
**JHA COVID-19 Prison
Survey Comment
Report**



Perceptions and Experiences from People inside Prison during the Pandemic

Section: Special Populations

Overview

JHA's COVID-19 Prison Survey Comment Report presents information from comments shared in response to [JHA's COVID-19 survey](#), contextualized with survey data and other information. This survey was responded to by 16,351 people incarcerated in IDOC in late April and early May 2020.

This section of the report summarizes people's comments on special populations. This is one of 12 sections reflecting the comments JHA received from people in prisons; the report's Executive Summary and all other sections can be found on our website www.thejha.org.



Special Populations

People's experiences during COVID-19 were impacted by many different things, including by whether or not they were housed in special statuses. While it was not always possible to tell where people were housed in facilities or what their housing status was in survey responses, some people in prisons particularly commented on their difficulties based on being in Reception & Classification Centers or Segregation status, and some seemed more anxious, isolated, and poorly supplied. Additionally, people's experiences in Adult Transition Centers (ATCs), or work release, were unique from other prison settings and are discussed herein.

RECEPTION & CLASSIFICATION CENTERS (R&Cs)

This has been one of the most horrible experiences of my life. I've been here for 50 days with the most unknowns of my life. I ask questions and get no straight up reply or no reply at all. I've been here since [March]. And we didn't clean our cells until [April]. And they didn't clean it when I moved in. I'm here on a 1yr @ 50% bit, ... more than likely gonna parole from X-House R&C. I can't see my family, kids, or anything I was expected to be doing on this time of confinement. I'm pretty much doing a seg bit. – Graham R&C

JHA had particular concerns regarding people in R&Cs during the pandemic, which are located at Stateville, Graham, Menard, and Logan. JHA did not survey the Stateville Northern Reception and Classification Center (NRC) because based on past experience, JHA staff was concerned that people there may not even have adequate access to writing utensils. However, JHA has received other contacts from people at NRC.

Some prisoners got to a prison prior to mid-March and were then stuck in restricted transitory status for months and locked down no matter what their security level or risk; these included people in reception and classification status, as well as people on writs to other facilities. There have been a significant number of issues and serious concerns at facilities with R&Cs, including hunger strikes, limited out-of-cell time, lack of phone approvals, other factors limiting

communication with the outside world, inability to shop, lack of access to other privileges, property, etc. While these experiences are unfortunately typical at R&Cs the pandemic extended stays in such status were atypical for most.

It was unclear what privilege expectations were for these populations and administrators did not respond to JHA's repeated requests for additional information about privileges. It remained unclear whether people in R&Cs had improved access to out-of-cell time, phones, showers, commissary, televisions, memos and other communications, write-outs, video visits, etc.

JHA received several comments from people in the female R&C at Logan, which was an area also affected by a power outage as discussed in the Physical Plant section of this report. Women reported infrequent showers, upwards of 14 days prior to being permitted to shower. Some reported that they were not provided with orientation or lacked access to COVID-19 information. People also reported long waits to be able to use the phone.

I haven't been allowed to use the phone at all and I've been here since 3/13. Phone list still not approved and it's 4/24 and given numerous request slips. Try to speak to staff and they walk away. – Logan R&C

Women reported laundry was once a week and they could not buy clothing.

They won't let those of us that are still in the X-house buy any clothing, so we wear the same pajamas or the same yellow shirt and pants all week. We can only launder either the pajamas or the yellows as we only have 1 set of each (no laundry soap). – Logan R&C

Other women discussed not having access to hygiene items and lack of commissary opportunity and funds may have been contributing issues.

The main issue I had was toilet paper and pads. I am in intake and have been for about 45 days or more. But our wing never had either of those items and when I asked a Lt. his answer was to not go to prison. When we are on periods I feel that it's important to have those items on hand seeing as it is a female prison and if we need to buy them, then they need inform us. I went 4 days on my period without toilet paper or pads asking every CO, every shift and most replies were use a washcloth. – Logan R&C

Logan administrators responded that phone lists are submitted to vendor Securus upon receipt and Securus is responsible for adding or deleting all telephone numbers; that a laundry schedule is in place; that the lack of clothing was brought to their attention, yellow jumpsuits were exchanged, clothing was distributed and women were allowed to purchase clothing from commissary; that toilet paper is distributed every Friday and pads on Saturday, and additional toilet paper or pads are supplied upon request, and both toilet paper and pads are available for purchase on our commissary.

