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New Approaches to Ending the Use of Solitary Confinement of Youth

This next phase of the Stop Solitary for Kids Campaign focuses on racial justice, elevating the voices of those directly impacted, and supporting the decarceration of young people.

Washington, DC (February 17, 2021) - [The Stop Solitary for Kids Campaign](#) is pleased to announce an investment of almost \$1 million from Arnold Ventures to support new approaches to end the use of solitary confinement of youth.

Solitary confinement is one of the most common and abusive practices in youth corrections facilities. Federal data show that over 30% of young people report experiencing solitary confinement, and almost half of youth prisons and jails report using isolation to manage youth behavior, resulting in thousands of young people being held in solitary every day. Solitary confinement can have devastating and permanent effects on young people; more than 50% of suicides in youth facilities occur while young people are held in isolation. Youth of color and vulnerable youth are more likely to experience solitary confinement, including youth with mental illnesses or disabilities, LGBTQI or gender non-conforming youth, and youth with trauma histories.

The dangers of youth solitary are also of particular concern in the context of the pandemic, which has left incarcerated youth at greater risk of being put in room confinement as a means of “protecting” them from COVID-19. However, this is counterproductive. Although some facilities have made heroic efforts to maintain and even increase family contact through the use of video and other technologies, others have not. Unfortunately, this isolation has resulted in young people across the country, overwhelmingly Black and Brown youth, being cut off from contact with family members and loved ones right at the time young people need those supports the most.

This next phase of the Stop Solitary for Kids Campaign is an opportunity to promote new approaches to ending solitary confinement for young people with a particular focus on racial justice, elevating the voices of those directly impacted, and supporting the decarceration of young people.

New and impactful approaches to ending solitary confinement in this project include:

- Collecting data on racial bias in the use of isolation. “Currently very few jurisdictions collect racial information in incidents, which is highly problematic - to reduce racial bias in the use of solitary we first must know the extent of the problem, and as much as we can about when, where and why it is happening. We need to be able to make comparisons with similarly situated White youth, as well as begin tracking if there are particular problem officers,” said Mark Soler, Executive Director at the Center for Children’s Law and Policy.

- Providing technical assistance to a cohort of sites using the Room Confinement Assessment Tool (RCAT). “The RCAT is an effective screening tool to track, assess, and provide strategies to reduce the use of isolation. It allows us to work closely with a jurisdiction to look at their practices and presents an incredible opportunity to change policy and practice in facilities,” said Jenny Lutz, Stop Solitary for Kids Campaign Manager at the Center for Children’s Law and Policy.
- Creating and hosting a multi-day intensive training, or Certificate Program, at the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy (CJJR) where participating teams will receive intensive training and technical assistance aimed at ending the use of isolation in their jurisdictions. “Data and experience teach us that youth and staff are safer and better supported in facilities that do not rely on the practice of isolation. Through our dynamic Certificate Program, teams from across the United States will be inspired and supported to reform their existing facility-based policies and practices to achieve positive outcomes for youth, staff and communities,” said CJJR Director Michael Umpierre.
- And a new law school course based on the acclaimed six-part documentary series, “Time: The Kalief Browder Story,” which demonstrates the immediate and long-term harmful impacts of solitary confinement.

“Reducing room confinement for young people continues to be one of the most complex and challenging tasks facing correctional professionals. But it can be done and it will increase safety for youth and staff in facilities. Best practices call for evidence-based, and trauma-responsive, approaches to hold young people accountable while helping them change their behavior,” said Michael Dempsey, Executive Director, Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators.

The Campaign will also continue the critical work of elevating the voices of survivors of solitary, and partnering with directly impacted youth. SSK will elevate the voices of those directly impacted by developing ways for young survivors of solitary to tell their stories.

“At Arnold Ventures, we believe that solitary confinement is a prime example of the failures of our correctional system, and that any reform effort must move away from this inhumane practice that is far too pervasive within our justice system.” said Juliene James, Director of Criminal Justice, Arnold Ventures.

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The Stop Solitary for Kids campaign is a partnership between the Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP), the Justice Policy Institute (JPI), the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA), and the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University’s McCourt School of Public Policy (CJJR).

Arnold Ventures is a Houston-based philanthropy dedicated to tackling some of the most pressing problems in the United States. Founded by Laura and John Arnold in 2010, Arnold Ventures’ core mission is to improve lives by investing in evidence-based solutions that maximize opportunity and minimize injustice. More information about Arnold Venture’s work is available at www.arnoldventures.org.