

GROWING UP LOCKED DOWN IN NEBRASKA

January 2018

DYLAN, A 19-YEAR-OLD NEBRASKAN

Dylan is 19-years-old and has been housed in either Tecumseh State Correctional Institute and the Nebraska Correctional Youth Facility since 2014 when he was just 15. Dylan has been put in isolation multiple times and has not received appropriate mental health and medical care.

We asked him how being in these facilities is hurting him.



They do it Physically with they Goggles Squad with Body Armor, they Shock Shields, Pepper Ball & rubber Bullet Guns & they Cons of mace and they fist & elbow & knees. It a game for them until its not and reality hit them. Now mean? Then Mentally by are health care and a Average of 1 year in Solitary Confinement Imates do each time they End up in there. the unhealthy food we get Breakfast, lunch, & dinner. Also the small amount of Phone call we get to call are Family, which for me has been 1 fifteen minute call Per Week for the Past 8 months. ect. And then there's Spiritually→

Well I'm in Solitary Confinement so all I get is a Bible in my cell and that is it. But even when I was on the yard if you sign of for a service and you try to walk in and Co's wont let you in if you dont got a Belt on or if you dont got on a khaki Shift on or if you a few minutes later when it be the unit staff who make us late or even if we to early we get sent back ect, This Place is designed to destroy you and thats the bottom line.

ADDITIONAL STORIES OF CONFINEMENT

Nebraska attorneys from across the state have shared concerns about the use of solitary confinement on their juvenile clients. These are real stories from 2017 about the way solitary confinement is used in Nebraska. We have chosen not to share names of facilities and have changed names in order to protect the identities of the young people.

Katie

Katie is a Caucasian female

“The only thing to do if you are in solitary is sleep. I get extremely depressed being in isolation. You don’t have any contact with anyone else in the facility. I have hurt myself while I have been in room confinement.”

Darryl

Darryl is an African American male

“When I was in solitary, no one talked to me. Staff would look at me through a window every once in a while. Before I went to solitary, I had individual therapy. I did not get therapy while I was locked in my room. I did not get school work. The only thing to sit on during the day was a concrete slab.”

Malik

Malik is an African American male

“There is nothing to do in confinement. You only get out of your room for 1 hour a day. Staff can extend your time in solitary for any reason they want. I was in confinement for over a week for cussing at a staff member. Being in solitary does not help me. It only makes me angry.

Jada

Jada is an African American female

“Being in confinement made me have an anxiety attack. I was locked in my room. You eat meals in your room and don’t have any contact with anyone. I was not even allowed to have a book. I slept most of the time. Being in solitary made me feel like I was going crazy. I think putting people in solitary causes them to cut themselves. I could hear other people screaming, crying, and yelling.”

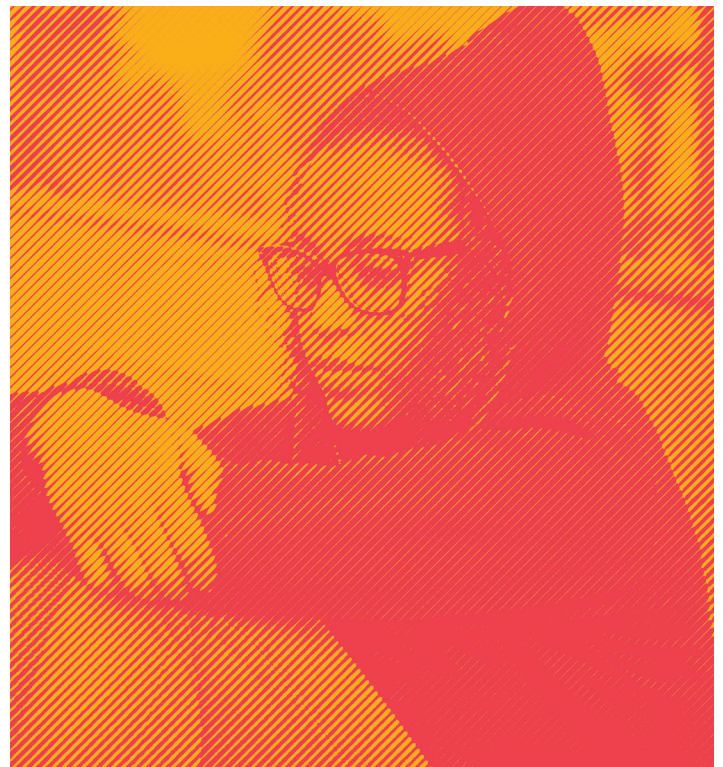
WHY ARE YOUNG NEBRASKANS IN SOLITARY CONFINEMENT?

