
Human Services & Early Learning Committee

HB 2277

Brief Description: Concerning youth solitary confinement.

Sponsors: Representatives Peterson, Ortiz-Self, Frame, Goodman, Kilduff, Callan, Senn, Lovick, Thai, Fitzgibbon, Leavitt, Ryu, Appleton, Valdez, Davis, Ormsby, Macri, Doglio, Gregerson and Pollet; by request of Attorney General.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Prohibits the use of juvenile solitary confinement in juvenile detention and correctional institutions.
- Limits the use of juvenile room confinement or isolation to no more than four hours in any 24-hour period except in limited circumstances.
- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to adopt a model policy regarding the use of juvenile room confinement and isolation by July 1, 2021, and detention facilities or institutions to either adopt or indicating why they are not adopting this policy by December 1, 2021.
- Requires the DCYF to compile, on a monthly basis until June 1, 2022, certain information regarding juveniles confined in all state institutions and facilities, county detention facilities, and governing units operating jails who are receiving isolation or room confinement.
- Requires the DCYF, beginning January 2023, to conduct periodic reviews of juvenile detention policies, procedures, and use of solitary confinement, isolation, and room confinement and provide reports to the Legislature.

Hearing Date: 1/15/20

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Institutions and County Detention Facilities.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) operates three juvenile institutions for juveniles convicted of crimes and sentenced to more than 30 days of confinement. Echo Glen Children's Center in Snoqualmie serves younger male offenders and female offenders. Green Hill School in Chehalis serves older male offenders. Naselle Youth Camp in Naselle provides services to male offenders and offers a forestry work program.

Confinement imposed by a juvenile court up to 30 days is served in a county juvenile detention facility. Counties with more than 50,000 inhabitants are required to provide and maintain a juvenile detention facility, while counties with less inhabitants may provide and maintain such a facility.

A consortium of counties in Eastern Washington contract with Martin Hall Juvenile Detention Facility in Medical Lake for juvenile detention services.

Juvenile Rehabilitation Policy Regarding Isolation and Room Confinement.

On November 1, 2019, the DCYF updated its policy regarding isolation and room confinement. According to this policy, room confinement and isolation cannot be used as a punishment, but can only be used:

- as a time-limited response to specific behavior;
- to allow youth to regain emotional and behavioral control; and
- for the least amount of time necessary.

Room confinement is defined as any instance when a youth is separated from the youth population and placed in a room for 15 minutes or longer, which may occur to:

- protect other youth, staff, or property;
- give youth time to cool off; or
- protect the youth.

Isolation is a subcategory of confinement occurring in a room other than the one assigned for sleeping.

Youth receiving room confinement in institutions must be visually checked at least every 15 minutes on a random schedule, and this must be documented.

Youth receiving room confinement or isolation must have formal reviews every two hours to encourage the youth to return to the general programming and determine if they are committed to safety and emotionally regulated enough to return to programming.

Youth receiving room confinement or isolation must be provided an opportunity for:

- a daily bath or shower;
- hourly access to a toilet and sink;
- medical and mental health evaluations; and
- large muscle activity.

Summary of Bill:

Juvenile solitary confinement, defined as involuntarily separating a youth from the youth population for longer than 15 minutes, is prohibited.

Juvenile institutions and county detention facilities must limit total isolation and room confinement of a juvenile to no more than four hours in any 24-hour period, except when:

- the reason for isolation and details regarding isolation are documented;
- an individualized plan is developed to reintegrate the juvenile to the general population; and
- the institution or facility superintendent provides documented authorization every four hours.

Isolation is defined as confinement that occurs:

- when a youth is separated from the youth population and placed in a room for longer than 15 minutes; and
- in a room other than the room assigned to the youth for sleeping.

Room confinement is defined as a juvenile separated from the youth population and placed in a room or cell that the juvenile is assigned to for sleeping, other than during normal sleeping hours, but does not include time a youth requests to spend in his or her room.

Juvenile institutions and county detention facilities may use isolation:

- to prevent imminent harm based on the juvenile's behavior;
- when awaiting transfer of facilities;
- overnight due to disruptive behavior that disrupts other residents; or
- when necessary to respond to an escape attempt.

Juvenile institutions and county detention facilities may use room confinement when:

- there is a repeated violation of facility or living unit rules;
- there is a refusal to follow staff directives;
- it is necessary to manage behavior that does not rise to the level of imminent harm.

Staff from institutions or facilities must remove the juvenile from isolation and room confinement when:

- the purpose of the confinement is met;
- the desired behavior is evident; or
- the juvenile has been evaluated by a professional who has determined the juvenile is no longer an imminent risk to self, staff, or the general population.

Staff from institutions or facilities must visually check every juvenile placed in isolation or room confinement.

When an institution or facility places a juvenile in isolation or room confinement, the juvenile must have access to:

- clothing;
- mattress and bedding;
- medication under staff supervision;
- a toilet and sink at least hourly;
- a bath or shower at least daily;

- necessary mental health services; and
- reading, writing, and treatment material unless precluded by suicide precaution level.

Each juvenile in isolation must be visually checked every 30 minutes, and instances of isolation must be documented. The juvenile in isolation must have access to certain things (clothing, mattress and bedding, medication, toilet, bath or shower, mental health services, and reading and writing material). The DCYF must adopt a model policy by July 1, 2021, prohibiting the use of solitary confinement of juveniles in institutions and county detention facilities with the goal of limiting the use and duration of isolation and room confinement. By December 2, 2021, institutions and facilities must adopt the model policy or notify the DCYF of the reasons that they will not adopt the model policy. The DCYF must compile certain information regarding juveniles confined in state institutions and facilities, including the number and times isolation and room confinement were used and information about such isolation and room confinement.

Model Policy.

The DCYF shall adopt a model policy prohibiting the use of solitary confinement in detention facilities and institutions with the goal of limiting the sue and duration of isolation and room confinement by July 1, 2021. The DCYF must consult with stakeholders in determining the model policy, and the model policy must include certain elements regarding isolation and room confinement.

By December 1, 2021, the detention facility or institution shall review and either:

- adopt the model policy; or
- notify the DCYF of the reasons the facility or institution will not adopt the model policy.

Reporting Requirements.

The DCYF must compile, on a monthly basis until June 1, 2022, certain information regarding juveniles confined in all state institutions and facilities receiving isolation or room confinement. Counties operating a juvenile detention facility and governing unites operating one or more jails must compile, on a monthly basis until June 1, 2022, certain information regarding juveniles receiving isolation or room confinement in those facilities and report this information to the DCYF. The DCYF must compile all of this information and provide a report to the Legislature by December 1, 2022.

Periodic Reviews.

The DCYF is required, beginning January 2023, to conduct periodic reviews of juvenile detention policies, procedures, and use of solitary confinement, isolation, and room confinement. The DCYF is required to review each facility at least once every three years. At the end of each three-year cycle, the DCYF must prepare a report to the Legislature summarizing its reviews.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.