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Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice to receive young adult transfers from Illinois Department of Corrections to provide high school educational services

Senate Bill 426 allows emerging adults in need of high school educational services to be considered for transfer from IDOC to IDJJ.

CHICAGO- On August 9, Governor JB Pritzker signed into law Senate Bill 426, which grants the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) and Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) the ability to transfer emerging adults who qualify for high school educational services from an IDOC facility to an IDJJ facility.

“Under this bill, IDJJ will provide mandated educational services to young adults transferred from IDOC while simultaneously offering the array of holistic, therapeutic, and individualized services that current DJJ youth receive,” said **Rob Vickery, Acting Director of IDJJ**. “IDJJ is grateful for the support of Senator Murphy and Rep. Guzzardi in moving this bill forward.”

IDJJ operates [School District #428](#) within the Department’s secure facilities, providing high school education for youth who are in the custody of IDJJ. According to Illinois Compiled Statutes (105 ILCS 5/13-40), IDJJ is also responsible for the education of emerging adults ages 21 or under within the Department of Corrections who have not yet earned a high school diploma or a General Educational Development (GED) certificate.

“By ensuring that young adults in IDOC custody receive developmentally appropriate educational and holistic services, this bill paves the way for successful reentry and safer, healthier communities for all of us,” said **Latoya Hughes, Acting Director of IDOC**. “Research consistently shows that young adults have a remarkable capacity for transformation, yet they often lack access to the specialized services needed to realize that potential. SB426 not only expands access to these critical resources but also reflects our collective commitment to driving meaningful change together.”

Senate Bill 426 amends the Unified Code of Corrections to allow IDJJ to establish emerging adult programs for individuals ages 18 to 21 who have been committed to IDOC. This legislation allows qualifying 18- to 21-year-olds to be considered for transfer to IDJJ in order to participate in developmentally appropriate educational services as well as holistic services such as individual or group therapy, case management, vocational training, and higher education opportunities.

"When a young adult is incarcerated, it often becomes apparent they lack basic educational

Healthy kids, strong families, safe communities



adequacies that are a significant cause of their bad decisions,” said **Senator Laura Murphy (D-Des Plaines)**. “We want to give emerging adults the chance at a fresh start when they leave custody and equip them with the tools they need to become productive, responsible members of their communities.”

The pilot program of approximately 20 students is anticipated to begin in the spring of 2025 at [IDJJ’s Harrisburg facility](#). The Department intends to expand the program to 50-60 students in the first year with plans for additional expansion beyond the first year. IDJJ will transition youth at IYC Harrisburg to other DJJ facilities in advance of the new program’s inception. Some youth transferred from IYC Harrisburg will be placed at IDJJ’s new Monarch Youth Center in Lincoln.

“We have a unique opportunity to transform the Harrisburg facility and help set young people on the right path,” said **Rep. Will Guzzardi (D-Chicago)**. “Thanks to this law, more emerging adults in prison will get a diploma, life skills, job training, and be prepared to return to community successfully.”

Repurposing IYC Harrisburg to exclusively serve the educational and developmental needs of emerging adults is an outcome of IDJJ’s [21st Century Transformation Plan](#). The Transformation Plan aims to reduce the harm of incarceration and result in better outcomes for youth.

“JHA has long supported recognizing and serving the unique needs of emerging adults, and repurposing Harrisburg as a facility geared for this population is a step in the right direction,” said **Jennifer Vollen-Katz, executive director of John Howard Association**. “Careful consideration should be given to the policies, practices and culture of an institution meant to meet the varied needs of young people who are incarcerated and have already spent time in an adult prison. We hope that this is just the first step towards policies and practices that will be more focused on rehabilitation, skill building, emotional development, and support for young people caught up in the carceral system, and that Illinois will invest in more noncustodial interventions and community-based programs for emerging adults.”

Under Senate Bill 426, program participants will qualify based on eligibility criteria set up by IDJJ and IDOC. Transfer policies and procedures are being established by an intergovernmental agreement set by the two agencies.

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