

DID YOU KNOW?

Rhode Island has **no minimum age** of incarceration for youth.



Rhode Island is **the only state** in New England with no minimum age of jurisdiction, pre-trial detention, or commitment.

Research shows that incarcerating children can exacerbate criminal behavior and that children who are incarcerated are more likely to be arrested again in the future. It is especially concerning and harmful for younger children to be placed with much older and more serious offenders.

Alternatives to incarceration have been shown to be more effective in preventing recidivism, are more cost effective, and are often the more appropriate response to developmentally typical child and adolescent behavior that is often criminalized.

"Generally speaking, children younger than 12 have not matured enough to 1) understand competency and capacity as defined by the legal system, and 2) benefit from treatment available through [youth] justice interventions, especially programs that may have been designed for older [youth]."

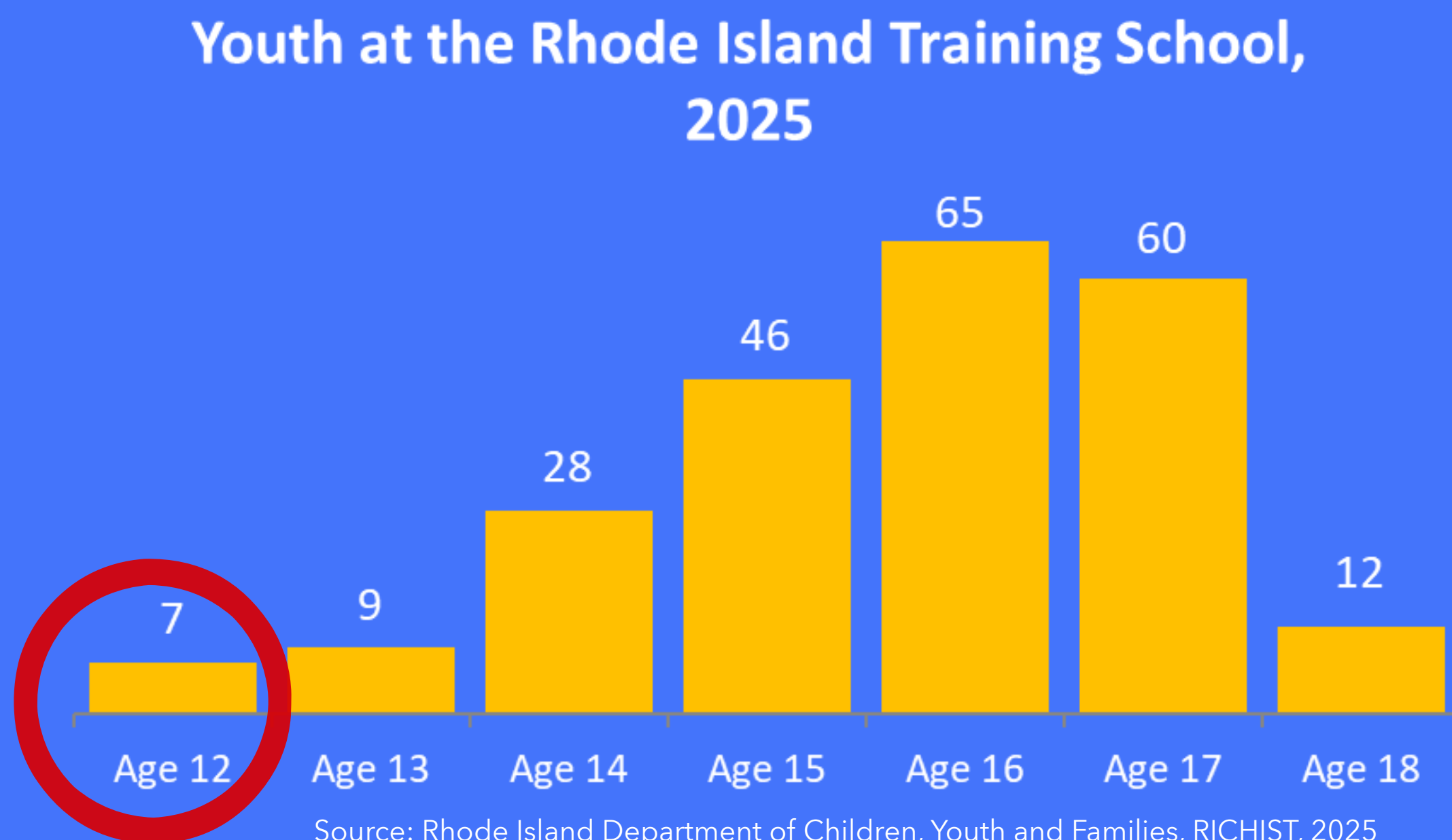
-The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

S2046 (Acosta) and H7818(Stewart) establish a minimum age of detention and commitment in Rhode Island.

How many children would need an alternative?

Fewer than 10 children a year would need an alternative to detention.

This is a small lift that would **dramatically impact the trajectory** of these vulnerable lives.



What about serious offenses?

Most young children commit low level offenses.

These bills have carveouts for VERY serious crimes such as murder, first degree sexual assault, or an attempt to commit such offenses. Any youth who commit these serious crimes, regardless of age, would still be sent to the Rhode Island Training School.

S2046 (Acosta) and H7818 (Stewart) will protect young children from the harms of incarceration.

If not the Training School, then where?

Most young children ages 12 and younger do not spend more than 1-3 days in detention before their court hearing, and are then referred to a program or service that both holds them accountable for their actions and is age appropriate for helping them learn from their mistakes. With that being the case, **it is hard to argue they needed to spend any time in detention.**

Simple alternatives can include keeping youth at home, having them stay with a relative or caring adult before their court hearing, and calling mobile response and stabilization services.