



## JUSTICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY CABINET

**Andy Beshear**  
Governor

**Department of Juvenile Justice**  
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**Justice Mary C. Noble, Ret.**  
Secretary

**LaShana M. Harris**  
Commissioner

April 17, 2020

Corey Shapiro  
Legal Director  
American Civil Liberties Union  
325 West Main Street, Suite 2210  
Louisville, Kentucky 40202

Dear Mr. Shapiro:

This office received your letter dated April 14, 2020. I hope that this correspondence finds you in good health and safe. The Coronavirus has truly transformed the way we interact and engage as a society; nevertheless, I have found that those of us that are flexible, patient, and that have the ability to adapt are able to navigate these extreme circumstances and conditions with intention and a steadiness.

In your letter, you identified several issues of concern. First, you wanted to meet with the Department of Juvenile Justice ("KYDJJ"). Mr. Codell, the Assistant General Counsel for KYDJJ, contacted and advised you that the Department could meet, but that the meeting would have to occur later in the month of April. Based on the tenor of your letter and while I understand that you would like immediate attention, please be advised that the first priority of KYDJJ is to make sure that the department is focused on the prevention and mitigation of the Coronavirus as well as executing the daily business operations of this complex system. I am confident that you understand that my energy is focused on the intricacies of balancing operational protocols, maintaining security, managing staff and ensuring that health and safety protocols are executed daily during the midst of this international pandemic. Nevertheless, if you would like to meet via video conference, let me know if you are available to meet any of these days- April 24, April 27 or April 28. KYDJJ has always been very accommodating regarding your meeting requests.

Second, you indicated that you have questions regarding the suspension of services at the Jefferson Regional Juvenile Detention Center. As I stated to you in my email dated April 7, 2020, KYDJJ made the decision to temporarily suspend operations at the Jefferson Regional Juvenile Detention Center in response to the elevated risk of exposure to the Coronavirus in Jefferson County. In your letter, you called the decision "entirely unprecedented". However, please be reminded that the Commonwealth of Kentucky and KYDJJ is currently facing an unprecedented circumstance in confronting the international pandemic. This unprecedented circumstance necessitates that KYDJJ engage in proactive measures to protect both the youth that are in the care of the Department and managing a workforce of over one thousand two hundred KYDJJ employees. I want to assure you that any unprecedented steps that were taken were thoughtful, intentional and calculated to mitigate the elevated risk and rapidly escalating cases of exposure to the Coronavirus in Jefferson County.

Third, you inquired about testing. Testing of youth in confinement settings is one of the populations identified as having access to testing. KYDJJ is grateful to report that no youth in DJJ custody has tested positive for the Coronavirus at this time.

The Justice and Public Safety Cabinet and KYDJJ in consultation with the Department for Public Health, have taken proactive measures to mitigate the spread of the virus to youth and staff. Key initiatives include but are not limited to:

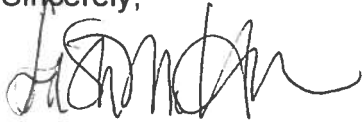
- Limiting the transfer of youth throughout the agency with the exception of an operational or medical emergency.
- New youth residents are quarantined for 14 days prior to being incorporated with the general youth population. Quarantined youth receive the same services and access to video conferencing with their families and attorneys as youth residents in the general population.
- All facilities have enhanced sanitization protocols.
- Staff are screened for Coronavirus symptoms every day upon entry. Anyone entering a DJJ facility is required to sanitize hands and feet, receive a temperature scan, answer questions regarding recent travel activity, social contacts and current health symptoms.
- Staff have been supplied with general masks and cloth masks.
- All facilities have implemented social distancing, as much as feasible.
- All facilities and offices are closed to the general public.

In the event of any health related issues, staff and the families of impacted youth are notified privately and confidentially.

Corey Shapiro  
American Civil Liberties Union  
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Mr. Shapiro, please know that I value your advocacy and this office has worked to improve communications with you and the ACLU. Let me assure you that I am committed to protecting the wellbeing of each youth in the custody and care of the KYDJJ. I look forward to our meeting. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'LaShana M. Harris', written in a cursive style.

LaShana M. Harris, J. D.  
Commissioner

C. William Codell, Asst. General Counsel  
George Scott, Deputy Commissioner