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NEW REPORT: State Agency at Breaking Point Youth Services Strained by Shrinking Staff, Growing Violence

Denver, CO — A new report by Disability Law Colorado finds the state’s Division of Youth Services (DYS) at a “breaking point.” The four-year study, [available here](#), describes an agency strained by shrinking staff, growing violence, and a shortage of alternatives.

Disability Law Colorado visited every DYS facility in the state, scrutinizing conditions and interviewing more than 100 youth and staff. Among the key findings:

- More than one-third of the youth interviewed said that staff had slammed them or other youth to the ground, choked them, or struck them with a knee to the stomach or head — all at odds with state policy.
- More than one-third of the youth said that they had been injured, or had seen another youth injured, during a physical restraint.
- More than half of the youth in detention last fall were eligible for release but remained in custody because other placements were not available.

The report recommends a slate of reforms to strengthen oversight and improve DYS operations. But advocates say the most important change lies outside the agency: “Colorado must reduce its reliance on confinement and increase investment in community programs.”

The full report can be [downloaded here](#). Contact **Communications Manager Felix Ortiz** to schedule interviews with Disability Law Colorado staff or with parents of youth who have lived in DYS facilities.

Disability Law Colorado is a nonprofit civil rights organization, authorized by federal law to combat discrimination, abuse, and neglect. We aim to make Colorado the best place in America for people with disabilities to thrive. For more information, visit disabilitylawco.org.

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