



Conditions of Confinement for Young Offenders

Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) Position on Conditions of Confinement:

- Because of its focus, the juvenile court system upholds accountability and rehabilitation, and gives young offenders a chance to make positive changes.
- Incarcerated youth must have access to high-quality education, life skills training, mental health treatment and rehabilitative experiences.
- Youth confined in detention and correctional facilities need to be in safe, healthy and sanitary environments.
- Status offenders—youth who engage in behaviors (curfew violation, truancy, etc.) that if committed by adults would not be considered to be crimes—should not be confined. Rather, they should receive community-based treatment and support.

The Facts on Incarcerated Youth:

- Each day, approximately 110,000 youth are being held in confinement.¹
- Less than one-third of youth are in the juvenile court system for a violent offense.²
- Nearly 10% of youth in custody are confined in adult facilities.³
- Youth confined in adult facilities are five times more likely to be sexually assaulted and eight times more likely to commit suicide than youth held in juvenile facilities.⁴
- More than 75% of incarcerated youth are confined in overcrowded detention and corrections facilities.⁵
- More than half of youth in detention centers are in facilities that fail to meet the health service criteria established by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).⁶
- Less than a third of youth are in detention or correctional facilities that meet recommended suicide prevention measures, according to OJJDP.⁷
- Detention and correctional facilities—like Giddings State Home and School in Texas—that provide counseling and treatment, and compel young offenders to be emotionally accountable for their offenses can dramatically lower rates of re-offense, even among young violent offenders.⁸

¹ Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, *Juvenile Offenders and Victims: 2006 National Report*, Washington, DC, 2006.

² [Ain't No Place Anybody Would Want to Be: Conditions of Confinement for Youth](#), CJJ, 1999.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

CJJ Recommendations:

- Congress should encourage states and localities to conduct effective early intervention and prevention programs, and to experiment with innovative and humane detention and incarceration models.
- Congress should establish and the Attorney General should enforce minimum federal standards for juvenile detention facilities.
- Policy makers should mandate that no parent be forced to surrender legal custody of their child solely for the purpose of acquiring mental health treatment.
- Policy makers need to alleviate overcrowding not by only funding more facilities, but by supporting community-based alternatives to incarceration.
- Policy makers must stop exploiting juvenile crime—which has decreased steadily the last several years—as a political issue and instead promote safe, secure, humane and rehabilitative facilities for youths in detention.