Women also wrote regarding lack of cleaning supplies, lack of out-of-cell time, and staff non-responsiveness. Similarly, people at male R&Cs wrote about limited out-of-cell time, lack of access to communications and showers, lack of information, and general feelings of neglect and isolation during the pandemic.

I wasn't showered for 8 days. – Graham R&C

I feel we should get more than 2 twenty-minute phone calls a month that we as inmates pay for. I'd love to be able to know how my family has been doing more than twice a month. – Graham R&C

Please help us get more than 2 phone calls a month and be able to purchase food on commissary in the X-house. – Graham R&C

In X-house receiving (Graham) we received an initial soap upon arrival. That only last about a week or so. After that we haven't received soap until this week. Not enough to wash hands and shower with. People without money were only rinsing off on rare occasion of showers. – Graham R&C

We have not had our scheduled yards one time since I've arrived here! For literally 35 days straight we had no yards whatsoever. Now the last 3 weeks we have been given 1 yard for only 1 hour. – Graham R&C

People pointed out that they were not provided with orientation manuals, or certain clothing or linens, and other needed items on arrival. Many commented on the fact that in R&Cs they did not have electronics or access to commissary that they would have in general population (additional comments from R&Cs are in the Commissary section of this report). People on writs also wrote about being without access to funds and property. R&Cs are not intended to be long-term housing and have harsh, segregation-like conditions. JHA again calls on IDOC to plan for greater privileges and more frequent reviews within these settings as many factors may adversely affect people's length of stay.



SEGREGATION

[Staff] told me that if I want a clean cell, get out of seg. – Western (segregation)

I'm currently in segregation. We only get 2 t-shirts, 2 boxers, and 2 pairs of socks, and we only get our clothes washed once a week... I feel like we need more laundry services for us in segregation. – Lincoln (segregation)

No visits, no emails, no phone, very little soap and disinfectants, no yard is all punishment. They are randomly picking seg inmates to switch the phones off on. 1/3 of us on my gallery cannot call while the other 2/3 seg inmates can. – Menard (segregation)

Saturday mornings is the only time we have yard and they 'conveniently' do phones at the same time so we have to choose. – Pinckneyville (segregation)

They said we 'all grade offenders' will be able to make a phone call but to no avail. What's the difference from having C-grade in population or in segregation?" – Illinois River (segregation)

No TV, going crazy. – East Moline (segregation)

JHA is pleased that IDOC is currently updating its policy to improve their segregation practices to conform with national guidance, as [JHA has long recommended](#). However, during COVID-19 people in segregation continued to report various issues in addition to those experienced by people in general population. There were several reports that those in segregation did not receive any information about COVID-19 and people in segregation reported not being able to clean cells at several facilities.

Although certain segregation restrictions were supposed to be waived during the pandemic, for example permitting more audio-visual privileges to be restored and allowing for phone calls and video visits, many people in segregation reported this did not occur. Others reported other issues prevented them from having these benefits; for example, at Menard people in segregation reported they were not allowed to purchase phone minutes on commissary. Several people commented that they could not receive video visits in segregation, although IDOC represented this was to be available for everyone in lieu of in-person visitation being restricted. However, a few people commented that they were thankful for the waivers.

The only thing good that has come from the administration since COVID-19 has been happening is everybody in seg is getting one phone call (collect) a week, even on C-grade! This should be permanent! I haven't used the phone in years cause I been in Pontiac seg for years and I still have years left to be in seg, so using the phone helps!
– Pontiac (segregation)

JHA agrees that disciplinary restrictions on communications should be permanently reconsidered and that IDOC must reconsider lengthy disciplinary terms.

Some people in segregation reported they were not placed in clean cells or provided with necessary items, including bedding, when they were moved to segregation. At Menard there was a report that someone was moved into a cell while there was still pepper spray remnants from the prior person being extracted. People in segregation reported various property issues, such as not having access to pens or hygiene items, or not having toothpaste for three weeks. People in segregation at various facilities also reported physical plant issues, such as leaks and lack of hot water.

