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**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

***Legal Aid Condemns Adams Administration for Housing Children in Congregate Classrooms at Juvenile Detention Centers***

***Children as Young as 14-Years-Old Represented by Legal Aid Report Sleeping in Cots on Floors in Classrooms, Lack of Private Space, Random Assaults and Inability to Sleep Due to Safety Concerns***

***Attorneys Call on ACS for Immediate Solutions to Ensure that Children Detained at these Facilities Have Appropriate Housing***

(NEW YORK, NY) - The Legal Aid Society [decried](#) the Adams Administration over the Administration for Children's Services' (ACS) new practice of condemning children to sleep in congregate classrooms in juvenile detention. Children as young as 14-years-old have reported sleeping on cots on the floor in classrooms, as opposed to single occupancy rooms as regularly required by New York State regulation.

Children represented by Legal Aid have also reported random assaults due to tensions arising from the lack of assignment to a housing hall; difficulty sleeping due to fears for their safety; hours-long waits to simply use the shower and restroom; and an inability to secure clean clothing. Furthermore, clients have been woken early in the morning to be moved out of the classroom area to sit in other areas, including housing areas to which they are not assigned.

Last week, in response to these startling revelations, Legal Aid demanded an explanation from ACS and learned that ACS had secured a [waiver](#) from the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) from the requirement that each child charged as a juvenile delinquent or juvenile offender ages 13 and up be housed in a single room, instead allowing ACS to house children in these hazardous settings. ACS's justification for the waiver appears to cite an increase in the census count in secure detention at juvenile centers.

This waiver was granted on October 23, 2023, and it remains unclear exactly how many children have been impacted by the new practice, which is being followed at both of ACS's secure juvenile detention centers: Crossroads Juvenile Center and Horizon Juvenile Center.

“Condemning children, including those we serve as young as 14-years-old, to sleep in congregate classrooms is reckless and compromises their safety,” said **Dawne Mitchell, Chief Attorney of the Juvenile Rights Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “We have received frantic calls from children and their parents in response to a situation that is both unacceptable and untenable. The Adams Administration and ACS had ample time to account for the increase in census but failed to prepare. We demand a solution to ensure that children are safe and that facility conditions are appropriate, and we are considering all options - including litigation - should this policy continue.”

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*The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. [www.legalaidnyc.org](http://www.legalaidnyc.org)*