

ACLU Ohio

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.acluohio.org/en/news/buried-alive-isolation-doesnt-teach-it-hurts>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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17-year-old Raistlen Katka twice tried to bite through the veins in his wrists. He tried to commit suicide while in solitary confinement in a Montana detention center.

Raistlens story is just one of the countless that indicate how isolation hurts.

This week, after several failed attempts to resolve the issue of excessive seclusion in Ohios juvenile detention facilities without litigation, the U.S. Department of Justice filed a restraining order against DYS to stop them from secluding boys with mental health needs.

In 1842, Charles Dickens compared solitary confinement to being buried alive.

Today, across the United States, children are buried alive in jails, detention facilities, and prisons.

Like many states, Ohios juvenile detention facilities seclude and isolate children; however, the state practices it so frequently that an ACLU report released in November 2013 named Ohio among the top three states in the nation with the highest seclusion hours.

[Read our letter](#) to the Ohio Department of Youth Services.

The ACLU report, [*Alone and Afraid: Children Held in Solitary Confinement and Isolation in Juvenile Detention and Correction Facilities*](#), shows that isolation is especially harmful to children. Young people, who are still developing, are in many ways less capable of dealing with the damaging effects of isolation. Not only do children experience many of the same destructive symptoms as adults in isolation, but they are also at higher risk for suicide and physical or developmental harm.

It is for these reasons that in December 2013 the ACLU of Ohio sent a [letter](#) to the Ohio Department of Youth Services calling on them to amend their rules and ban seclusion, not only because of its dangerous effects, but because it is excessively used and has no constructive or positive educational impact on children.

Juvenile detention facilities have a duty to protect the children in their custody and care. Seclusion and isolation not only harms children, but undermines the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system. We expect children to be better when they leave a juvenile detention facility, not worse. We want children to learn how to manage and succeed beyond past trauma while in detention, **not** experience new trauma.

Read National ACLUs report, [Alone and Afraid](#)

Read National ACLUs [letter](#) to DYS

Read the U.S. Department of Justices [press release](#)

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