Reasons for Solitary & Number of Incidents

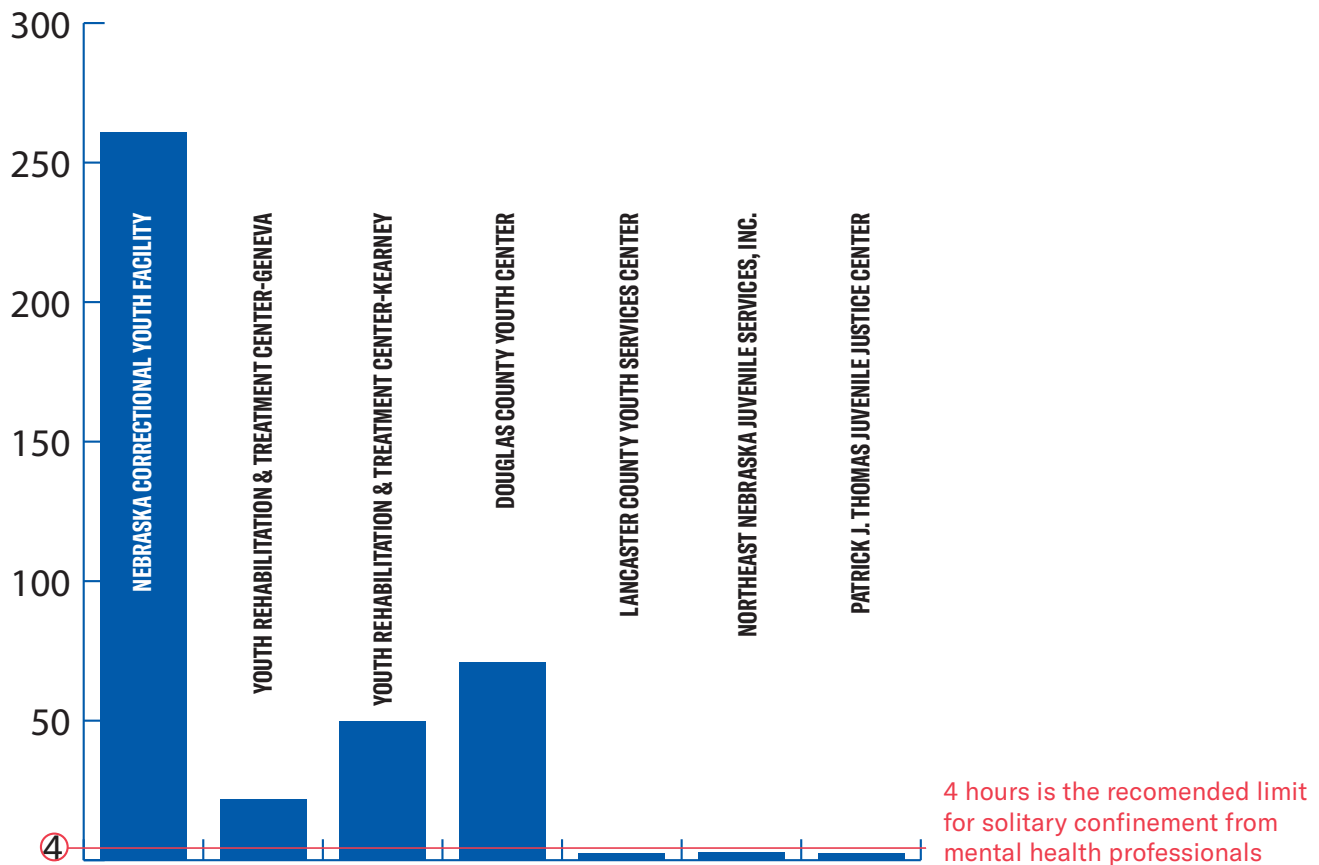
Rule violations/disobeying orders	646
Administrative including staff breaks	481
Verbal Aggression including cussing	193
Self-harm (threats and attempts)	84

These are the types of reasons for solitary that LB 870 would prohibit.

Source: Mandatory data reporting from facilities for the period of July 2016 to September 2017.



