

Equal Justice Initiative

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://eji.org/news/florida-lawmakers-find-horrific-conditions-in-juvenile-facilities/>

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12.08.17

Miami Herald

Florida lawmakers recently made surprise inspections of juvenile detention centers in Miami-Dade and Broward counties and found conditions to be horrible, horrific, deplorable.

Conditions inside Floridas 21 juvenile detention centers and 53 privately run residential programs came under scrutiny after the *Miami Herald* [reported](#) about widespread excessive force, sexual misconduct, and inadequate medical care in the states juvenile facilities.

A week after the investigativseries was published, state lawmakers from Miami-Dade County made a surprise inspection of that countys detention center, and expressed disgustabout what they saw: mold, mildew, leaking toilet water, broken showers, and living quarters with no running water. The living conditions are horrible, horrific, deplorable, said State Rep. Kionne McGhee, Dem-Cutler Bay.Unacceptable. Unacceptable. And we want answers.

This past summer, Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) inspectors found grime and mold on toilet walls, graffiti in bathroom stalls, and missing tiles in showers.Photos from their inspection show a gaping hole in one wall, exposing plumbing fixtures; widespread graffiti, peeling paint, moldy bathroom floors, caked-on dirt and grime on the concrete slabs where youths sleep, and filthy bathrooms and showers. But not until four days after lawmakers visited the facility wasMiami-Dade detention centers top administrator reprimanded for failing to quickly resolve identified cleanliness and maintenance issues, the *Herald* [reported](#).

At other facilities, lawmakers found youth had numerous untreated ant bites and lice infestations, and had only sporadic access to cold, short showers.

Inhumane conditions inside Floridas juvenile facilities have largely remainedhidden from the public.DJJs Office of Program Accountability performs oversight of each facility and posts reports online, but those reportsdo not include any measures of building maintenance, cleanliness, sanitation, plumbing, or ventilation, and such information is not readily available elsewhere.

So many of the children in our detention centers, through no fault of their own, only know impoverishment and deprivation. It is our job, as an institution, to rise above that and show them that their lives are valuable and we expect them to make a positive contribution to our community,said Miami-Dade Juvenile Court Judge Cindy Lederman, who has spent two decades on the bench. The conditions in our detention centers only reinforce their impoverishment and deprive them of hope. We should be ashamed. This is not rehabilitation.

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