


# SPLC Report Reveals the High Price of Florida's Incarceration of Black Children

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Florida's school-to-prison pipeline imprisons children as young as 7 years old

**MIAMI** — Today, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) released a chilling new report that details the costs, incarceration rates, stories and impact of Florida routinely pushing Black children out of schools and into its legal system with well-documented harms. The report, *Only Young Once: The Systemic Harm of Florida's School-to-Prison Pipeline and Youth Legal System*, exposes how the state's system creates an easy entryway to incarceration for children as young as 7 years old – the youngest age for states that have a minimum age – and dealing with mental health issues.

“The legal system in Florida fails Black youth, trapping them in cycles of trauma and punishment, and at great expense to state taxpayers—\$130,520 per child,” **said Delvin Davis, senior policy analyst, Southern Poverty Law Center, and the report's author.** “Florida must shift its focus from penalizing children to community-based alternatives and policy reform that respects and protects Florida's future generation.”

The report seeks to inform the public about this issue and hold policymakers accountable to how youth are incarcerated in their state and promote reforms that would lead to fewer children in the criminal legal system. Florida's school-to-prison pipeline

creates an open path for children into the legal system and disproportionately impacts the state's Black children.

Top findings from the SPLC report include:

The use of Florida's Baker Act – a policy allowing law enforcement to involuntarily detain someone for mental health evaluation – on children has increased 128 percent over the last two decades.

The arrest rates for Florida schools employing more than three law enforcement officers are more than double those for schools employing less than two.

The majority of all youth in Florida that are arrested (53.1 percent) and incarcerated (58.2 percent) are Black, even though Black children make up only 21.1 percent of Florida's youth population.

Direct file transfers, which force children to be prosecuted in adult court and detained in adult facilities, happen 63.2 percent of the time for Black youth in Florida, compared to 22.7 percent for white youth.

Almost half (45.7 percent) of Florida's incarcerated youth recidivate within a year.

"Families, legislators and other advocates must disrupt Florida's school to prison pipeline by asking the state to invest in policies that prioritize rehabilitation and care over punishment and incarceration," **concluded Davis.**

Read the report [here](#).

*Editor's Note: Florida is the second-highest incarcerator of youth in privately run facilities nationwide and is the national leader in the total number of incarcerated children in both adult prisons and jail facilities combined, as highlighted in the report.*