

**Minimum Age for Juvenile Detention:**

**A Humane and Reasonable Response**

*In Indiana, there is no minimum age for a child to be held in a secure juvenile detention facility. As a result, children as young as 10 and 11 (and sometimes even younger) may be held in secure detention facilities which has been shown to increase recidivism and have lasting harm and behavioral consequences for children.*

**Background Information:** Any length of detention may negatively impact a child’s mental and physical well-being: delaying education, causing lasting psychological trauma, jeopardizing future employment prospects, and exposing young children to significant risks of violence. Detaining children also poses a threat to public safety as it leads to increased rates of crime and recidivism in minors.

Indiana is **among 2/3 of states that do not specify a minimum age for a child to be held in a secure detention facility**.

**Why establish a minimum age for detainment in juvenile detention facilities?**

1. **Young children are at the greatest risk of being victims of violence when in custody.**
2. **Children can be served by a variety of placements that are safer, more effective and less harmful than detention.**

1. **Detention increases chances of recidivism and poor outcomes for children.**

Indiana law does, however, recognize the dangers of detaining young people.

Indiana has statutes that prohibit juvenile status offenders from being placed in a detention center

pre-adjudication, as well as a statute that requires a child to be **at least 12 years old** to be committed to the Department of Correction/Division of Youth Services. The Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Justice Alternatives Initiative recommends prohibiting the detainment of children under the age of 12 in juvenile detention facilities as a national best practice. Indiana is a JDAI state site.

RECOMMENDATION

Indiana should amend its juvenile statutes by establishing a lower age limit for secure detention that matches the state’s current age limit for commitment to the Indiana Department of Correction.