



Health Care for Incarcerated People

What are the rights of incarcerated people related to health care?

Since a person in custody is unable to procure outside medical services, the state is responsible for providing, at a minimum, adequate care. The JHA encourages the state to surpass this minimum by improving preventive care and by implementing systemic changes that will establish continuity of care between facilities and service providers in the community, which will most likely improve outcomes for incarcerated people and the communities to which they return.

The JHA has long advocated for improved medical care for Illinois' incarcerated population. JHA supports the resolution introduced by Rep. Greg Harris that will direct the Auditor General to conduct a management audit of IDOC's medical and mental health services. An audit of health care in IDOC will provide oversight of one of the most challenging facets of prison administration.

JHA collects data concerning health care in facilities that is furnished by people involved with or impacted by health care provided in IDOC. The information collected enables JHA to advocate for change.

How do incarcerated people access health care when needed?

The first step a person in prison should take when they require medical care is to request assistance by following the process as explained in the orientation manual for their respective facility. There should be medical request slips available to all incarcerated people, and thanks to JHA's advocacy, medical co-pays have been eliminated as of 2020.

If a person does not believe that they are receiving necessary care, they may file a grievance. If the matter is pressing, a person may mark the grievance form as an emergency. After exhausting the grievance process in the facility, a person may appeal the grievance as directed on the grievance form.

Due to privacy regulations, IDOC will not disclose information regarding an incarcerated person's medical condition or care to people outside of prison, unless an Offender Medical Health form has been completed and processed. The incarcerated person must sign this form in advance. This form may be downloaded from www2.illinois.gov and it should be available to incarcerated people upon request.

IDOC is not compelled to notify family and friends if there is a medical emergency. If an incarcerated person is transported to an outside hospital for care, IDOC may restrict access to this person for security reasons.