



## Solitary confinement is no place for kids.

**Every day across the country, kids as young as 13 are held in solitary confinement with almost no human contact for days or months at a time.** The consequences are devastating. Complete isolation can be physically harmful and psychologically damaging – especially for youth.

Solitary confinement is torture, and it should be outlawed for all kids. It's time to speak up.

That's why it's crucial for youth organizers, grassroots prison reform organizations, and civil rights organizations to come together to take action to end the torturous practice of putting youth in solitary confinement.

## Who are we?

The [Student Alliance for Prison Reform](#) is a national organization mobilizing young people around the country to work in prison education and reform. The [American Civil Liberties Union](#) leads the [Stop Solitary Campaign](#) to end the pervasive use of solitary confinement and to divert vulnerable groups, such as youth and persons with mental illness, out of solitary.

Partnering together, we launched a campaign to pressure the Attorney General to ban solitary confinement for youth in federal custody. And we are looking for friends and allies to join us.

## How can you and your organization help?

You can take action today individually and with your friends, fellow students, and colleagues.

- **Sign a petition** to stop youth solitary at [www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth](http://www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth) and urge others to sign. The more signatures we gather, the stronger impact we will have to tell the Attorney General our constituents want to ban solitary confinement of youth.
- Use the **Talking Points & FAQ's** to help educate your friends, family, student colleagues, and the public about the dangers and impacts of solitary confinement of youth.
- Check out the **Take Action!** section for ideas for organizing on-the-ground actions, speaking events and film screenings, and rallies to draw attention to the problem. Make sure to have petitions ready for signing at all your events. Don't forget to bring pens!

## Talking Points & FAQ's

How many youth are in solitary confinement?

- On any given day in the United States, tens of thousands of youth under age 18 are confined in adult jails and prisons. Not only are youth held in adult facilities, but they are often subjected to extended periods of solitary confinement.
- Juvenile facilities routinely lock the 70,000 kids in their care on any given day in tiny cells for 22 - 24 hours a day, for days, weeks, or months on end.

How dangerous is solitary?

- Locking kids alone in a cell for 22-24 hours a day is child abuse – plain and simple. If you locked your kid in a closet you'd go to jail. But the government locks kids in isolation every day.
- Isolation is psychologically shattering, especially for youth. It stunts their social and physical development and has lasting damage. More than half of kids who commit suicide in juvenile facilities are in solitary confinement when they die.
- Isolation cells often have no window or view of the world outside cell walls. In solitary, youth are regularly deprived of the services, programming, and other tools that they need for healthy growth, education, and development. Sometimes they don't even receive access to school books.
- Solitary poses such dramatic risks of doing lasting harm to kids that it simply cannot ever be justified.

How will taking action make an impact?

- We need to raise our voices and create awareness that the solitary confinement of youth is a huge problem in this country. Juvenile and adult facilities across the country have been able to lock kids in solitary with little public oversight, knowledge, or legal limits.
- Public education and pressure are effective means to raise awareness of a problem, change the way we as a society thinks about that problem, and demand institutions change their practices.
- The more events we organize, petition signatures we gather, and coalition-building we create through these activities, the bigger impact we can have to change minds and policies.

Where can I find more information about solitary confinement?

- Visit [www.aclu.org/we-can-stop-solitary](http://www.aclu.org/we-can-stop-solitary) and [www.studentprisonalliance.com](http://www.studentprisonalliance.com) for resources on solitary confinement and prison reform advocacy, and for more tools for activists.

## Take Action!

### Collect petition signatures

The easiest effective tactic for getting the word out is to grab a couple of friends and collect petition signatures.

