

Statement of Concern for the Protection and  
Well-Being of Children Housed in Institutions  
During the COVID Pandemic

Children and young people are housed in institutions throughout the state of Ohio either as a disposition for delinquency, abuse/neglect/dependency petition, or in order to access behavioral health treatment. This includes children confined in three state correctional facilities operated by the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS), the four contract facilities for DHS alternative placements, twelve (12) community correctional facilities, and 36 juvenile detention centers, as well as numerous shelters and residential facilities across the state.

The COVID-19 pandemic poses an urgent threat to the safety and well-being of all Ohioans, as indicated by Governor DeWine's declaration of a state of emergency on March 9, 2020 and subsequent stay at home orders issued on March 22, 2020. Prevention through social distancing is currently the recommended course of action given that there is no known treatment or vaccine. Institutional settings, including youth prisons, detention centers, shelter care and residential facilities, where children and youth live in close quarters are particularly difficult spaces to ensure effective distancing, hygiene and sanitation.

Child and adolescent experts