



## **Juvenile Justice in California**

Over 6,500 people currently in California prisons were under the age of 18 at the time of their crime. Current California law fails to recognize human capacity for change. People in their late teens are still developing, and the direction of that development is not one that can be predicted with reliability. Changes in California law have removed many safeguards and points for review that once existed for youth charged with crimes.

### **Testimony from a juvenile sentenced to Life Without Parole:**

"[M]y life in prison has been like living in hell. It's like living and dying at the same time, and with my sentence the misery never ends. Life in prison is no life at all. It is a mere existence."  
male prisoner, July 23, 2004

### **Juvenile Justice and the Convention on the Rights of the Child:**

**Article 37** – Detention and punishment: Children should be treated with humanity and respect and not subject to cruel and unusual punishment. State parties shall ensure that: No child shall be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without the possibility of release shall be imposed for offenses committed by persons below 18 years of age.

**Article 40** – Juvenile justice: Children who are accused of breaking the law have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects their rights. Treatment should take into account the child's age and promote the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society.

### **Recent California Juvenile Justice Bills:**

**AB1276:** Ensures that people under the age of 22 at the time they enter prison are less likely to be placed on the most dangerous prison yards and more likely to have access to rehabilitative programs and services. **Status:** Signed into law by Governor Brown, September 27, 2014.

**SB260:** Gives a second chance to most people who were under the age of 18 at the time of their crime, tried as an adult and sentenced to an adult prison sentence. It gives them a chance to demonstrate remorse and rehabilitation, establishing a parole process with different criteria. **Status:** Signed into law by Governor Brown, effective January 1, 2014.

**SB9:** Gives a second chance to most people who were under the age of 18 at the time of their crime and sentenced to life without parole. They can ask the court for a new sentencing hearing, where they will have the chance of getting a new sentence with the possibility of parole. **Status:** Signed into law by Governor Brown, effective January 1, 2013.