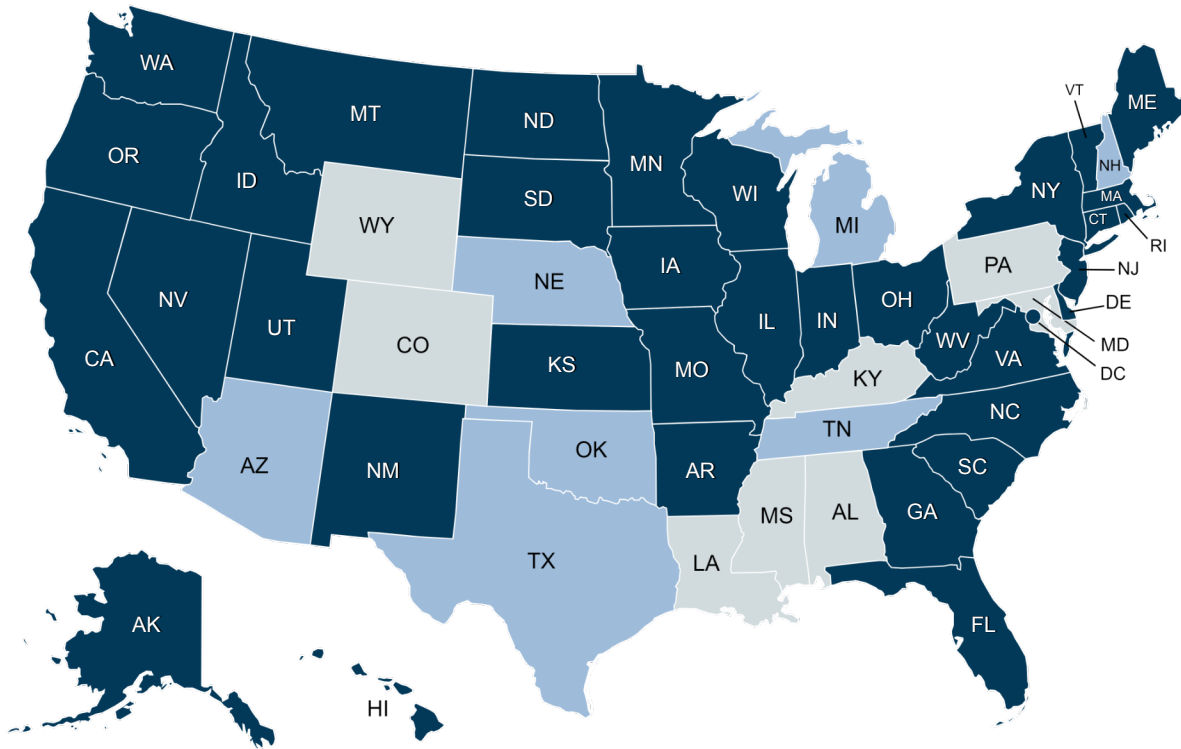
Ban Incarcerating Kids with Adults

Detaining or incarcerating children in adult jails, lock-ups, or prisons is a very clear violation of human rights standards under both the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Such treatment of children increases their risk of physical and sexual violence and limits the education and rehabilitative programming that would otherwise be available to them. Additionally, children held in adult facilities are often subject to conditions of solitary confinement or room seclusion which is also a violation of human rights standards. This category is the greatest human rights failure of any we track. While many states strictly regulate sight and sound restrictions between children and adults in detention facilities, most do not prohibit detaining or incarcerating children in adult facilities. This year, Hawaii joins California, Rhode Island, and West Virginia as the only states in compliance with this category.



Post-Release Supervision

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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Ban Mandatory Post-Release Lifetime Supervision

