

Just Detention International

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://justdetention.org/what-we-do/federal-policy/youth-detention/>

Policy Issue Resources

Sexual abuse is shockingly common in U.S. juvenile detention facilities. JDI is dedicated to ending this violence, and to ensuring that children in custody are treated with the dignity and compassion they deserve.



The juvenile justice systems mission is to help young people in trouble get back on their feet. Yet instead of getting help, a shocking number of youth are sexually abused. The Bureau of Justice Statistics found that nearly ten percent of kids in youth facilities reported being sexually abused in a single year.

Disturbingly, most sexual abuse in juvenile detention is committed by staff the very people whose job it is to keep youth safe. While any young person in detention can become a target, kids who have been sexually abused before and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) are especially at risk. In other words, young people who most need the help of caring adults are most likely to be targeted by abusive staff.

Any survivor of sexual abuse, no matter where it occurs, is likely to struggle with painful feelings of grief, shame, and anger that can last for years. But for young survivors in detention, the effects of this abuse can be especially devastating. As JDI Survivor Council member Troy Isaac explained, Being attacked and not receiving support from the adults in charge turned my world upside down. Its a traumatizing experience for someone who is young. I take that with me wherever I go.

The good news is that the groundbreaking Prison Rape Elimination Act standards for addressing sexual abuse in detention apply to youth facilities. JDI works with juvenile detention agencies to put these lifesaving reforms in place. Our efforts include educating officials about staff sexual misconduct and how to identify and protect kids who are especially vulnerable to abuse. We also teach young people about their right to be free from sexual abuse and make sure that survivors can get help from outside counselors. In all of our work, we emphasize staffs absolute responsibility to keep all youth safe.

I experienced the most damaging and emotionally devastating treatment of my life. I was sexually assaulted. The staff never tried to stop this; instead, they called me names such as twinkle toes and fairy.

Last name

Email