



**Texas Center for
Justice & Equity**
SOLUTIONS FOR SAFE, HEALTHY,
JUST COMMUNITIES

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“Finish the 5” Policy Plan to Close Texas’s Youth Prisons

Advocacy Organizations Convene Coalition After Dangerous Conditions Reported in Youth Facilities

(AUSTIN, TX) – Today, the Texas Center for Justice and Equity (TCJE) released a [policy brief](#) outlining a path to closing Texas’s five youth prisons by 2027. “Finish the 5: Our Journey to Zero Youth Prisons in Texas” includes a history of abuse in Texas’s youth punishment system and policy recommendations to close all five facilities while prioritizing child and community safety.

With the publication of the policy brief, TCJE also launched a coalition of advocates and individuals in a campaign centered on closing the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) facilities. The Finish the 5 Coalition has three primary demands, asking the Texas Legislature and state leaders to:

- Shut down TJJD’s five state secure institutions by 2027 through a thoughtful, staggered closure plan.
- Invest in building communities’ infrastructure to appropriately address the needs of children who would have been sent to TJJD, and allow recapture from closed facilities to reimburse the costs for community-based resources.
- Enact policy reforms that decriminalize youth, diverting children from the youth punishment system altogether.

Reports from TJJD’s Independent Ombudsman from November 2021 to April 2022 revealed widespread human rights violations for the children incarcerated in Texas’s state secure youth lockups. Reviewed by the *Texas Tribune*, these reports showed that incarcerated youth were locked in their rooms for up to 23 hours a day and forced to use water bottles and food trays as makeshift restroom facilities. Nearly half of the children incarcerated in TJJD were at risk of suicide, and some had already self-harmed. TJJD is currently under investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice.

While Texas leaders have suggested that investing in this failed system is sufficient, the Finish the 5 Coalition is instead demanding a culture shift.

“Recruiting more staff at higher salaries will not fix the inhumanity inherent in a culture where our most vulnerable kids are imprisoned, neglected, and abused,” said Alycia Castillo, **TCJE Director of Policy and Advocacy** and author of the policy brief. “All children are human beings deserving of care, protection, and humane treatment. Instead, Texas has failed these kids again and again. We’re ready to imagine something better, and our leaders can and must be ready to do the same.”

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On Tuesday, October 25, the Finish the 5 Coalition will host a free [webinar](#) at 5:00pm CDT to share more about the issues in TJJD and their plan to address them. *Texas Tribune* reporter Jolie McCullough will participate on an informational basis to walk attendees through her reporting on this topic. Afterwards, advocates from TCJE and Austin Liberation Youth Movement (ALYM) will introduce attendees to the Finish the 5 Coalition and share opportunities to get involved.

“Finish the 5: Our Journey to Zero Youth Prisons in Texas” is available [on the TCJE website here](#). The webpage for the campaign is [available here](#).

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The Texas Center for Justice and Equity (formerly the Texas Criminal Justice Coalition) advances solutions and builds coalitions to end mass incarceration and foster safer Texas communities.