

We are a **SAFETY-NET** of wraparound services and support for those who need it most – court-involved youth and their families.

**TOGETHER** we can work to improve outcomes, identify needs, and link participants to age-appropriate services as early as possible and as rapidly as we can.

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hope



**BROOKLYN  
YOUTH  
INITIATIVE  
(BYI)**

# BROOKLYN YOUTH INITIATIVE – WHO WE ARE & WHAT WE DO

**Brooklyn Youth Initiative (BYI)** is designed to assist court-involved youth and their co-defendants (ages 14-24) at Kings County Supreme Court (Youth Part), under the direction of Presiding Judge, Honorable Craig S. Walker.

- ✓ **BYI** provides advocacy, clinical screenings, individualized treatment planning, supportive housing assistance (HRA), and **case management** services.
- ✓ **BYI** strives to provide **linkage** to NYC's extensive clinical & social services, including tailored referrals to counseling, education, programming, positive social/recreational activities, career development training, and/or employment opportunities to foster perspectives for youth that prepare them for a fully-supported, stable, successful, and safe transition to adulthood.
- ✓ **BYI** is also responsible for the preparation and completion of court-ordered **PPIs** (a detailed pre-plea report exploring the participant's social, economic, medical, educational, and criminal background to assist in making informed sentencing decisions).
- ✓ **Referrals** are encouraged and often identified by the Resource Coordinator to Hon. Craig S. Walker at Kings County Supreme Court (Criminal Term) but may also be completed by an **outside organization** or **family member**.

For questions regarding referral eligibility or to schedule your first appointment with us, please contact: BYI Clinical Youth CM, *Karisma Oquendo* (LMHC) via e-mail ([koquendo@eacnyc.org](mailto:koquendo@eacnyc.org)).

To learn more about our program, discuss referral partnerships, or to speak with BYI Program Director, *Gabrielle Herman* (LMHC) directly, call EAC Brooklyn office at (718) 975-0180 x340.

# WHY WE DO IT – RAISE THE AGE (RTA)

**Raise the Age (RTA)** legislation changed the age that a child can be prosecuted as an adult to 18 years of age in criminal cases in New York State, now mindful that adolescents are different from adults in their capacity to regulate their behavior and are also more susceptible to behavior change.

*“New York was previously one of only two states that automatically prosecuted 16- and 17-year-olds as adults, an injustice that unfairly punished youth and prevented them from receiving the services needed to rehabilitate and re-integrate into their communities.”*

Under **RTA** legislation:

- ✓ Cases against 16-and 17-year-old youth are **no longer** processed in Adult Criminal Court.
- ✓ Misdemeanor level cases are processed through Family Court under **delinquency procedures** (where opportunities for adjustment exist).
- ✓ Felony cases begin in the newly created Youth Part (YP) of Supreme Criminal Court, now processed as **Adolescent Offender (AO)** cases under laws created specifically for this age group.
- ✓ Procedures for removing a case from the Youth Part to Family Court vary by arrest charge. However, if the case stays in Youth Part, the Presiding Judge determines whether to **release** the individual with no conditions, set **bail**, place them under **community supervision**, or remand them to **detention** (held without bail).

# NOW WHAT?! FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*How is RTA implemented?*

- **Probation Case Planning:** AOs diverted to Family Court are eligible for adjustment services through probation. Programs are tailored to the specific needs of every individual. Parental notification requirements are also extended.
- **Program Treatment Model:** Youth now have access to specialized therapeutic programs to develop cognitive skills. Academic transition plans are developed with the AO student and school psychologist to transition the AO to education programs, vocational training, and/or employment opportunities. Substance abuse treatment is also offered to youth who require it.
- **Re-Entry and Discharge Planning:** DOCCS, County Re-Entry Task Forces, and the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) jointly administer discharge planning services, including family reintegration, housing assistance, mental health and medical care, employment support, and educational assistance.
- **Supervision and Treatment Services for Juveniles Program:** Expanded eligibility for STSJP to include youth who are alleged to be or are convicted as AOs. STSJP covers the continuum of services needed throughout the criminal justice system, including prevention, intervention, alternatives to detention, alternatives to placement, and re-entry programming.

*What are the outcomes of RTA?*

Reforming the justice system response for 16- and 17-year-olds has led to greater potential for public safety outcomes and improvement in life opportunities for young people who maintain capacity for course correction. Far fewer youth under the age of 18 are entering the justice system and opportunities for diversion have expanded for youth younger than 18 who have been arrested. As of June 2020, the **RTA** Implementation Task Force reported that there were no youth under age 18 detained with adults or sentenced to local jails or state prisons.