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**Ohio Announces the Release of Fact-finding Report, Prompting  
Continued Reforms of Ohio's Juvenile Justice System**  
*Report Challenges State to Cooperate in Finding Solution*

COLUMBUS, December 31, 2007 – A fact-finding report released today by nationally recognized independent consultant Fred Cohen outlines a foundation for future reforms of Ohio's juvenile corrections system.

This report is a result of a class-action lawsuit that originated in December 2004, the Ohio Department of Youth Services (DYS) collaborated with the lawyers representing the youth in DYS to bring in a group of experts to conduct a fact finding and make recommendations.

DYS and the plaintiffs' counsel agree with the report's major findings concerning use of force, use of seclusion, and provision of medical, mental health, and education services.

"The Ohio Department of Youth Services will continue to build on the initiatives we have underway, but the time has come to turn a new corner in DYS history," said Department of Youth Services Director Tom Stickrath. "Mr. Cohen's report is a catalyst for change, and we will work closely with plaintiff's counsel to move DYS forward in a meaningful way. Together, we will create a plan to make needed improvements in a responsible and appropriate manner to ensure our system provides a secure, healthy environment for the

youths in our care."

The report offers opportunities for various entities of state government to address the serious problems. The system-wide scope of this report will help focus the parties on remedies that are most likely to succeed. Attorney Al Gerhardstein, who represents the plaintiffs along with the Children's Law Center, Ohio Justice and Policy Center, Sirkin, Pinales, and Schwartz, and the Youth Law Center, stated, "This is a great way to start the New Year. I have been encouraged by the willingness of the State to open itself to this tough scrutiny and am eager to join all the stakeholders in a comprehensive effort to solve these problems."

Attorney General Marc Dann, who represents DYS, is optimistic. "My office will continue to assist the Department of Youth Services and Governor Strickland in their efforts to transform Ohio's juvenile justice system into a national model," said Dann.

The report concluded that, "Most ODYS facilities were found to be overcrowded, understaffed, and underserved in such vital areas as safety, education, mental health treatment and rehabilitative programming." Since 2005, various initiatives have been put in place in an effort to improve the quality of life within the DYS facilities, but the parties agree that more needs to be done. The parties will evaluate alternative options for many of the youth committed to DYS and that could transform Ohio's juvenile justice system statewide.

The Ohio Department of Youth Services is the juvenile corrections system for the state of Ohio. ODYS is statutorily mandated to confine felony offenders, ages 10 to 21, who have been adjudicated and committed by one of Ohio's 88 county juvenile courts. ODYS operates eight correctional and rehabilitation facilities and provides parole services from six regional sites.

The full report is available online at [www.dys.ohio.gov](http://www.dys.ohio.gov).