



## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**THE ISSUE: SB 1391 Juveniles: fitness for juvenile court (Lara, D-Bell Gardens).** This bill will prohibit youth ages 14 and 15 from entering the adult criminal system and instead keep them in the juvenile system. **(SUPPORT)**

### HISTORY & BACKGROUND

Prior to 1994, California did not try 14 and 15-year-olds as adults. Instead, youth under the age of 16 accused of a crime were tried in the juvenile justice system. In response to what turned out to be unfounded predictions about accelerating youth crime in the 1990s, California lowered the age at which youth could be tried as adults. Now, teenagers as young as 14 years-old can be tried as adults.

In the past, when 14 and 15-year-olds were tried as adults, society believed that the human brain was fully developed at age of 12 or 13 and that young people engaged in criminal activity would always be criminals. Now, cognitive science has demonstrated that brain development continues into the mid-twenties and full development for decision-making and self-control is not achieved until the age of 25. Extensive research has established that youth tried as adults are more likely to commit new crimes in the future than their peers treated in the juvenile system.

*“Situations can change; people can change. Be the first to seek to bring good. Do not grow accustomed to evil, but defeat it with good.”*

*— Pope Francis,  
The Church of Mercy*

### CHURCH TEACHING

“We are still a long way from the time when our conscience can be certain of having done everything possible to prevent crime and to control it effectively so that it no longer does harm and, at the same time, to offer to those who commit crimes of redeeming themselves and making a positive return to society. If all those in some way involved in the problem tried to...develop this line of thought, perhaps humanity as a whole could take a great step forward in creating a more serene and peaceful society.”

- St. Pope John Paul II, July 2000

### TALKING POINTS

- ▶ The juvenile justice system, with its emphasis on rehabilitation and promoting positive development, is better equipped to provide youth with the skills and supports necessary to become productive adults.
- ▶ The decision to try a young person as an adult is irrevocably life altering.
- ▶ The adult system has no age-appropriate services, participation in rehabilitation programs is voluntary, and in many prisons, programs have long waiting lists.
- ▶ Most youth will eventually be released from prison and in the interest of protecting public safety, we need to ensure they get the treatment and tools needed to succeed when they return to society.