

Connecticut Shouldn't Lock Up Traumatized Girls

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Though we have spent our careers studying and advocating for youth in the juvenile justice system, their level of suffering still astounds us. The majority of incarcerated boys and girls have experienced trauma, though girls experience higher rates of sexual and physical abuse. When the system chooses to lock them up, that's one more trauma in their young lives.

Connecticut's rush to open a new maximum security facility for girls -- when the number of girls committed for delinquency is dropping -- is disturbing [Jan. 12, Opinion, "Girls Need Help, Not This"]. The state already has a locked girls facility, where overlong stays are the norm. Programming that offers girls the care they need to heal in a less restrictive environment would free up existing beds.

Connecticut has been praised nationally for incarcerating fewer children in favor of community-based programs, which are generally cheaper and more effective. A locked girls facility would be a giant step backward.

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