



PRESS RELEASE

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Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Releases Report on Mental Health Care in the Juvenile Justice System

On February 14, 2024, the Texas Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (Committee) issued a report on [Mental Health Care in the Texas Juvenile Justice Department](#) (TJJD). The report was issued after a series of public hearings where the Committee heard from individuals, organizations, and professionals with specific knowledge of and experience with the conditions and challenges within TJJD.

What the Committee has learned through this investigation is deeply concerning, and for every day that it continues unchecked we feel is another day that the rights of those held in TJJD facilities are violated. Most youth in the Texas Juvenile Justice System have clear mental health needs. Not only are these needs not being adequately addressed, but being in state-run facilities may further traumatize the youth and exacerbate mental health needs.

Facility understaffing and under-resourcing has long been a challenge and was exacerbated by the pandemic. And while understaffing is improving, in part due to pay increases, it is still too low. We commend the Texas Legislature for taking steps to improve staffing and funding in the system, but it remains far short of what is needed to meet the needs.

Committee Chair Merrill Matthews stated, “In recent years, allegations of civil rights violations and reports of abuse and mistreatment have plagued the Texas Juvenile Justice Department. During this project, we learned of numerous, serious problems in the TJJD, especially relating to those with mental health care needs. Our report identifies several needed reforms, and the Committee urges state legislators and the governor to address those problems immediately.”

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing an annual federal civil rights enforcement report. The Commission, by Congressional mandate, establishes Advisory Committees in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Committee members conduct reviews and produce reports and recommendations concerning local civil rights issues, including justice, voting, discrimination, housing, education, and other important themes. For information, please visit <http://www.usccr.gov> and follow us on Twitter and Facebook.