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## **JHA System-Wide Survey on COVID-19 in IDOC: Initial Results Released**

June 9, 2020

As of June 1<sup>st</sup>, IDOC had reported:

- 221 diagnosed COVID-19 cases among Illinois' incarcerated population (21<sup>st</sup> nationally)
- 13 deaths of incarcerated people due to COVID-19 (8<sup>th</sup> nationally)
- 174 diagnosed cases of COVID-19 among IDOC staff<sup>i</sup>

However, these numbers do not tell the full story because without robust testing inside the prisons, the actual number of people who may have been infected with the virus cannot be known. JHA continues to push for more COVID-19 testing inside our prisons and more publication of data on the health of prisoners and correctional staff. This is important for our incarcerated population as well as for IDOC employees and the communities they come from and live in.

It is critically important that we know and better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the health, safety, and quality of life of people who are incarcerated in Illinois' prisons. In order to get this information, [JHA conducted our first ever system-wide survey](#). We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for this project. To date, we have collected 16,236 surveys from people who are incarcerated in IDOC; this represents an astounding 49% response rate.

Our **INITIAL DATA FINDINGS** show that there are areas where practices have been mixed or require improvements. These results are based on 14,636 surveys completed by people in prison between April 24<sup>th</sup> and May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Our findings include:

### **Hygiene**

- 35% reported they did not have enough soap for regular handwashing, although >97% said they followed good health practices and washed their hands often
- Almost 95% reported covering their mouth or nose when coughing or sneezing but nearly 40% responded others around them did not, which is a particular concern in an environment where social distancing is not always possible

### **Cleaning**

- Only about 16% reported that they received daily cleaning chemicals for their sleeping area
- Only 26% reported that all common areas were cleaned two times a day
- 80% of incarcerated people reported cleaning shared items such as phones after use, but only 38% were sure that others did

### **Seeking healthcare**

- 83% of people reported they would tell IDOC staff if they were sick because of COVID-19. It is vital to the containment of COVID-19 that people seek treatment and are identified as possibly sick as soon as possible to prevent virus spread.
- However, 13% or 1,877 people reported they had sought healthcare because of COVID-19 in the last week and had not received a response.

### **Facility restrictions**

- 46% of respondents reported they had been not allowed to go outside to yard in the prior week
- Nearly 18% reported they had not been able to shower at least 3 times in the prior week
- 44% reported commissary had not been run on the normal schedule

### **Communications**

- 64% had not received at least one free phone call and 58% did not get a free video visit in the last week despite IDOC's saying it would provide everyone in custody two free phone calls and a free video visit.
- Fewer than 9% of people said they had had a functional video visit, while about 14% reported that while they had had a video visit, it had poor functionality

[You can view the results of our survey here](#); data is available in aggregate and by individual facility.

JHA shared these survey results with IDOC administration, and we are in discussions with them on areas in need of and opportunities for improvement. IDOC has indicated it will issue a response to the survey results; when this is available JHA will share this document on our website in order to increase information sharing and promote transparency.

It is critical that we know and understand what IDOC has done and what needs to be done to minimize exposure, reduce contagion and treat those who have been infected. Without this information it is very difficult to hold IDOC accountable for implementation of policies that affect the lives of people in its custody. Furthermore, it is critical that we assess what is happening both systemwide and in individual facilities. Illinois prisons often operate as individual units, thus creating a lack of consistency and uniformity. This is problematic under ordinary circumstances, but more so during times of crisis. There is much more to be learned from the survey responses and thousands of pages of comments we received. JHA continues to review and analyze the data; ***stay tuned for further results, information and insight.***



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<sup>1</sup> Data Sources: IDOC, The Marshall Project