



**Children First Condemns Use of Youth Seclusion at the
Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center**

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Children First is deeply disturbed by the findings in a recent Philadelphia Office of the Youth Ombudsperson (OYO) report on the use of seclusion at the Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center (PJJSC).

It is not only inhumane, but harmful, to lock children in rooms for extended periods of time, denying them education and contact with their families and support systems. Restrictive interventions like seclusion worsen children's mental health and can also lead to physical injuries – even death. These interventions should only be employed as a last resort, when a young person's behavior is an immediate risk of serious harm to themselves or other people, and never beyond the timeframes indicated in policy. When a facility does use seclusion and restraint, monitoring to ensure children's safety and thorough documentation – something that was clearly lacking at the PJJSC – are of the utmost importance.

Children First is grateful to the OYO for its swift and thorough response to the concerns raised by the children at the PJJSC, and to the Philadelphia Department of Human Services (DHS) for their attention to the OYO's findings and changes implemented thus far. We urge DHS to explore the use of alternatives to seclusion and restraint, particularly those that are supported by research and help young people heal from trauma. Beyond changes within the PJJSC, Philadelphia juvenile justice system partners should continue efforts to prevent children from entering detention in the first place. In addition to the work ongoing to expand youth diversion, Philadelphia must also implement a complete array of alternatives to secure detention and long-term placement, so that no child who can be served in their home and community ends up locked up in a facility.

Lastly, Children First recommends that state policymakers take a broader look at the use of seclusion and restraint across Pennsylvania. While state regulations offer some protection, the Commonwealth must codify strict limits on the use of these interventions and ensure facilities are held accountable for violations of the law.

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