They are putting 2 people to a cell in seg and not checking people for the COVID-19 before they bring them in seg, nor are they checking while they're in seg. – Vandalia (segregation)

Some people commented that movement on and off of segregation units seemed to continue despite COVID-19 concerns and need to cohort people to reduce transmission. However, other people reported that because housing moves were limited due to COVID-19 they were also not able to return to general population.

My seg out date came and went and I am still being held in seg. I wouldn't mind but they are still treating me like I am a seg inmate. I should at least be allowed population privileges like given my property, commissary, etc. – Pontiac (segregation)

There were some reports of non-uniform undocumented practices in segregation not reflected in policy, e.g. at Menard someone wrote, “As for yard, they started a new policy called ‘pink tag’ which says we have to be in seg 30 days before we can go to yard.” JHA has received no response to our follow up question about this reported practice, which is not in accordance with [IDOC's](#)

[Recreation for Persons in Segregation Status policy](#) generally requiring people in segregation receive eight hours of out-of-cell time a week distributed over at least two days. Additionally at Menard, some people reported that showers were not offered until the person had been in segregation for a week and someone in C grade reported only being able to shower 2 times a week, while current [IDOC segregation policy](#) calls for people to be allowed to shower at least 3 times a week. JHA again encourages review for uniform and humane practices.



ADULT TRANSITION CENTERS (ATCs)

I wish there was better communication between IDOC to Crossroads to inmates. The facility is now half full with one man per room since last week. I understand the lockdown in Chicago may extend to the end of May. What are the plans for the inmates at the facility now? Especially with inmates with under a year till parole?

–Crossroads

No way to keep distance in dorm rooms, when one gets sick we all do! The Governor should send us all home. It is too much danger here. – Peoria

I would not tell staff about having symptoms of COVID-19 because they threaten to send you back to prison. – North Lawndale

No one wants to say if they are sick because they are sending us back to prison.
– Fox Valley

While we would expect work release centers to have more liberal pandemic practices, in fact work release seemed from comments to also be particularly difficult places to weather the pandemic. JHA encouraged IDOC to quickly release people from these centers as they had already been evaluated and permitted to work in the community so there is little argument that release would be unacceptably dangerous.

JHA received [115 responses](#) from people incarcerated in IDOC's four work release, or Adult Transition Centers (ATCs), representing about a quarter of the ATC population. ATC survey results were not included in [the cumulative prison survey response tally](#). JHA expected that these surveys would be too distinct, i.e. more positive, than prison responses and experiences. However, that does not seem to have been the case. JHA notes that the ATC population as reflected in IDOC's daily population reports may include residents who were furloughed and not physically present at the facility and the population over the time has also declined at ATCs as people have finished their sentences, so the survey sample from 115 people at ATCs may in fact represent a higher participation rate than 25%. In mid-June Fox Valley administrators updated JHA that there were at that time only 18 residents onsite, while 43 women were on furlough status. As of September 15, 2020, reported population was down to 190 at the ATCs, which again may count people who are no longer physically at facilities.

Practices did not appear standardized across ATCs. Crossroads and North Lawndale ATCs are operated by vendor Safer Foundation (Safer), while Peoria and Fox Valley are operated by IDOC. Fox Valley is the only female work release facility. Further analysis of differences between

facilities could be conducted by comparing responses between ATC facilities from survey tally reports.

ATC subsections below are:

1. Access to Information
2. Hygiene, Cleaning & Social Distancing
3. Movement
4. Shopping & Dietary
5. Communications
6. PPE
7. Medical
8. Early Release

ATC ACCESS TO INFORMATION

No one talks to us about what's going on or answers our questions or grievances and they threaten us with tickets about everything. – Fox Valley

7 staff and 4 inmates had the disease and no one told us, we had to find out via the internet from family and friends. – Fox Valley

The staff has verbally mistreated us along with writing tickets if we speak up for ourselves. They have misinformed us or in most cases had no communication at all.
– North Lawndale

After weeks of the news on TV the IDOC had to start posting bulletins. – North Lawndale

They have not committed to well-informing us of issues arising. Their format has been shut up, lock up, and stay away from us (staff). – North Lawndale

