



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
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CONTACT: pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov, (212) 788-2958

**MAYOR DE BLASIO AND COMMISSIONER PONTE ANNOUNCE NYC
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTION HAS ENDED PUNITIVE SEGREGATION FOR
INMATES 21 AND UNDER**

New York City becomes first in nation to reform practice for young adults

NEW YORK—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Joseph Ponte today announced the Department of Correction has ended the practice of punitive segregation for inmates 21 years old and under. The Department of Correction has created alternative, rehabilitative approaches for managing young inmates' behavior that have paved the way for ending a practice that can be counterproductive to the development of young adults.

“Today’s announcement shows that New York City is leading the nation down a new path toward rehabilitation and safety. Commissioner Ponte has established viable options for managing and disciplining young inmates that can bring about better outcomes while reducing violence – and has done so years ahead of other jurisdictions. New Yorkers can be proud that their correctional facilities are pioneering these smarter, more humane approaches,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“This accomplishment culminates much hard work on the part of our dedicated staff. During the last two years, the Department created and tested a number of models for safely managing our youngest inmates. Each step of the way, we assessed our progress and setbacks with safety for staff and inmates foremost in mind. Our ending of punitive segregation today is founded upon thoughtful evaluation, flexibility and adjustments with the needs and safety concerns of staff and young adults front and center,” said **Correction Commissioner Joseph Ponte**.

This announcement represents an unprecedented milestone in New York State correctional history and puts the DOC at the forefront of correctional reform across the nation. No other state has accomplished comparable punitive-segregation reforms for inmates ages 19 through 21.

The Department ended punitive segregation for 16 and 17 year olds in December 2014 and in June 2016 ended punitive segregation for 18 year olds. The number of inmates serving punitive segregation sentences has dropped almost 80 percent since Commissioner Ponte arrived on the

job in April 2014, from about 600 to 123 as of October 6. Along with the elimination of punitive segregation for inmates ages 21 and under, the Department has capped punitive-segregation sentences. The reform comes as violence is dropping throughout the City's jails, with two of the most serious violence indicators down 40 percent this year as compared to a year earlier.

The Department accomplished the reform by creating three therapeutically oriented alternative housing models for managing the behavior of young inmates, who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of jail violence. Each housing option – Second Chance, Transitional Restorative Unit (TRU) and Secure – provides a progressively therapeutic and structured approach for incentivizing positive behavior, with heightened staffing, programming, and inmate engagement. Today, the Department announced that it is working to adapt its Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH) to meet the needs of 18-21 year olds. Transferring the last few young adults into ESH officially ends punitive segregation for the Department. Young adults ages 18-21 comprise about 10-12 percent of the jail population but commit about a third of the violence in the City's jails.

After years of departmental neglect and rising violence under previous administrations, Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte embarked on a [14-point anti-violence reform agenda](#) in March 2015. Through an unprecedented \$200 million investment in officer safety reforms to reduce violence in specific facilities and throughout the Department, DOC has registered a 40 percent drop in the most serious assaults on staff and uses of force through the first eight months of 2016 as compared to the same period in 2015. “Even a single assault on staff is unacceptable, but our numbers are moving in the right direction,” said Commissioner Ponte.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte announced a series of [officer safety measures](#) in September, including new contraband scanners, Tasers for supervisors in the Emergency Service Unit and an infusion of 1,200 recruits – the largest class of new officers ever – to decrease overtime

“When young people interact with the correctional system, the stakes are the highest they can be – lives can be restored or irrevocably derailed by what happens in our jails,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I thank the mayor and Commissioner Ponte for working to promote more rehabilitative approaches and phasing out policies that we know have done more harm than good.”

Assembly Member Danny O'Donnell, Chair of the Committee on Corrections, said, “I support the mayor's decision to end punitive segregation for young adults in New York City. With this change, this often vulnerable population will instead participate in rehabilitative programming. I applaud these efforts and hope that we continue to see progressive changes for young incarcerated adults across the state.”

“New Yorkers in the Big Apple can be proud of today's announcement which separates New York City from other state and city administrations where punitive segregation is unfortunately the cruel but usual treatment meted out to adolescent offenders in their prison systems. Empirical research has repeatedly found such treatments to be more harmful than useful in positively altering behavior. The new approach will not only reduce violence, but will also make

our terrible prison systems more humane and safer for employees who must interact with prisoners regularly throughout their time of incarceration. It is the right thing to do, and I commend the Mayor and the New York City Department of Corrections for this bold initiative, which certainly makes New York City a leader in ensuring the respect of human rights in our prison system,” said **Assembly Member Nick Perry, Chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus**.

“As a member of the state Assembly Committee on Correction and chair of the Subcommittee on Transitional Services for released inmates, I applaud this historic move by Mayor de Blasio and Correction Commissioner Ponte. For too long, our city's correctional system has lagged behind in dealing with serious issues that affect not only inmates, but the reputation of our city as a forward thinking, progressive urban center. I look forward to working with Mayor de Blasio and his administration to bring about even further – and much needed – reforms to the city's correctional system,” said **Assembly Member Luis Sepulveda**.

“Ending punitive segregation for our youngest inmates is a victory for due process and prisoners’ rights,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson, Chair of the Committee on Health**. “Our goal must be to build a correctional system that reduces recidivism. Inhumane punishments will not help us bring down rates of recidivism and they do not make our City safer, so this reform is wise and much needed. I commend Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Ponte and our City’s correctional officers for leading our city in the direction of progress and justice.”

“JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA) and our allies have adamantly called for the Mayor to eliminate the practice of punitive segregation for young adults. Prolonged segregation for anyone, but especially for young people, is counter-productive as well as cruel. This form of confinement makes people suffer without making Rikers safe for detainees or correction officers. While we continue to demand the closure of Rikers Island, JLUSA thanks the Mayor for his leadership in moving New York City’s jail system towards being more fair, humane and just,” said **Glenn E. Martin, President of JustLeadershipUSA**.

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