

Just Detention International

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://justdetention.org/staff-sex-abuse-of-youth-in-detention-widespread-figures-show/>

Campaign and Advocacy

Newly released federal data show a direct link between widespread sexual abuse in youth detention facilities and unprofessional behavior by staff, charges the advocacy group [Just Detention International](https://justdetention.org).

The group says the findings detail how staff routinely crossed boundaries with children prior to abusing them, in ways that should have been obvious to fellow staff and higher ups, including showing kids preferential treatment, sharing intimate details with them about their lives, and providing them forbidden items like alcohol and other drugs.

Perpetrators most often targeted children who identify as LGBT, who have disabilities, and who have been victimized earlier in another facility

The [data released Tuesday](#) were collected in the Bureau of Justice Statistics National Survey of Youth in Custody.

Just Detention International says the new data provide key details that were omitted from a BJS report last December and follow-up up data released in May.

In last years report, BJS said that 7.1 percent of youth nationwide were sexually abused in their current facility, compared with 9.5 percent in a 2013 survey.

Staff sexual abuse remains the most common form of such violence in youth detention. About three times as many youth reported that they were abused by staff than by other youth (5.8 percent versus 1.9 percent).

The new report says that an overwhelming majority of youth who were victimized by staff reported previous inappropriate contact with their abuser. More than four out of five victimized youth (81.9 percent) said the earlier behavior involved the staff member talking or joking about sex, or sharing sexual stories.

About three-quarters of victimized youth said staff told them they felt emotionally close or had special feelings for them; nearly half said staff gave them pictures or wrote them letters; and more than two out of five said staff offered them drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, or other prohibited items.

More than nine out of ten victimized youth (91 percent) were sexually abused by staff more than once; a quarter were abused more than ten times.

The BJS data showed that youth who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual were about twice as likely as their straight peers to be abused.

For the first time, BJS provided data on transgender and nonbinary youth, finding that nearly one in five reported being sexually abused. Youth who have a disability or mental illness whose experiences with sexual abuse were not reported in prior BJS surveys faced high rates of sexual abuse, especially at the hands of staff.

More than one in five youth who have serious difficulty walking and climbing stairs were abused by staff. Youth who had been sexually abused at a previous facility were exceptionally vulnerable, with more than half reporting they were re-victimized at their current facility, either by other residents or by staff.

The new study paints a portrait of a juvenile detention system that is failing in its core mission to keep children safe, said Linda McFarlane of Just Detention International.

Shamefully, the kids who are being targeted for sexual abuse are the kids who are most in need of support who often were ensnared in the youth system because of the intense marginalization they faced due to their disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Instead of being treated with compassion, many are being preyed upon, usually by the very people entrusted with their care.

Originally posted [here](#)

First Name

Last name

Email