When does Stateville plan on sending inmates to Crossroads? There have been positive corona cases including deaths at Stateville and wouldn't mixing and sending inmates to Crossroads put the current residents and staff at risk? – Crossroads

As in prisons, people at ATCs expressed that they had difficulty getting information and questions answered. Some people wrote that information from their facility or IDOC was inadequate or lagged. Other people commented that their families had difficulty getting information from the facility. The lack of law library access and ability to do research was also raised at ATCs. Fox Valley administrators noted there was a month-long period where nearly half of staff were on COVID-19 related absences and the remaining staff were working double shifts numerous times a week, but that they were making efforts and maintaining continuous communication.

ATC HYGIENE, CLEANING, & SOCIAL DISTANCING

I think the Warden wants to keep the place clean but the young guys don't help very much and they don't care if they pass sickness on to anyone. – Peoria

There isn't any soap in the soap dispensers in the bathrooms; we are not supplied with toilet paper; no sanitizer in the dispensers. – Peoria

No hygiene for the guys with no money until this last week. – North Lawndale

Our laundry is 75 cents to wash and 75 cents for drying. I believe because we are not working they should give us more options where food is cheaper and not charge us for washing our clothes. – North Lawndale

My laundry I couldn't do cause I couldn't get money cause my family live too far away. – North Lawndale

Some staff members make jokes about charging us for state tissue, saying they will start charging us 50 cents a roll. We have to give them an empty roll in order to get toilet paper. – Fox Valley

As at prisons, people at ATCs reported difficulty getting cleaning and hygiene supplies. At ATCs 37% of ATC respondents reported not having enough soap to regularly wash their hands, 45% reported not getting cleaning supplies for their sleeping areas, 28% reported common areas were not cleaned, 43% reported others around them did not practice good hygiene with hand washing, 46% reported others did not clean shared items, and 33% reported not having laundry services. Some people reported they were “*threatened*” with being sent back to prison and “*yelled at*” for expressing a concern about cleaning practices. Several women at Fox Valley expressed concern about having to clean areas that may have been used by people who were COVID-19 positive without proper PPE. 70% of people at ATCs reported that others did not follow good health practices by staying six feet away when possible. Positively, 99% said they could shower at least three times in the prior week. Also, as in prisons, some people commented about the physical plant conditions, including noting mold. JHA again recommends outside health and safety inspections.

Expectations regarding what was supposed to be supplied for hygiene and cleaning again were unclear. IDOC was not publishing information about the Safer facilities' inventories.

Inmates with colds are careless over sneezing, coughing and handling doors or common surfaces like phone handsets, sink faucets, and are spreading contamination carelessly. There's a lot of bumping, jostling, crowding and during breaks they will play cards, watch tv in tight groups. There is no six-foot spacing in routine use, although dining area makes attempt to provide spacing while seated there is crowding leading into dietary area and if unsupervised inmates will move chairs closer together despite warnings from officers on duty. – Peoria

Some people also expressed concerns regarding others' hygiene practices and disregard for or impossibility of social distancing.

It's impossible to practice social distance, because each room is 8 to 10 people. This place is not built to have a lockdown for this long period of time. – North Lawndale

When going to chow we are gathered together closely, when eating we are gathered closely at tables without masks. – North Lawndale

It's extremely hard to practice the 6 feet rule here. We share restrooms, shower areas, we stand in line for meds, food, and the phone. – Fox Valley

Many people wrote about difficulties socially distancing in dorms or commented on the fact that they were not being separated from others, including those who may have COVID-19 exposure. People also reported that they felt that staff should do better at socially distancing from them.

I'm in a room with 10 people whom have jobs outside the building. We are not 3 feet away from each other, let alone 6 feet away. They've closed down the third floor and piled us all on the second floor next to one another. – Peoria

They've allowed one who displayed symptoms even though test was negative, to roam freely throughout the halls... Instead of spacing out the residents as rooms become open they pack us 8-12 or more deep in an area hardly bigger than 12-15.
– Peoria

They knowingly had COVID-19 positive people in the living area with us freely using the toilets etc. without quarantining. – Fox Valley

Fox Valley administrators reported that as population decreased they were able to increase social distancing and that they established a shower and laundry schedule to enforce social distancing, that residents were given the option of eating in their room or eating in the dining room with one resident per table, and that only two residents can use the pay phones at a time on opposite sides of the room.

