



The John Howard Association independently monitors Illinois correctional facilities, policies and practices, and advances reforms needed to achieve a fair, humane and effective criminal justice system. As a citizen monitoring organization, part of our mission is to be inside the prisons, so we can see for ourselves and hear directly from you to learn about things that people outside of prison don't know.

Outside visitors were restricted from entering IDOC facilities starting March 15th, 2020, due to concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic and the JHA office closed days later. Since that time, JHA staff have been working remotely taking phone calls from your loved ones, reading through the letters we've received, tracking concerns, and using this information in our conversations with IDOC, other advocates, reporters, the public, and your families. We also sent surveys out to 28 prisons across Illinois in April, asking for your opinion about IDOC's response to COVID-19, and to find out how the situation has impacted you personally.

We asked, and you answered. JHA received over 16,000 completed surveys, representing nearly half of the prison population at those 28 facilities. We want to thank you each of you who participated, and let others know that it's not too late to send in any remaining surveys out there. As the surveys came in, we immediately gathered and processed the data from each facility. We've requested survey results be made available in law libraries; in the meantime, your loved ones and anyone outside prisons with internet access can view and print the results from our website at www.thejha.org.

In addition to the survey, we asked you to write comments and to provide details about your answers on the included blank page. JHA staff, interns, and volunteers are deep into the process of reading each of your comments, collecting quotes and identifying trends to better understand the issues and concerns you expressed. Between the privileged mail letters that you've sent and your survey comments, we've learned a lot about the realities and consequences of the policies and practices put into place during this pandemic. Among other things, we hear your concerns around access to cleaning supplies, commissary and dietary. We hear your concerns related to communicating with loved ones, medical care and out-of-cell time. We have communicated to IDOC the need to address these problems immediately. Please continue to keep us updated!

Each survey comment and personal letter we receive provides valuable insight, however, as previously posted, we unfortunately do not have the ability or capacity to respond to each personal request. As a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, we are working from our homes, with limited resources and technology, and fewer volunteers than usual. JHA is committed to reading, tracking, and using each letter and survey comment as a critical part of all our advocacy efforts, *but you should not expect a response*. With that in mind, do not send JHA important documents or expect to receive time-sensitive information in return. As a reminder, JHA is not a law firm and does not represent anyone in litigation. We are designed to provide oversight and advocate for reform, so while we can't represent you, hearing about the challenges you experience helps us to fight for a more just system. The more information you share about your conditions of confinement, the better equipped we will be to address these issues with IDOC administrators and Illinois legislators, particularly as the response to, and consequences of this pandemic evolve.

We encourage you to share specifics about your experience by writing to us at the following address:

**JOHN HOWARD ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 10042
CHICAGO, IL 60610-0042**

Note: Write "**PRIVILEGED MAIL**" on the envelope and seal the letter, if you want the letter to be confidential.

June 2020