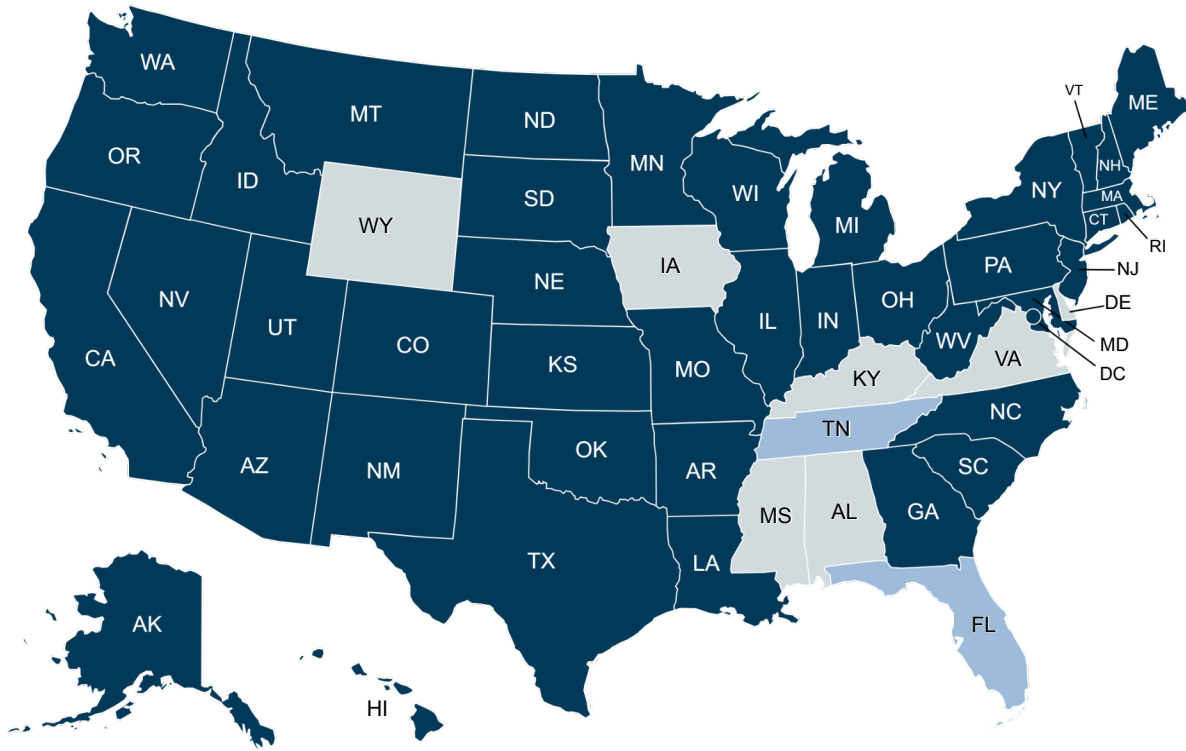
Promoting reintegration and the assumption of a constructive role in society for formerly incarcerated children means they must have the ability to discharge their full sentence, including any period of post-release supervision. In General Comment 24, the CRC stated that promoting reintegration requires a child in conflict with the law to be “protected from actions or attitudes that hamper the child’s full participation in his/her community, such as stigmatization, social isolation, or negative publicity.”

In many states, post-release supervision is considered a part of an offender’s sentence. For formerly incarcerated children serving lengthy prison sentences this could mean lifetime supervision that hinders his or her ability to move on with their life, exercise their full rights of citizenship, or assume a constructive role in society. Therefore, states should enact laws that allow the supervising authority to discharge a formerly incarcerated youth from supervision at a reasonable point after release. All but 9 states received full or partial credit for this category, with Alaska having one of the best laws in the nation. No new states received credit for this category in 2025.



Voting Rights

● Full Credit ● Partial Credit ● No Credit



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Restore Voting Rights

The full social reintegration of formerly incarcerated children is the chief human rights principle behind many of the protections found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, a person cannot achieve full social reintegration if they are denied the rights and privileges afforded to their fellow citizens. No right is more important to active citizenship than the right of suffrage. Therefore, states must create a pathway for formerly incarcerated children to have their voting rights restored upon release. Many states require the completion of the entire sentence, including post-release supervision, before one's voting rights can be restored. States with such requirements must also create a mechanism that allows formerly incarcerated children to be discharged from state supervision in order to earn credit for this category.

The overwhelming majority of states – 41 and the District of Columbia – have statutes in place creating a pathway for all formerly incarcerated children to register to vote. While Tennessee and Florida received partial credit, Virginia, Kentucky, Delaware, Iowa, Wyoming, Mississippi, and Alabama continue to receive no credit. These states can look to Vermont where voting rights are never taken away or Nevada where formerly incarcerated youth are permitted to vote once they've been released from prison, for model language to receive credit for this category.

Hope is a Good Thing,
Maybe the Best of Things, and
No Good Thing Ever Dies.

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