



March 30, 2020

VIA EMAIL

1

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[cca-ct.org](http://cca-ct.org)

Commissioner Rollin Cook  
Department of Correction  
24 Wolcott Hill Road  
Wethersfield, CT 06109

Dear Commissioner Cook:

We are writing in follow up to the letter sent to you by the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance dated March 16, 2020 which included our office as an Alliance member, in support of the youth and young adults currently incarcerated in the Department of Corrections. As you are aware, we are gravely concerned for the young men and women in your care during the COVID-19 crisis, specifically those 15 -21 year olds at both Manson Youth and York Correctional Institutions. On their behalf, we would like to underscore with urgency our previous requests, including the request to release the youth in your care to their communities and families when possible, especially those who are pre-trial. We also have some additional requests for your immediate consideration detailed herein. Please note that these points are also in keeping with the recommendations of the Youth Correctional Leaders for Justice in their recent statement of March 19, 2020. (This statement can be found at: <http://https://yclj.org/covid19statement> )

In addition to requesting increased access to phone calls, mental health, recreation, and hygiene products, we are requesting that the Department take immediate measures to allow for these young men and women to have direct and virtual access to communicate with family and loved ones. While we appreciate the Department implementing two free phone calls as a starting point, these young men and women need more at this crucial time. We would suggest that this could be achieved through the JPay tablets that the Department purchased a year ago. It is our understanding that the primary purpose for these tablets was to facilitate connection with family and loved ones and there is no more important time than now to ensure that this is happening for the Department's most vulnerable population. We also ask, whether through these tablets or other means, that the Department immediately explore the opportunity for delivering of programming and therapy services to be provided virtually and/or through tele-platforms. As the Department recently clarified, Parole and Community Release Units are releasing individuals 'without disruption.' With that in mind, these young men and women, particularly those who will be returning to the community soon, critically need these services to ensure a successful transition.

Also, since the writing of March 16<sup>th</sup> letter, Unified School District No. 1 has fully shut down, leaving these young men and women with absolutely no school

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or instruction. We would ask that Unified School District No. 1 provide a form virtual and/or distance learning, as all school districts have been encouraged to do by both the State Department of Education and the U.S. Secretary of Education, as soon as possible. As you are likely aware, a great number of these young people have special education needs. Therefore, it is only in the Department's best interest to provide them with as many services as possible at this time to reduce the necessity of compensatory education when school officially re-opens.

Thank you for your willingness to work with us in collaboration to meet the needs of the young men and women in your care, and thank you in advance for your consideration of these additional requests. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

/s/  
Martha Stone, J.D.  
Executive Director

/s/  
Marisa Halm, J.D.  
Director, TeamChild Youth Justice Project

Cc: Maria Pirro, Unified School District No. 1  
Warden Molden, MYI  
Warden Carlos, YCI