

# Justice for juveniles

[Law](#), [Capital Punishment](#)



Justice for Juveniles Capital punishment is the ultimate punishment that can be received by a convicted criminal in a capital offence. Capital punishment ultimately means the convicted criminal will be executed upon their execution date given to them by a court of law. Today, only 33 states allow the death penalty and after the Supreme Court case of *Roper v. Simmons* (2005), no states allow the death penalty for children under the age of 18 at the time of the crime. Juvenile offenders typically have some sort of obstacles that keep them from acting maturely or as a law-abiding citizen. These obstacles could be mental issues, lack of education, or financial pressures to help their family. These are things that can be fixed and thus, save a child's life when they have acted out illegally, which is why this is a sanctity of life issue. A child's life is very delicate and sacred. It is important that we continue to make capital punishment for juveniles under 18 illegal because it has been proven to be inhumane due to a juvenile's incomplete biological structures and ultimately these juveniles should be held liable to the Juvenile Justice System and should be offered pro-social opportunities to get away from and learn from these poor decisions. The main argument held against juveniles sentenced to capital punishment, or execution is the March 2005 Supreme Court case *Roper v. Simmons*. The Supreme Court ruled that capital punishment was not to be given to any person who had committed a capital offence under the age of 18. The Supreme Court felt that this punishment for juveniles would fall under cruel and unusual punishments and was then eliminated from the Constitution. The Supreme Court felt that the juvenile's Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment would be jeopardized if given execution. The fact that the Supreme Court has made it clear it is

inhumane to execute a juvenile, this ruling should be upheld. The Supreme Court's decision to eliminate the death penalty for those who committed an act under the age of 18 was also decided upon reasoning that youth do not all reach the same maturity levels at equal times. Some juveniles are more mature, intelligent, and emotionally capable of handling different situations than others. In other words, children 18 years and younger are not categorized as adults because they do not function as adults. Juveniles under 18 are not given the same rights as adults. For example, anyone under 18 is unable to vote, unable to join the military, and they are unable to sit on a jury to decide the fate of someone else's poor decision. With this being said, it is unreasonable to allow a child under 18 to be executed due to poor decisions when they are not even categorized as a normal functioning adult. To be more scientific, researchers at UCLA's Department of Neuroscience found that the location in the brain that regulates impulse control and judgment does not mature or fully develop until 18 and 22 years old, which means that anyone under 18 is not even biologically done maturing. This would give a definite reason as to why children or teenagers act out on poor judgment and poor decisions. The lack of biological growth does not give an excuse for juveniles to act out or commit illegal acts. Juveniles should not just get away with their crimes, they should be held liable. The Juvenile Justice System is the final argument to this case. The Juvenile Justice System was created to rehabilitate juveniles and deter them from committing more illegal acts in the future. The Justice System leans toward rehabilitation rather than punishment because juveniles are not adults, rather, must be taught and reprimanded instead of just punished. Today, different cities and

states fund diverse programs to help juveniles get out of bad environments or situations. In Harris County (Houston, TX), the Juvenile Justice System holds gang court on Friday mornings to talk to juveniles involved with gang life. The judge, social worker/probation officer, defense attorney, and assistant district attorney will sit in an office and allow 5-10 juveniles to come and talk about their involvement with the gang they are affiliated with and other potential options for the juvenile. Many of the juveniles express that they want out of the gang life and they need help but have no way of getting it. This is where after school or weekend programs come into play. Harris County has after school tutoring, free transportation to and from, and fun activities that the juveniles could turn to instead of gang activities. The Juvenile Justice System allows so many phenomenal opportunities that can be given to at risk juveniles that capital punishment should not even be an option. There should be a clear call to action on the defense of juveniles regarding capital punishment. Children are very important because they are the future of our world. These juveniles are the next President and Vice President of the United States, they are the next police officers, veterans, and parents to our society and culture. It is important to protect and teach lawfully our constitution and amendments to them. With this being said, it is important to protect the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment and ultimately protect and teach our juveniles so that they may grow into successful, law-abiding citizens. It is up to society and communities to help donate their time, effort, or donations to programs that help keep juvenile offenders out of negative environments and continuously keeping busy with pro-social activities.