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Wisconsin State Conference of Branches

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAACP Calls for Reopening of Ethan Allen School for Boys & Southern Oaks School for Girls

(December 21, 2015) - The NAACP Wisconsin State Conference and the NAACP Milwaukee Branch express grave concern about the dangerous and deplorable conditions reported recently by newspapers regarding both the youth and staff persons at Lincoln Hills School for Boys and Copper Lake Girls School in Irma, WI.

The NAACP is aware that in 2011, both the Ethan Allen School for Boys (Wales, WI) and Southern Oaks School for Girls (Union Grove, WI) were closed for budgetary reasons. The youth were transferred to Lincoln Hills School for Boys and Copper Lake Girls School in Irma, WI over 200 miles north of Milwaukee, whereas Union Grove and Wales were just over 30 miles away from Milwaukee.

In 2010, more than half the youth in the care of Wisconsin Department of Corrections-Division of Juvenile Corrections were from Milwaukee. By moving the children so far away, the majority of the children's families were given an undo burden of longer distances, greater travel cost, and fewer travel options to visit their loved ones in confinement. If the schools were closer to Milwaukee, it also would make it easier to hire a more diverse staff and teachers. Additionally, more diverse organizations could interact with the schools to help provide more transparency about the everyday conditions in the schools.

The NAACP recognizes that there is an ongoing Department of Justice investigation regarding the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections' Lincoln Hills facility and will take immediate steps to follow up with DOJ and State Officials on these matters, with a particular emphasis on whether the abuses uncovered at Lincoln Hills have violated the Civil Rights of the youth detained.



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The NAACP also will call for a more expansive statewide review of Wisconsin Department of Corrections facilities.

In view of the reported egregious abuses, NAACP State President Frank Humphrey and Milwaukee Branch President Fred Royal call on Governor Scott Walker and the Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections to focus on accomplishing the following objectives:

- Immediately ensure youth detained at Lincoln Hills and all Wisconsin Juvenile facilities are humanely treated and respected by Department of Corrections Administration and staff;
- Immediately close the Lincoln Hills and Cooper Lake Schools and reopen the Ethan Allen School for Boys and Southern Oaks School. The location of the schools to be reopened should take into consideration a closer proximity to the Milwaukee Metropolitan area where a greater diversity of staff can likely be achieved;
- Expand the review of conditions of confinement and treatment of youth at all Wisconsin juvenile facilities as well as those detained in adult facilities;
- Revise the Vision and Mission Statements of the Division of Juvenile Corrections (currently only the public and staff persons are mentioned in them – see the 2014 Annual Report) to include wording about providing quality education and holistic care for the youth in confinement;
- The over-arching goal of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) for our youth should be one of support, rehabilitation and reduced recidivism. It is not appropriate in the case of our youth for the public policy objective to be one that focuses on retribution;
- Policy and Procedures at the Wisconsin Department of Corrections should ensure the safety and dignity of youth while fostering and achieving an environment of genuine academic education and learning so that our youth can leave the facility in a better position to continue their education and secure sufficient skills to flourish as fully productive citizens in their respective communities;
- Create a holistic and humane environment for both youth and staff while assessing staff compensation and time-off policies to reduce job-related stress;
- Establish an advisory curriculum committee made up of DOC officials, teachers, parents, current youth within a juvenile facility;



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- The racial/ethnic composition and diversity of the DOC staff at Lincoln Hills and statewide requires immediate review and corrective action to ensure the staff interacting with our youth can relate and communicate with their circumstances;
- Partner with teaching programs at Wisconsin colleges and universities to help with delivering quality academic education;
- Establish a formal procedure and process for staff persons to report abuse without fear of retribution;
- Include community organizations on the Youth Injury Review Panel recently established by new Administrator John. D. Paquin;
- Ensure quality, academic & holistic education is delivered to the youth by establishing an advisory curriculum committee to include community organizations on the Youth Injury Review Panel recently established by new Administrator John. D. Paquin.

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"There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children." — Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them." — Lady Bird Johnson, Former First Lady of the United States

"Safety and security don't just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear." — Nelson Mandela, Former President of South Africa