There were also several comments regarding the difficulty containing contagion in the ATC environment.

I feel like if one inmate here catches COVID-19 then the rest of us will catch it also.
– Peoria

If COVID-19 gets a foothold it will run through this facility in a matter of days. – Peoria

ATC MOVEMENT

They're doing very little to help prevent us catching COVID-19. There's about 100 inmates still here coming and going daily. – Peoria

It seemed that some facilities stopped all or most residents from working while others did not and various levels of quarantine or lockdown for residents were in effect. Fox Valley administrators reported in mid-June that residents who remained at the facility had not been permitted to go to work since March 27, reportedly due to the Agency's COVID-19 mitigation protocol related to community movement, but people at male facilities seemed to still be going to still have some movement.

People coming and going from the facility was a concern for virus spread expressed by some.

One resident went on an administrative furlough during the worst part of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resident was allowed to return to the facility to finish up the time he had remaining to be release. This caused a great concern amongst residents here because we were in the unknown about who this resident had been around or if he had contracted the virus during his time out of the facility, but he was allowed to come amongst residents who had been on full lockdown due to COVID-19.

– North Lawndale

Some people felt the use of furloughs for some people and not others was arbitrary and unfair.

If you live local, you get to go home on permanent furlough, but you have to report back every 3 days. If not local, there is work movement only. Definitely not fair to everybody here. – Peoria

Many people commented on not being allowed outside.

We have not been outside in over a month, but today when we got this survey they are letting us choose between a phone call or fresh air. – Fox Valley

I also haven't been outside for fresh air [in two months] but again I understand the health crisis, just 10-15 minutes would be good. – North Lawndale

No outside fresh air, ventilation is all recycled air thru the whole facility. – North Lawndale

We can't even go out to the parking lot for a matter of minutes to get some fresh air. It's been 31 days now of lockdown to a hallway. – North Lawndale

At ATCs 85% reported not getting the opportunity for yard in the prior week compared to 43.82% in the cumulative prison survey tally. This may reflect the fact that ATCs had early diagnosed cases and may have been under medical quarantine restrictions or people interpreting “yard” literally to not include other outdoor opportunities. Nonetheless, JHA questioned why people would not be able to go outside for fresh air, as several people at ATCs commented was the case. At Crossroads, some noted that 10 people at a time in the gym was newly allowed at the time they completed their survey in late April. Fox Valley administrators responded to concerns that upon the first positive COVID-19 occurrence the facility was placed on no movement status for several weeks due to COVID-19 mitigation protocol and that for health and safety reasons most residents were on quarantine status and had highly limited movement out of their room, but that on May 1 resident fresh air movement resumed and was offered for one hour in the morning and one hour in the afternoon.

ATC SHOPPING & DIETARY

Being an ATC, wish we could have a store run and have some time outside being inside all the time is depressing and used to being at work 12 hours a day and having passes to the store. – Crossroads

We have not been able to shop or get essentials in over a month. We are limited to personal hygiene products (tampons, pads, shampoo, toothpaste, body soap, laundry soap, etc.) – Fox Valley

They don't give you the time during [leaves], or distance, to purchase hygiene, personal care, or any item that would be crucial for sanitation, or health upkeep.
– Peoria

We are supposed to be allowed to go to the store for food and hygiene but have not been to the store in over a month [dates provided indicating more than 6 weeks].

– North Lawndale

Some people reported not having been able to shop for anything in two months and some reported difficulty getting funds.

