



Solitary Confinement of Juvenile Offenders

Solitary confinement is a practice in which an individual is isolated in a cell, usually for disciplinary purposes.ⁱ Every year, thousands of prisoners under the age of 18 are placed in solitary confinement.ⁱⁱ Juvenile solitary confinement is associated with serious consequences for mental and physical health, and APA supports efforts to eliminate the practice.

The Experience of Youth in Solitary Confinement

Youth in solitary confinement:

- may be confined in isolation for days, or even weeks.ⁱⁱⁱ
- often have little or no human contact, even with health care providers.^{iv}
- are frequently handcuffed or shackled if temporarily released from their cell.^v
- are denied the social interaction that plays an integral role in adolescent psychosocial development.^{vi}
- are often denied access to educational materials or opportunities.^v
- report greater instances of physical, sexual, and psychological abuse during incarceration than youth not in isolation.^{vii}
- have little access to recreational activities or recreational spaces.^{viii}

Solitary Confinement is Harmful

Solitary confinement is associated with severe harm to physical and mental health among both youth and adults, including:

- increased risk of self-mutilation and suicidal ideation.^{ix}
- greater anxiety, depression, sleep disturbances, paranoia, and aggression.^{ix}
- exacerbation of the onset of pre-existing mental illness and trauma symptoms^{x vii}
- increased risk of cardiovascular problems.^{xi}

Efforts to Support Youth and Reduce the Use of Solitary Confinement

There is widespread support for limiting or eliminating juvenile solitary confinement, including:

- bi-partisan federal bills (e.g., [the MERCY Act](#), introduced by Senator Booker, D-NJ, and the [Protecting Youth from Solitary Confinement Act](#), introduced by Rep. Cardenas, D-CA) to reduce or prohibit the use of juvenile solitary confinement in federal facilities.^{xii}
- proposals from state corrections officials and the Association of State Correctional Administrators to reduce the practice of solitary confinement in correctional facilities.^{xii}
- work by state legislatures to reduce the practice of solitary confinement.^{iii,xiv}
- a focus by non-profit organizations and state and federal legislators on increasing rehabilitation practices in juvenile and adult facilities nationwide.^{ii,xv}

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