



POSITION STATEMENT

Adopted by NPJS Board of Directors ~ October 18, 2011

PLACEMENT AND TREATMENT OF PRE-ADOLESCENTS IN A DETENTION FACILITY

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

Pre-adolescents (children 11 years of age or younger) have unique needs and when placed in secure juvenile detention facilities pose specific programmatic, safety, and security issues.

NATURE OF THE ISSUE

Pre-adolescents, due to the developing maturity level and limited ability to make rational cognitive choices:

- Behave differently and require age appropriate behavior management programs.
- Have emotional needs that require a more nurturing environment. ⁹
- Have different educational and recreational needs.
- Have unique healthcare needs.
- Require a different level of supervision and classification to protect them from harm and possible victimization. ⁹
- Require that staff have different skill sets and specific training to address the developmental and emotional needs of this population.

POSITION STATEMENT

The National Partnership for Juvenile Services (NPJS) opposes the placement of pre-adolescents in secure juvenile detention facilities. The NPJS believes that this population is best served through the professional and effective collaboration among child welfare, mental health, and juvenile justice agencies. In the event that a placement occurs in a secure juvenile detention facility, services should address the specific safety, health care, and developmental needs of the child. An alternative placement consistent with public safety should be facilitated immediately.