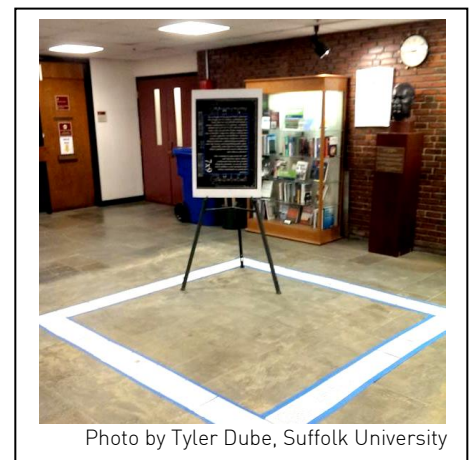


Photo by Tyler Dube, Suffolk University

- Gather petition signatures online for [www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth](http://www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth) using an iPad, tablet, or laptop. Or print the paper petition sheet included at the end of this toolkit to collect written signatures. Always make sure to get people's first and last names, email addresses, and zipcodes when they sign.
- Take the petition to dining halls, campus cafés, and other popular spots on campus.
- Set up a table outside campus buildings and tell people entering and exiting about the petition using information sheets and the talking points.

To engage the community even more, offer signers an additional activity to show support, such as writing why they support the petition onto a post-it note. By the end of the day, you'll have enough post-it notes to make a visual statement to the community about what we stand for.

## Create signs and displays

If you are working solo on campus, create a display.

- Get permission to host your display in a noticeable location. Talk with organizations or academic departments to secure permission.
- Create a poster surrounded by a square drawn in the ground using information sheets about solitary confinement.
- Or create a visual art display that creatively shows the impact of solitary confinement.
- Make sure to prominently display copies of the petition so passersby can sign.

## Organize demonstrations

If you can find a small group of dedicated volunteers, try this:

- For an hour, stand together in a public space on your campus holding signs that each spell out the following statement: "Youth stand with youth in solitary," or another statement of your choice.
- As passersby notice your demonstration, point them to a volunteer who has an information sheet about the action, can explain your mission, and can ask people to sign the petition.

Not only will you garner lots of signatures but you will create a stunning visual that can be used as promotional material later on.

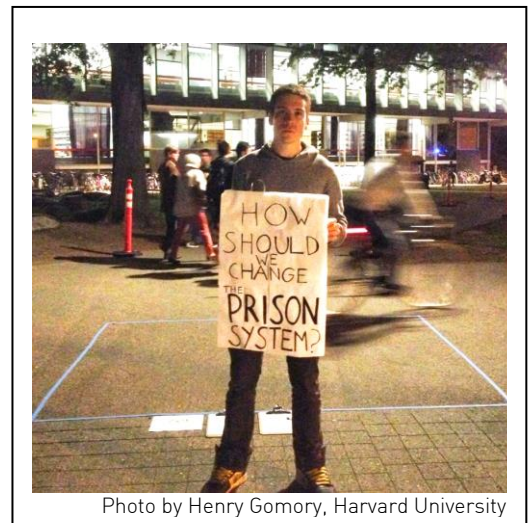


Photo by Henry Gomory, Harvard University

## Rally

If you have access to a large group of people on your campus, host a traditional rally.

- Get proper permissions to convene a rally somewhere prominent on campus.
- Come prepared with chants, printed handout materials, and petitions to collect signatures.
- Have two to four student organizers give short speeches and cap off the rally by telling attendees to sign the petition.

## Host speaking events

If your campus is more traditional, host a speaking event on campus:

- Invite an activist or lawyer who works against solitary confinement to speak. If you need resources on experts you can invite to speak at your event, email [studentprisonalliance@gmail.com](mailto:studentprisonalliance@gmail.com).
- Broaden your audience by partnering with political organizations to co-host the event. Partnerships draw audiences, raise the profile of your organization, get the petition out to a broader audience, and can even include financial sponsorship for your event.
- At the start of your event, show the video featured on the petition page [www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth](http://www.aclu.org/bansolitary4youth).
- Announce the petition and urge attendees to sign it and tell others about it.



Photo by Eva Shang, Harvard University

For example, at Harvard, students invited a survivor of solitary confinement and a lawyer from the ACLU to speak to a student audience at the Institute of Politics.

## Document everything with photos!

Whatever kind of event you host, make sure to take photos to share with the Student Alliance for Prison Reform by emailing [studentprisonalliance@gmail.com](mailto:studentprisonalliance@gmail.com). We will be running a live blog of all that is happening on the ground and would love to post your photos on our website!



STUDENT ALLIANCE FOR  
**PRISON REFORM**

## SIGN OUR PETITION

### To the Attorney General:

**We urge you to ban the solitary confinement of youth held in federal custody.**

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