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CLBB News

A newsletter from the Center for Law, Brain & Behavior

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Getting Smart on Crime: Reform Efforts for Adolescents and Young Adults Gain Traction in Massachusetts



Research increasingly confirms that young adults (ages 18–21) subjected to traditional criminal justice processing are at increased risk of recurring arrests and incarceration. One program at The Center for Law, Brain & Behavior (CLBB) focuses upon advancing science to inform juvenile and young adult justice policy and practices. Notable examples reported previously are the publication in January 2022 of a [White Paper on the Science of Late Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood](#), and citation by counsel during oral argument before the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court to Dr. Robert Kinscherff's testimony on adolescent and young adult development (*Commonwealth v. Mattis*, regarding raising the age of full criminal culpability from 18 to 21).

Over the last several months, CLBB has joined with the Suffolk County District Attorney Kevin Hayden, the Justice Lab at Columbia University, and two community-based service providers to design and implement a Young Adult Diversion Program (YADP) for persons aged 18–25. The YADP will prevent unwarranted penetration in the criminal justice system. A pilot pre-arraignment YADP will begin in Boston in the Fall of 2023 to prevent the negative outcomes of early criminal justice involvement while supporting increased community safety by reducing recidivism. Media reports of these and other initiatives follow.

[Suffolk DA announces diversion program for young adults](#): DA Kevin Hayden announced a pilot program for young people 18–25 at a panel with nonprofit More Than Words. The Boston Globe, April 27, 2023.

[An unfinished piece of criminal justice reform business: Raising the age for juvenile offenders](#): New research supports a new approach to dealing with 'emerging adults.' The Boston Globe, May 25, 2023.

[Raise the Age bill is 'smart on crime'](#), a Letter to the Editor from Dr. Robert Kinscherff. The Boston Globe, May 31, 2023.

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