

CONTACTS:

KATY OTTO (JUVENILE LAW CENTER)

OFFICE: 215-625-0551 ext. 128 CELL: 240-478-9387 EMAIL: kotto@jlc.org

MOLLY COLLINS (ACLU OF WISCONSIN)

EMAIL: mcollins@aclu-wi.org

Civil Rights Groups File Preliminary Injunction in Case Against Wisconsin State Officials to Halt Unconstitutional Use of Solitary Confinement, Other Inhumane Conditions in State-Run Youth Correctional Facilities

Milwaukee, WI (April 19, 2017) – Today the ACLU of Wisconsin and Juvenile Law Center, with pro-bono assistance from Quarles & Brady, filed a request for a [preliminary injunction](#) in federal court to halt the unconstitutional use of solitary confinement and other inhumane conditions and practices for youth in state-run correctional facilities. The suit was originally [filed in January](#) on behalf of youth confined in the Lincoln Hills School for Boys and the Copper Lake School for Girls. Earlier this week, the groups filed [an amended complaint](#) with additional children incarcerated at Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake as plaintiffs.

“Isolating, handcuffing and pepper spraying children is not only dehumanizing and traumatizing,” said Larry Dupuis of the ACLU of Wisconsin. “It is also unnecessary and counterproductive. As experts in the field show, these practices actually undermine institutional safety and security. As a result, most juvenile correctional facilities no longer use pepper spray, restraints or punitive solitary confinement.”

Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake incarcerate about 150 to 200 youth, some as young as 14 years old. It confines about 15 to 20% percent of the youths at any given time in seven or eight by ten foot solitary confinement cells for 22 or 23 hours a day. On top of that, the guards keep many of these children in handcuffs attached to a belt around their waists, and then handcuffed to a table or desk, during the hour or two they are allowed out of their cells. Guards throughout Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake also regularly use peppers spray on the youth, causing pain and burning and impairing their breathing and health.

“These practices are so harmful that we’re taking decisive action to stop them immediately,” said Jessica Feerman, Associate Director of Juvenile Law Center. “Putting children in solitary, shackling them to tables, and pepper spraying them isn’t rehabilitation – it’s abuse.”

As the [Complaint](#) asserts, these practices violate children’s constitutional rights, including their rights to substantive due process, as guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, and their right to be free from cruel and unusual punishment, as guaranteed by the Eighth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

The plaintiffs are seeking immediate relief for the young people in these facilities while this case is being litigated.

Juvenile Law Center is the oldest non-profit, public interest law firm for children in the nation. Widely published and internationally recognized as thought leaders in the field, Juvenile Law Center's impact on the development of law and policy on behalf of children is substantial. Juvenile Law Center uses an array of legal strategies and policy advocacy to promote fairness, prevent harm, ensure access to appropriate services, and create opportunities for success for youth in the foster care and justice systems. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.JLC.org.

The ACLU of Wisconsin is a non-profit, non-partisan, private organization whose 24,000 members support its efforts to defend the civil rights and liberties of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our website at www.aclu-wi.org, like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter at @ACLUofWisconsin and @ACLUMadison.

#