AVERAGE DURATION OF EACH USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT IN NEBRASKA FACILITIES IN HOURS*



Source: 2017 Juvenile Room Confinement Annual Report, Office of Inspector General of Nebraska Child Welfare Reports

YOUTH OF COLOR ARE OVERREPRESENTED IN USE OF SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

Race	Percent of Solitary Incidents ¹	Percent of Child Population in Nebraska ²
White	45.3%	70.0%
Black	33.4%	5.8%
American Indian or Alaska Native	9.4%	1.1%
Asian	20.0%	2.4%
Multi-Race	5.5%	6.4%
Hispanic	15.6%	14.3%

¹Mandatory data reporting from facilities for the period of July 2016 to September 2017. Hispanic data from facilities based on ethnicity reporting.

²U.S. Census Bureau, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population by Sex, Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin, July 1, 2015, Table PEPASR6H.

I SPENT MY 16TH BIRTHDAY ALONE IN A CELL

Megan, A Young Nebraskan

Many 16-year-olds spend their birthdays with their family and friends. I spent my 16th birthday this past March trapped in solitary confinement.

You may be wondering how a teenage girl ended up in solitary confinement in Nebraska. As I spent hours alone and locked up, I was wondering the same thing.

Rewind to just a few weeks earlier and I was living with my mom and dad and 8 brothers and sisters. In my neighborhood, I was a typical high school girl. I loved cooking, singing, and hanging out with my friends. I had no idea what was about to happen to me.

In late February, I had to go to court to review how I was doing on juvenile probation for a drug offense. I tested positive for marijuana and missed my curfew so my probation officer told the judge I should be removed from my home. I had a panic attack. I felt like I couldn't breathe. I saw my parents and I wanted to stand up to hug them, or go to them, or something. The deputies in the courtroom grabbed me and held me down. The prosecutor charged me with attempted escape, but I wasn't trying to escape. I just wanted to be closer to my parents. The judge ordered that I be locked up in county jail for the night. I was just 15. Can you imagine waking up at home expecting a normal day and trying to fall asleep that night in a jail cell with no clothes and no one to talk to? I couldn't until it happened to me.

I was then sent almost four hours away from my home to a young adult detention center in Madison, NE. Because of marijuana and running late, I was away from everything I had ever known while I was locked in a room alone waiting for my trial on the new charges.

“My cell was about the size of a queen-sized bed. The only thing I was allowed to have in my room was a book.”

Prior to this experience, I didn't know what solitary confinement meant or why people would be sent there. My cell was about the size of a queen-sized bed. The only thing I was allowed to have in my room was a book. There was a small bed, a desk and a chair.

There was no counselor to talk to about what I was going through. I was only able to talk to my mom every few days, sometimes for only three minutes. When I first got there, I had to “earn” soap, a toothbrush and toothpaste. They took my pillow away as punishment. I spent countless hours isolated from everything and everyone. I felt myself becoming less “me” every day.

After a couple weeks in Madison, the judge told me I was

going to the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center in Geneva. I just could not believe the judge's decision. I had heard Geneva was a place for girls that did the worst crimes in the state and that lots of fights happened there. How was that a good place for me? I told the judge that I wanted to go home on house arrest. They took me to Geneva from the courtroom that day. I had never been so upset and scared before in my whole life. On the way there, I think the woman guard who was driving me must have felt bad for me because she stopped at a fast food restaurant to buy me something to eat.

While I was at Geneva, I was in a constant state of depression. I had anxiety attacks and when I tried to get help for them, no one cared. While I was there, at least two girls attempted suicide and many others talked about it. I can honestly say that for the first time in my life, I thought about hurting myself too. Just like at Madison, I spent a lot of my time alone, confined to my cell, desperate for anything that reminded me of my old life. At different times while I was locked up in Madison and Geneva, I was not allowed talk with my lawyers and my family. Thankfully my family fought back to get me out and to help me share my story.

I chose to come forward with my story to help other people. I want people to know that the kids like me who are locked up and put in solitary confinement aren't monsters. No one, especially a kid, deserves to be locked away and forgotten. I still feel the effects of being put in solitary confinement. A lot of kids are there for much longer than I was and, unlike me, have no support from their families. I can only imagine how bad it is for them. All of these young people should have a voice and I hope sharing my story helps more Nebraskans listen to those who are still locked up and can't tell their stories. Juvenile solitary needs to end in Nebraska. We might not be able to stop solitary in other places but we can make a positive change right here at home. Solitary for kids doesn't solve anything. It only hurts kids like me, and our future in Nebraska.

STOP SOLITARY FOR YOUNG NEBRASKANS

Support LB 870
aclunebraska.org/stopsolitary

Learn more about juvenile solitary confinement in Nebraska.
aclunebraska.org/juvenilesolitary