

**For Immediate Release**

November 16, 2018

**Contact:**

Tom Masseau

501-296-1775

tmasseau@disabilityrightsar.org

### **Governor's Plan to Reform Juvenile Treatment Centers Long Overdue**

Disability Rights Arkansas, Inc. (DRA) has been monitoring Juvenile Treatment Centers across Arkansas for more than five years. In that time, the agency has reported concerns over a failure to provide treatment, lack of educational opportunities, ineffective Aftercare plan, and poor overall conditions.

“Our investigations at these facilities have shown an appalling lack of treatment and educational opportunities that has persisted for years,” said Tom Masseau, executive director of Disability Rights Arkansas. “Today’s announcement by Governor Hutchison and the Department of Human Services Division of Youth Services is the first step towards transforming the juvenile justice system in Arkansas to a more community based system rather than a punitive system.

The Governor announced today the planned closure of the Dermott Juvenile Treatment Center and the combining of the Colt/Harrisburg Juvenile Treatment Centers which will allow additional funding to be invested into community services for the youth. Additionally, requiring a statewide validated assessment tool prior to placement in a secure facility, along with the requirement of treatment plans being reviewed every three months are issues DRA has been advocating for within the state.

“DRA is committed to holding Governor Hutchison and the Department of Human Services Division of Youth Services accountable to its promises and will continue to advocate for the rights of the youth in the state of Arkansas,” continued Masseau.

###

**DISABILITY RIGHTS ARKANSAS (DRA)** is an Arkansas nonprofit organization with funding and authorization from the federal government to serve as the Protection and Advocacy system for individuals with disabilities in Arkansas. DRA collaborates with other disability rights and civil rights organizations and agencies, the private bar and legal services to accomplish its goals and objectives.