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Release No. 08-44

**Study Shows That Youths Processed in Adult Criminal Courts  
Have Very High Incidence of Psychiatric Disorders**

**Arlington, VA**—A study published in the journal *Psychiatric Services* found that in a group of youthful offenders tried in adult criminal court, more than two-thirds (68 percent) had a psychiatric disorder and nearly half (43 percent) had two or more types of disorders. Transferred youths who were subsequently sentenced to prison had even higher rates of psychiatric disorders.

Little is known about the characteristics of transferred youths—a fast-growing population. Nationwide between 1983 and 1998, the number of juveniles transferred to adult court nearly quadrupled. Twenty-nine states have passed laws that take transfer decisions out of the hands of juvenile court judges. The laws mandate transfer to adult court solely on the basis of the type of offense, criminal history, and age of the youth.

A research team led by Jason J. Washburn at Chicago's Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine examined the cases of 1,715 youths aged 13 to 18 taken to the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center in Chicago, 275 of whom were mandated to adult court. "Psychiatric Disorders Among Detained Youths: A Comparison of Youths Processed in Juvenile Court and Adult Criminal Court" appears in the September 2008 issue of *Psychiatric Services*, which is published by the American Psychiatric Association.

In addition to the high rates of psychiatric disorders among transferred youths, the study found that African-American and Hispanic males were more likely than non-Hispanic whites to be transferred, even when the analyses controlled for violent crime. Many studies have shown that males from ethnic minority groups are among the least likely to receive mental health treatment, either in the community or in prison. "This finding suggests an urgent situation in which the largest numbers of transferred youths in need of psychiatric services are also the least likely to receive them," the authors note.

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