

September 10, 2024

Dear Governor Inslee,

As formerly incarcerated persons who have professional, as well as deep personal knowledge of the process of rehabilitation, we ask that you respect our lived expertise and release youth in our state's Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) facilities who have served 75% or more of their sentence and/or open other avenues of release for these young people.

Both you, Governor, and DCYF Secretary Ross Hunter publicly acknowledge that the conditions inside JR facilities have devolved into an emergency. We agree.

Moreover, the overcrowded conditions inside JR facilities preclude DCYF from carrying out its agency mandate. Legislative intent is that DCYF facilitate rehabilitation inside its JR facilities by administering an environment conducive to that mission. Presently, the opposite is happening – and, to be clear, the *opposite* of rehabilitation is *harm*; harm to the young people in JR facilities, their families, and their communities.

Facilitating a rehabilitative environment for incarcerated young people is not a complicated formulation; incarcerated young people require no more than what any other young person needs. *Rehabilitation* is fostered in a pro-social and nurturing environment of active engagement in which young people can work toward and achieve their potential. The environment should include the following elements:

- Education – young people need a functional education system that provides K-12; GED; higher-ed; vocational; and other certification pathways for them to improve themselves.
- Connection – young people need to be supported in their connection with family, community, and community-based mentors from the same communities and/or lived experience as the young person.
- Basic Needs – young people need adequate nutrition; medical care; positive and constructive outlets for physical activity; and time outdoors (i.e., fresh air and sunshine).

As you know, the above list does not correlate with the current and longstanding conditions in our state's JR facilities. Current conditions are:

- Incessant Lockdowns -- young people are kept locked in cells nearly without respite.
- Unchecked Use-of-Force Incidents -- young people are reporting constant physical abuse from both JR staff and "DCYF-deputized" DOC staff.
- Restricted Access to Bathroom Facilities -- young people are locked in cells without plumbing and their pleas to be let out to use a bathroom are often ignored, or the young people face retributive repercussions.
- Not Meeting Basic Needs – the state is not meeting young people's basic needs of nutrition; education; physical activity/exercise; medical and mental health services; and visitation.

RCW 9.94A.870 empowers you to “[c]all the sentencing guidelines commission into an emergency meeting for the purpose of evaluating the standard ranges and other standards. The commission may adopt any revision or amendment to the standard ranges or other standards that it believes appropriate to deal with the emergency situation.”

Governor Inslee, we call upon you to act to address the harm taking place, and to begin to move in a direction in which *rehabilitation* is possible in our state’s JR facilities. We ask that you release youth who have served 75% or more of their sentence and/or open other avenues of release for these young people.

Respectfully,  
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[Please note, I support JR Executive staff in their efforts; they are doing the best they can. However, staff are constrained by an overburdened institution attempting to operate beyond its capacity.]
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