

ACLU Ohio

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/press-releases/aclu-ohio-calls-juvenile-judges-depopulate-juvenile-detention-centers-covid-19>

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COLUMBUS The ACLU of Ohio sent a letter to juvenile administrative judges in Ohio with specific methods of how to urgently depopulate juvenile detention centers and implement age-appropriate pandemic policies for court-involved youth. Given the impracticability of safeguarding detained youth without creating other significant harms, the ACLU of Ohio encourages courts to release *all* youth from pretrial detention to safe, home-based alternatives, starting with the most medically vulnerable.

Specifically, the ACLU of Ohio urges juvenile courts to continue, adopt or expand the following practices:

In August 2020, the ACLU of Ohio [sent a separate letter to 450+ criminal legal stakeholders](#) in Ohio offering specific policies to decarcerate county jails across the state. While all those held in congregate environments are put at greater risk during this global health crisis, youth held in such facilities are especially vulnerable given what we know about youth development, mental health care, and the demographics of detained youth, noted **Sabrina Harris, Policy Strategist for the ACLU of Ohio**.

What Ohio juvenile judges must remember is that they are dealing with children. It is imperative that these stakeholders implement holistic policies that do not cause greater harm to youth in the juvenile system, many of whom have experienced childhood trauma. The practices we recommend could save lives. Its past time for Ohio to treat kids like kids, added **Claire Chevrier, Policy Counsel for the ACLU of Ohio**.

Ohio saw the second highest number of COVID-19 deaths in state prisons. With these recommendations, the ACLU of Ohio hopes to ensure outbreaks and deaths do not also occur in juvenile facilities as they have in adult jails and prisons across the state.

The pandemic has not subsided, and neither have our ongoing advocacy efforts to depopulate juvenile detention centers and protect detained youth, concluded Harris.

[Read the letter to Ohio juvenile judges.](#)

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