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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **MARIETTA JUVENILE CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT PROPOSED TERMS INCLUDE FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND IN DAMAGES PLUS REFORMS**

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Columbus, Ohio. A settlement has been proposed in the civil rights class action challenging conditions at the Washington County Juvenile Center in Marietta, Ohio. A consent decree has been filed with the federal court that, if approved, will result in damages totaling approximately \$406,230.00. Additional funds will be paid for attorney fees, expenses and monitoring result in extensive reforms.

**Reforms:** The Settlement calls for changes in the way the Center is operated, including:

- No youth will be held in detention for more than 24 hours
- No youth will be held in isolation for more than 24 hours (there is an exception to the limit if a mental health provider recommends suicide watch)
- Youth in detention between 7 a.m. and 7 p. m. shall receive a minimum of one hour recreation without restraints
- Privacy zone will be established for detention and observation cells so the view in the monitoring camera does not show areas around the toilet and shower
- Medical director to be appointed and medical policies will be established
- Suicide screening and staff training will be improved
- End all community service at farms or other for profit establishments
- Consult with University of Cincinnati on programming
- Communicate timely with home schools to ensure special education compliance
- Update handbook
- Searches by staff of same gender as youth
- End payments of child support or social security to County General Fund.

If approved by the Court the Settlement will be in place for one year but can be extended for six more months if the terms are not implemented. The parties have asked the Court to appoint

corrections expert Steve Martin as monitor to ensure compliance with the terms regarding operations.

Plaintiff co-counsel Al Gerhardstein of Cincinnati stated, "I commend Washington County for addressing our concerns promptly and working with us to remedy the problems at the Center. We are hopeful that Judge Sargus will approve the settlement and that we can start making distributions early next year."

The case was filed in federal court in Columbus in December, 2010. A detailed notice must be sent to all members of the class and a fairness hearing must be scheduled by the Court before the settlement can be finally approved. Any class members with questions should contact co-counsel for the Plaintiffs Jennifer Branch 513-621-9100