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CDC Task Force on Youth and the Criminal Justice System is led by UMDNJ Dean

- Report Finds Teens in Adult Justice System Victimized, Re-offend -

WASHINGTON, D.C. – A study conducted by a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention task force has found that teens that are transferred to the adult justice system are 34 percent more likely to be arrested again. Outcomes from the task force, which was led by an administrator from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey, are published in the April 2007 edition of the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*.

In the article, "Effects on Violence of Laws and Policies Facilitating the Transfer of Juveniles from the Juvenile Justice System to the Adult Justice System: A Systemic Review," the CDC's 15-member Task Force on Community Preventive Services recommends against laws that allow states to try youth as adults rather than in the juvenile justice system.

The task force conducted a systematic review to determine whether laws or policies that govern the transfer of youth to the adult criminal justice system effectively deter youth from committing crimes. The task force reviewed the theory that transferring youth to the adult criminal justice system and that fear of perceived severity of sentencing will deter youth from committing subsequent crimes.

According to a national survey that was conducted in 2002, adults in the United States reported more than 1.87 million incidents of victimization by perpetrators who were between ages 12 and 20. This statistic represents 5.1 incidents of victimization per 100 juveniles in this age group.

"A cardinal rule in the medical profession is 'first, do no harm,' said Dr. Robert L. Johnson, interim dean of UMDNJ-New Jersey Medical School and leader of the task force. "Transferring youth to the adult criminal system is counterproductive. It tends to increase risks for the young offenders, yet it fails to significantly increase public safety. We recommend that researchers, public health and juvenile justice policy makers consider this information when establishing and revising laws."

The study found that strengthened transfer policies might be harmful for juveniles. The report notes that other violent outcomes may result from the transfer of youth to the adult system. These violent outcomes include an increase in pretrial violence, victimization of

juveniles in adult facilities, and elevated suicide rates for juveniles incarcerated in adult facilities.

"The theory that trying youth as adults reduces violence is false. The Task Force found strong evidence that shows youth who have been previously tried as adults are, from available evidence, 34 percent more likely to commit violent crimes than youth retained in the juvenile justice system," said Dr. Robert A. Hahn, coordinating scientist, Violence Prevention Review and Excess Alcohol Consumption Review at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

To arrange an interview with Dr. Johnson, call Kaylyn Dines at 973-972-7276. Dr. Hahn can be reached at 404-498-0958 or by email: rah1@cdc.gov.

Click on the following link to view an abstract of the report. <http://www.ajpm-online.net/article/PIIS0749379706005526/abstract>

UMDNJ is the nation's largest free-standing public health sciences university with more than 5,700 students attending the state's three medical schools, its only dental school, a graduate school of biomedical sciences, a school of health related professions, a school of nursing and a school of public health on five campuses. Annually, there are more than two million patient visits at UMDNJ facilities and faculty practices at campuses in Newark, New Brunswick/Piscataway, Scotch Plains, Camden and Stratford. UMDNJ operates University Hospital, a Level I Trauma Center in Newark, and University Behavioral HealthCare, a statewide mental health and addiction services network.

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