At ATCs 76% reported commissary had not run on schedule in the prior week, which we interpret to mean some shopping opportunity. People in ATCs mostly work in the community, while a few temporarily work at the facilities for IDOC prior to qualifying for outside work, and do not have access to commissaries but are typically permitted to shop in the community. Experiencing COVID-19 related lockdowns and restrictions meant not having outside access for shopping, and other services, as is normally the case at ATCs for most. This was pointed out as a particular challenge. Some people also commented on the difficulty of purchasing necessary things such as transit passes online given limited movement and things being closed, as no prepaid or credit cards were allowed. Some noted that it was unclear how people at ATCs without funds, family support, and jobs could get needed items, “*which does nothing to relieve the stress of the current situation.*”

It is very hard to get money, they won't let us get cash and if we do get cash it is only forty dollars and by the third day it's all gone on the expensive food and vending machines. – North Lawndale

We are on lockdown, they have drop off times for residents to get food and stuff if they live here in Chicago and surrounding areas but the people who live hours away, you don't get no food or anything, but you do get a hygiene bag. – North Lawndale

Our families are only allowed to bring \$40 a week to us during an economic crisis and people being laid off. – North Lawndale

At Crossroads, people commented that family was allowed to bring food and \$100 to residents every two weeks, but that this went fast because pay phones and vending machines at the facility are expensive. Someone also commented that people had to search for change to be able to use the phone, laundry, or vending machines for food onsite. In response to facility follow-up Fox Valley administrators reported residents had not been allowed to go on shopping trips but that they were provided weekly hygiene kits, including detergent, that most residents have had family or friends drop off or mail items, and that there is a free washer that indigent residents can use upon request.

Some at ATCs reported that meals were meager, or they believed there was “*food rationing.*” As all residents do not typically consume all meals onsite due to being at work in the community it seemed likely that there were some issues. At North Lawndale several people commented that they did not feel they were fed adequately, and they were “*forced*” to buy food from overpriced vending machines to supplement their diets. A few people wrote about going to bed hungry.

We don't have commissary and we get very little food here. – North Lawndale

There is no commissary but there is vending machines that are overcharging us on food. \$1.50 for cup noodles, \$1.25 for a small bag of chips, \$4.00 for a cold little sandwich, \$1.50 pop. – North Lawndale

ATC COMMUNICATIONS

We get a 10 min phone call in daytime shift and a 10 min call on night shift but we pay for them. We don't get visits because of the stay at home order. – Fox Valley

Please help us at North Lawndale ATC. We have been severely mistreated. The staff here has just started giving phone calls once a week. – North Lawndale

At ATCs 73% reported they had not had a free call in the last week and 15% said this did not apply to them. Some people at ATCs commented on the expense of pay phones or their difficulty accessing funds.

The phone call cost \$1 for 3 mins so I never talk to my son or loved ones. I ask for a free call and they tell me no. – North Lawndale

They're not giving us no free one phone call, all they have is pay phone and depending on where we live the pay phone cost 50 cents up to \$2 for 3 minutes. – North Lawndale

Phone call is at an all-time high 50 cents for 3 minutes locally. No one is working jobs anymore but being forced to pay high phone rates to talk to family. – North Lawndale

Some people compared the cost at ATCS to 1 cent per minute now in IDOC prisons. Someone also commented that pay phones fees are assessed for calls even when the call does not connect.

Unlike prisons, it was not clear how ATCs were trying to offer people ways of getting free outside communications when in-person visitation was suspended. It seems staff could have offered regular wellness calls, or even considered allowing personal cell phone use during these circumstances. People at ATCs have been permitted cell phone use while outside facilities but must store them in lockers upon return to facilities. Some women shared that they faced retaliation and threats of restriction of communications for expressing concerns. Fox Valley administrators responded that when they had a higher population, phone time was restricted because of limited pay phone availability and use of social distancing, but that call times were increased as the population lowered, that counselors would provide free calls to residents and women without funds could be issued calling cards.

At ATCs 78% reported they had not had a free video visit in the last week and 21% said this did not apply to them, so with 99% reporting it is clear video visits were not available or considered. ATCs also lack other electronic means of communication now present in prisons (although with vendor GTL services being of mixed availability and functionality), i.e. tablets, email and video visits. In prisons, people's access to these means of communications was increased through credits, yet nothing similar seems to have been done at ATCs. Fox Valley administrators responded to concerns about lack of communication access that although most residents did not have a cell phone, those who did were at that time able to use it during "fresh air time," which started May 1. JHA was disappointed that ATCs have not explored more options to provide people family connections while in-person visitations are suspended.

