



## NEWS RELEASE

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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### **Connecticut Voices for Children Supports Recent Calls for Change at CJTS and Pueblo**

Two reports released within the last week regarding the Connecticut Juvenile Training School (CJTS) and Pueblo Unit both raise issues of urgent concern. The two reports have different purposes: Dr. Robert Kinscherff's report, commissioned by the Department of Children and Families (DCF), is a strategic review of the two facilities intended to offer short and long-term recommendations for improvement, while the Office of the Child Advocate's (OCA) report is an investigative review that examined a multitude of individual cases. We are struck by the similarities in the concerns that rise to the surface in both. Specifically:

- Both reports raise concerns about the potential overuse or inappropriate use of restraint and seclusion;
- Both reports emphasize there is an immediate need for better training regarding suicide prevention and self-injury;
- Both reports make the case that, while the children at CJTS and Pueblo have access to therapeutic services, the institutions themselves lack an overarching system of trauma-informed care;
- Both reports are clear that DCF fails to track valuable outcome data (including but not limited to recidivism data) to determine whether these institutions are doing their job, and whether the children who go there are any better off when they leave.

We at Connecticut Voices for Children applaud DCF's response to Dr. Kinscherff's report, which includes a stated commitment to ensuring adherence to a trauma-informed service approach, reducing the use of restraint and seclusion, and improving training around suicide prevention. Commissioner Joette Katz has long emphasized Connecticut's commitment to a rehabilitative model of juvenile justice, and her constructive approach to Dr. Kinscherff's recommendations is to be commended.

However, these actions must be viewed not as ends in and of themselves, but as initial steps on a journey to much greater transparency and accountability. Going forward, Connecticut Voices for Children recommends the following:

- Creating a better mechanism for quality assurance within these facilities, one that is not dependent on complaint investigations but is an iterative and ongoing process;

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- Expanding and enhancing training for staff within these facilities, particularly with regard to crisis management, and with a framework that sees use of restraint and seclusion, in Dr. Kinscherff's words, as a "**clear intervention failure**," not a strategy;
- Devising and tracking outcome measures to assess the long-term impact upon children of commitment to these facilities;
- Looking carefully at whether punitive treatment is disproportionately applied to youth of color, who already enter the juvenile justice system at greater rates, and whether outcomes differ for these populations;

We also believe that these reports, and DCF's positive response, open the door for a much broader discussion about whether alternative models to CJTS and Pueblo could serve our children and the public in more effective ways. A recent report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, a leader in juvenile justice reform, asserts that recidivism rates of juvenile corrections facilities are almost uniformly poor, and that "community-based supervision, treatment, and youth development programs achieve equal or better results at a fraction of the cost." We must investigate whether the same or better outcomes could be achieved in a differently designed continuum of care, one that relies more heavily on community-based programs.

As both Dr. Kinscherff and the Office of the Child Advocate rightly state, Connecticut has long been looked to as a leader in juvenile justice reform. Our hope at Connecticut Voices for Children is that the conversation spurred by these two reports will be welcomed and will allow Connecticut to continue its leadership in improving opportunities for all our children, no matter their struggles.

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