



For Immediate Release
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Advocates Applaud Mayor, DYRS on Oak Hill Closure ***Reform efforts include one of a kind Youth advocacy office in new facility***

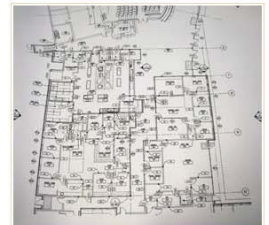
Washington, D.C. – Today, Justice for D.C. Youth (JDCY) applauds Mayor Adrian Fenty and the D.C. Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) for the pending closure of the Oak Hill Youth Center (OHYC), on Thursday, May 29. Justice for D.C. Youth has been advocating for this since 2001 when then Mayor Anthony Williams' Blue Ribbon Commission recommended its closure. DYRS will provide office space for JDCY at the New Beginnings Youth Development Center, the newer, smaller facility which will replace Oak Hill, to operate JDCY's mentoring and leadership development program for youth at the facility. The closure of Oak Hill is required by comprehensive reform legislation, the Omnibus Juvenile Justice Amendment Act of 2004 (D.C. Law 15-261), which was approved by the D.C. Council on November 9, 2004.

"For too long, Oak Hill represented the abusive and inhumane confinement of hundreds of D.C.'s youth and an ineffective approach to reducing juvenile delinquency," says JDCY's Director, Shani O'Neal. "Justice for D.C. Youth commends Mayor Fenty and DYRS for closing this institution and providing JDCY with an office inside New Beginnings. To the best of our knowledge, we are the first youth advocacy organization to have a permanent presence inside a juvenile correctional facility."

"The closure of Oak Hill signals the end of a failed experiment on the children in our nation's capitol that has been marked for decades by warehousing children in rat-infested rooms, abuses by guards, little to no educational programming, and high rates of reoffending," said Liz Ryan, President and CEO of the Campaign for Youth Justice and member of JDCY's Advisory Council. "The Mayor is to be praised for following through on his commitment to close Oak Hill, an effort he championed since his service in the D.C. Council."

Justice for D.C. Youth was founded in 2001 and is a diverse, intergenerational organization that is pushing for a fair and more effective juvenile justice system in the District. JDCY's mission is to shift the city's priorities from incarceration to education. The organization works with youth who are disproportionately affected by crime and the criminal justice system, particularly youth from Wards 5, 7, and 8. JDCY manages a youth leadership and mentoring program at Oak Hill and will now start that program at New Beginnings.

To mark the closure of Oak Hill, JDCY will be hosting a celebratory event, "The Blue Party" on Wednesday, June 17 at the Hamiltonian Gallery on U Street. JDCY encourages community members to participate. Tickets are \$50. For more information, contact JDCY at 202.386.7104.



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For background information on Oak Hill and the Mayor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Juvenile Justice, visit: <https://digitalcommons.georgetown.edu/blogs/oakhill/>.