They don't sell us stamps to send out mail. My family is worried about me. – North Lawndale

At ATCs 17% said they could not send and get mail in the prior week. Some people expressed concerns regarding mail tampering, which where specifics were provided JHA addressed these

issues with facility administrators. Some people reported their mail was slow. Fox Valley administrators stated that starting March 27, due to IDOC's COVID-19 mitigation practices all incoming mail was placed in a room for up to 48 hours for disinfecting prior to being released to the resident for their safety.

ATC PPE

90% of the time the [staff] have N95 masks hanging on their necks. – North Lawndale

Have been given one single use face mask but the rubber band broke the first time I put it on. – Peoria

We were never given masks until 2 weeks ago. – Fox Valley

We are given face masks once a week, told to wear them or we will get a ticket, however not all the staff members wear one. – Fox Valley

Some residents wrote about staff non-compliance with PPE or that they were not provided with PPE. At North Lawndale, people commented that at the time they filled out the survey they had “finally” received masks a week prior. Women at Fox Valley expressed concern about lack of PPE, e.g. gloves for cleaning. Fox Valley administrators reported initially residents were given DIY masks to wear, that about two weeks after staff were directed to wear masks residents were issued surgical masks and about two weeks later, they were issued KN95 masks. They also reported that gowns, gloves, shoe and head coverings are issued as needed and that documentation of distribution and receipt is maintained. Additionally, Fox Valley administrators stressed that it is mandatory that all staff wear masks while on duty and that Shift Supervisors, the Safety Officer, and administrators are responsible for being a role model to staff and as well as assuring that staff adhere to direction. Administrators stated failure to follow COVID mitigation protocol will result in progressive discipline, and that COVID mitigation measures and use of personal protective equipment was discussed with staff on a daily basis.

ATC MEDICAL

At Fox Valley the people who get sick were shipped directly off to Logan CC the next day after showing symptoms. – Fox Valley

It is hard to get a doctor appt. When and if you do get a doctor appt. half the time they won't take you. ... Both before and during this pandemic. – North Lawndale

Going to the hospital or seeing a doctor is increasingly difficult, as staff neglect to have any genuine concern if anyone falls ill, or has any symptoms of sickness, and have an impossible response time to any requests for such a visit if and when the need arises. There is no professional medical insight to handle any concerns that the COVID-19 epidemic has given. – Peoria

Unlike people in prisons, people in ATCs typically get medical treatment in the community and are responsible for their healthcare costs although some can receive government healthcare benefits or health insurance through their employment. However, some medical conditions will require someone to be returned to a prison for treatment. There were some comments regarding

concerns about delays for movement for outside medical treatment during the pandemic and difficulties getting medication refills.

There's no medical staff here at all. They have inmates here taking our temperatures each day for extra cigarette breaks. – Peoria

Other people expressed concerns about not receiving daily temperature checks like in prisons as one of the early IDOC memos suggested would occur.

Because of ATCs being located in Northern and more urban settings and having more community interaction, cases could be expected to be experienced sooner. All ATCs had early staff and prisoner cases.

Some people believed that COVID-19 had already been in the facility even earlier than cases were first reported.

Many inmates throughout the month [April], even in March, experienced flu-like symptoms and have gotten sick, including myself, at that time, no one knew of the severity of the illness and its complications. It would be a good idea if the inmates at Crossroads got tested to see if we carry antibodies. – Crossroads

Again people, including staff, requested more testing for COVID-19 and antibody testing.

COVID-19 testing should be done daily on staff, who are a major risk to facility. – Peoria

5 positive COVID-19 cases – none of the residents have been tested. Out of 5 that did, all were allowed back in facility without further test, including staff.
– North Lawndale

Some people expressed concern about possibly spreading the virus to their families.

Many of the inmates are going home on furloughs and it seems reckless to be sent home without getting tested and putting your family and community at risk.
– Crossroads

At ATCs 14% of survey respondents reported they had sought medical care because of COVID-19 in the prior week and not gotten a response. Concerningly at ATCs 16% said they would not tell IDOC staff if they were sick because of COVID-19 and 17% were unsure if they would, compare to 8.53% and 8.28% in the cumulative prison survey tally. This may reflect people's fear of being returned to prison from ATCs.

