

RAISE THE AGE BACKGROUND/CURRENT STATUS

Vermont has been implementing Raise the Age Initiative since 2020.

Increases the maximum age when a young person who commits a crime can be charged as a juvenile in the Family Division as opposed to as an adult in the Criminal Division.

Note: Raise the Age does not apply to the more serious offenses, known as the Big 12 (now 14), which still generally must begin in the Criminal Division.

Before Raise the Age initiative began in 2020, a young person who committed a non-Big 12 offense could only be charged as a juvenile in the Family Division if the youth committed the offense at age 17 or younger. This meant that the maximum age for a juvenile offense in the Family Division was age 17.

2018 Act 201 Establishes Raise the Age Initiative

Raise the Age Step 1, became effective July 1, 2020: Upper age limit was raised to a youth's 19th birthday. This meant that anyone aged 18 or younger who committed a non-Big 12 offense would have their case start in the Family Division.

Raise the Age Step 2, scheduled to become effective July 1st, 2022: anyone aged 19 or younger who commits a non-Big 12 offense would have their case begin in the Family Division.

2022 Act 160—Extended effective date of Step 2 to July 1, 2023.

2023 Act 23—Extended effective date of Step 2 to July 1, 2024.

2024 Act 125—Extended effective date of Step 2 to April 1, 2025.

Act 125 also requires DCF to provide the Joint Justice Oversight Committee (as well as several other Senate and House Committees) with bimonthly progress reports on the requirement that the Raise the Age initiative be implemented on April 1, 2025.

Sec. 12. BIMONTHLY PROGRESS REPORTS TO JOINT LEGISLATIVE JUSTICE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

(a) On or before the last day of every other month from July 2024 through March 2025, the Agency of Human Services shall report to the Joint Legislative Justice Oversight Committee, the Senate and House Committees on Judiciary, the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare on its progress toward implementing the requirement of Secs. 7–11 of this act that the Raise the Age initiative take effect on April 1, 2025. The progress reports required by this section shall describe progress toward implementation of the Raise the Age initiative, as measured by qualitative and quantitative data related to the following priorities:

- (1) establishing a secure residential facility;
- (2) expanding capacity for nonresidential treatment programs to provide community-based services;
- (3) ensuring that residential treatment programs are used appropriately and to their full potential;
- (4) expanding capacity for Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) contracts;
- (5) expanding capacity for the provision of services to children with developmental disabilities;
- (6) establishing a stabilization program for children who are experiencing a mental health crisis;

- (7) enhancing long-term treatment for children;
 - (8) programming to help children, particularly 18- and 19-year-olds, transition from youth to adulthood;
 - (9) developing district-specific data and information on family services workforce development, including turnover, retention, and vacancy rates; times needed to fill open positions; training opportunities and needs; and instituting a positive culture for employees;
 - (10) installation of a comprehensive child welfare information system; and
 - (11) plans for and measures taken to secure funding for the goals listed in this section.
- (b) Failure to meet one or more of the progress report elements listed in subsection (a) of this section shall not be a basis for extending the implementation of the Raise the Age initiative beyond April 1, 2025.