



# OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED TO ENSURE SAFETY AT DIVISION OF YOUTH CORRECTIONS SECURE FACILITIES

DENVER—The Colorado Office of the State Auditor (OSA) has released its audit of the Division of Youth Corrections (Division) and has found that improvements need to be made in the management and documentation of procedures at its secure facilities if it is to ensure the safety of youth and staff at those facilities.

The Division's mission is to protect, restore, and improve public safety for youth offenders aged 10 through 21, and it oversees 10 state-operated and two contractor-operated secure facilities. In Fiscal Year 2016, the Division spent \$133.7 million on state- and contractor-operated facilities, admitting 1,369 committed youth and 6,813 detained youth to its secure facilities.

However, auditors found that staff did not always follow Division policies and statutes over seclusion, staff-directed time-outs, and reporting of fights, assaults, and critical incidents. For 13 of the 32 sampled seclusion incidents (41 percent), facility staff did not document that the emergency situations continued, as required by statute and Division policy, and therefore, the Division could not demonstrate that the continued seclusions were necessary and appropriate. In addition, auditors found that 16 of the 20 fights or assaults (80 percent) and all 10 of the critical incidents that they reviewed either lacked required information or contained inaccurate information.

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Auditors could find little practical difference between staff-directed timeouts and seclusion. Both are used to address similar behaviors, both place the youth in isolation, and both have the same requirements for releasing youth. Yet seclusions require more stringent documentation and notifications. “It’s important to point out that the federal government has prohibited the use of seclusion altogether for youth in federal facilities,” said Michelle Colin, Senior Audit Manager.

Separately, the audit also found that the Division does not provide the same level of oversight of the two contractor-operated secure facilities as it does with the 10 state-operated secure facilities, holding them to differing standards.

The audit makes 4 recommendations.

The full report is available @ [www.state.gov/auditor](http://www.state.gov/auditor).

Under the direction of the state auditor, the OSA is the state’s nonpartisan, independent external auditor with broad authority to audit state agencies, departments, institutions of higher education, and the Judicial and Legislative Branches. The OSA’s professional staff serve the people of Colorado by addressing relevant public issues through high-quality, objective audits and reviews that promote accountability and positive change in government. Performance audits address whether programs operate in compliance with laws and regulations and in a manner that accomplishes intended program goals. Financial audits include annual audits of the state’s basic financial statements and federal grants on a statewide level. IT audits review procedures and technology to ensure the confidentiality, integrity and availability of the state’s critical computer systems and taxpayer data. The OSA also tracks about 4,000 Colorado local governments for compliance with the Local Government Audit Law.