Similarly to what was reported in prisons, some people had concerns regarding how medical quarantines, cohorting and determinations of recovery were being handled. As at other facilities where there have been cases, people expressed discomfort about being around others who have "recovered," noting in particular fear of staff who had come back from quarantine. JHA again recommends IDOC provide more information about how they are ensuring safety for this.

They quarantine the same people on the same floor when they come back from hospital. Then release them back to regular floors so they mix people who have the virus. – Crossroads

There have been several confirmed cases in this facility and they say they have had people quarantined in rooms here, but it is impossible to properly quarantine here because we all use the same bathrooms and showers. And when they were on quarantine, they would let them out for 1 hour a night while we went to our rooms. In that hour the quarantined residents would be able to use the phones and vending machines. There is no way this part-time quarantine could ever be effective. – North Lawndale

Fox Valley administrators responded that as soon as COVID-19 symptoms were reported or observed, people were placed on quarantine and staff were not able to return to duty until they were medically cleared, likewise residents who reported or showed symptoms were quarantined. However, as Fox Valley ATC does not have medical staff, a medical unit, or an isolation unit (including negative pressure rooms containing a sink and toilet), residents who tested positive were immediately transferred to Logan where they could receive necessary medical care.

At North Lawndale some people commented on the lack of mental health staff to help at this particularly stressful time. Administrators at Fox Valley stated some mental health support was being continued via phone with providers in the community in addition to IDOC staff available onsite.

ATC EARLY RELEASE

Why aren't we being released? We are low-risk, minimum security. – Fox Valley

I'm at risk for COVID-19. People go home. I'm stuck here. No tickets for more than 3 years. Please help. – Crossroads

There's been 9 staff, 4 inmates all positive. We have an older lady ... with numerous health issues, and nothing has been done to protect her. She should not be punished and sent back because of this virus, which seems to be their answer! – Fox Valley

Older residents with risk factors are at great risk ... The inmates older than 55 ought to be sent out of DOC control when they are non-violent and low risk. – Peoria

Why are the old guys still here? I thought men older than 55 were being sent home or their sentence was shortened to avoid risks. – Peoria

As everywhere else within IDOC, people with low-level offenses, short time, or medical issues that make them at high risk and particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 expressed fears and desire for early release. However, people already at ATCs seem far more likely to be eligible. Some people felt that there was “*favoritism*” in use of furloughs or leaves.

Fox Valley administrators responded that many residents who met criteria were furloughed and the residents who remained did not qualify for furlough due to myriad reasons including extensive criminal history, history of violence, or lack of approvable host site. Some women believed that Fox Valley was not releasing people with disciplinary tickets and were using disciplinary tickets to keep women longer. Fox Valley administrators stated that women had been furloughed who had disciplinary tickets and that “eligibility was determined by pre-set criteria but also on a case by case basis.”

People also wondered if those in work release centers had been left out of advocacy efforts.

Why is there a protest about freeing inmates from the Cook County Jail, IDOC, but not work release centers? How is it that we meet the criteria of being candidate for work release but not to receive our 6 months good time? We've been interacting with society, going to work, going to the store, home on 12-hour pass before this pandemic among citizens. We're the least threat to society, but the least sought after to return back to society (home)... We are the least threat to society if any at all, but being overlooked in the draft to go home, as well as selected few who meet the criteria to reenter society and interact amongst citizens of the state. – North Lawndale

I believe that North Lawndale is off the radar when it comes to the release of inmates. Cook County Jail and some state prisons have released inmates due to COVID-19. North Lawndale ATC being the lowest security level of IDOC should have released all of its residents during this pandemic because this a work release center and the residents are low-level security risk because we interact with society daily commuting to work and going home on passes. All residents here should have been released on furloughs, or house arrest until this COVID-19 pandemic has come under control or subsided. I feel like my life is at risk and I am at risk of contracting COVID-19. – North Lawndale

JHA continues to advocate for people to be released in the interest of public health and safety whenever possible, particularly where beneficial programming is not being provided, and where people face greater harms through ongoing unnecessary incarceration.



This report was written by JHA staff.
Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz
at (312) 291-9555 x205 or jvollen@thejha.org.
Learn more about JHA at our website www.thejha.org.

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