

Position Statement on Review of Sentences for Juveniles Serving Lengthy Mandatory Terms of Imprisonment

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Approved by the Assembly, November 2011

"Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees...These are...position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects..." – *APA Operations Manual*.

The APA affirms the undesirability of long-term mandatory sentences without possibility of parole for offenders who were younger than 18 at the time of the offense. Such sentences fail to take account of the significant prospects of maturation and rehabilitation for most youthful offenders, even those convicted of serious offenses. States should require reviews for all juvenile offenders who are sentenced to lengthy mandatory terms of imprisonment.

The reviews should:

- take place within a reasonable period of time after sentencing and periodically thereafter;
- include evaluations by qualified mental health professionals when an offender's current developmental maturity or mental health status are relevant to the reviews;
- be conducted by mental health professionals trained to evaluate children and adolescents for offenders still under age 18; and
- include a thorough review of the offender's developmental, educational, legal, social, medical, mental health and substance abuse histories; and interviews with knowledgeable informants, including family members; and additional testing when needed.

Prepared by the Council on Psychiatry and the Law.