



Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children
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Dr. Mary L. Livers
Deputy Secretary
Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice
P.O. Box 66458 Audubon Station
Baton Rouge, La. 70896

Dear Dr. Livers:

Our families are gravely concerned about the violence and short staffing of Swanson Center for Youth. According to parents we have spoken with kids have been involved in gang violence because of kids being from the north and kids being from the south. Also, parents have said this has happened between dormitories. Parents have expressed concern about not being notified when their children have received injuries, been involved in instances of violence and in one case were not notified when their child was transferred. We also have a parent who tells us their child refuses to come out of the mental health ward because he feels more safe there than in the dormitory.

What catches our attention is that these stories are reminiscent of conditions before Emanuel Narcisse's death at Bridge City Correctional Center for Youth in 2003.

Their stories are reflective of unacceptable shortfalls inside your facilities. In relation to Mr. Narcisse's death, ACT 1225 was passed. Governor Blanco said there is no more time for preparation and strategizing; reform was needed immediately. There has been the death of another youth, Andy Naccio, and seven years since reform was promised with ACT 1225. Families are devastated because they are losing their sons to the very system that was supposed to care for, rehabilitate and keep them safe.

We commend OJJ for their efforts with Bridge City and would like to see this spread. In the interest of keeping our youth safe and ensure true reform within OJJ facilities, we would like to again extend an offer to solidify a real working partnership. FFLIC is requesting a meeting with you and Director Carolyn Atkins of Swanson Center for Youth within the next 14 days to discuss what actions can be taken to help reform our youth before another loses their life.

During our meeting we would like to discuss the following issues:

- What is being done to have better communication with parents?
- What is being done to address the immediate problem of staff shortages at Swanson?
- We are concerned that the lack of staff will lead to conditions that make our children unsafe.
- What type of curriculum do you have for non-violent youth being held in secure care?
- Will you honor your commitment to help FFLIC reach the parents to provide a support group for them, which can begin immediately?

Thank you very much for your immediate attention to our children's safety. We anticipate working together in the near future and would appreciate a follow-up by next week.

Sincerely,

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