

RESOURCE GUIDE

Why COVID-19 Goes from Jails to Communities



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70 Million is made possible by a grant from the Safety and Justice Challenge at the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.



million

ONE JAIL AT A TIME.

story

NICOLE LEWIS, SENIOR EDITOR OF THE JURISPRUDENCE SECTION AT SLATE MAGAZINE, POSES FOR A PORTRAIT IN BROOKLYN, NEW YORK. PHOTO BY DESIREE RIOS.



[the lack of] HEALTHCARE IN JAILS

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of healthcare in jails was abysmal. Non-private health insurance, like Medicaid and Medicare, is normally stripped from individuals once they are incarcerated. Jails and prisons often lack contraceptive devices. In some facilities, each meal costs less than \$2, and some even skip serving certain meals, like lunch, altogether. Those with disabilities are disproportionately punished. Medical care in jails and prisons are widely understaffed.

This is especially concerning given that the population in jails and prisons is incredibly vulnerable and in dire need of healthcare. Most incarcerated women have children and are of reproductive age, and approximately 75-95% of incarcerated women have experienced physical or sexual abuse. Additionally, "in every county in the United States with both a county jail and a county psychiatric facility, more seriously mentally ill individuals are incarcerated than hospitalized," with 1 in 4 incarcerated people report experiencing "severe psychological distress" and 37% a diagnosed mental illness. According to the Prison Policy Initiative: "*Astonishingly, most prisons charge incarcerated people a co-pay for doctor visits. The downstream effects — for both incarcerated people and the general public — have been disastrous: Mass incarceration has shortened the overall U.S. life expectancy by 5 years.*"

Most of those imprisoned are low-income and face similar barriers outside of jail, something that has been magnified during the COVID-19 pandemic. 39 of 50 of the largest COVID-19 outbreaks in the U.S. have happened in prison due to incarcerated individuals living in close quarters and with limited access to hygiene products like hand sanitizers and masks. Meanwhile, on the outside, Black, Latino, and Indigenous people and low-income workers are most at risk for infection and death from COVID-19.

Review Questions

In what ways are two of biggest challenges facing the U.S. in 2020/1, police brutality and killing of BIPOC and the pandemic, interrelated?

In what ways are communities inside and outside bars connected?

What can we learn from previous epidemics, such as HIV/AIDS, when it comes to spread between community and jails/prisons?

People Doing the Work...

"The fact is that jails and prisons are constantly intertwined with our communities. If we have cases in our communities, they will appear in jails and prisons [...] We need to wake up policymakers across the U.S.—this is not just about one sheriff, about one county." - ERIC REINHART

CHIP South Florida - "The Community Hotline for Incarcerated People is an abolitionist group that provides support, resources, and advocacy for people in South Florida jails."

Nation Inside - "Launched by artists and formerly incarcerated people and their families, Nation Inside is committed to building a powerful network of grassroots groups dedicated to ending mass incarceration."

Caging Covid Campaign - "#CagingCOVID is a campaign to shine a light on mass incarceration in a time of a public health crisis, and apply pressure to use parole, clemency and decarceration at local and federal levels to stop the spread of the virus behind bars."

Justice LA - "We work to reduce the footprint of incarceration by stopping jail expansion and reclaiming, reimagining and reinvesting dollars away from incarceration and into community-based systems of care. Since our launch, we have successfully stopped LA County's \$3.5 billion jail expansion plan and lead the development of LA County's Alternatives to Incarceration Workgroup report." Find their COVID response, petition, and demands [here](#).

The Covid Prison Project "The site will offer analysis and resources to better understand how coronavirus is impacting people who are incarcerated."

Transitions Clinic Network "The Transitions Clinic Network (TCN) is a national network of medical homes for individuals with chronic health conditions recently released from incarceration."



Round-Table Resources

Counting the Days: A Story of Prolonged Detention During COVID-19 from the UCLA School of Law Bail Practicum

Carceral-community epidemiology, structural racism, and COVID-19 disparities by Eric Reinhart and Daniel L. Chen

Association of Jail Decarceration and Anticontagion Policies With COVID-19 Case Growth Rates in US Counties by Eric Reinhart and Daniel L. Chen

HOW WE SURVIVED COVID-19 IN PRISON by Nicole Lewis



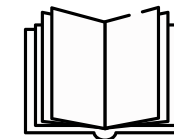
ERIC REINHART AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE COOK COUNTY JAIL IN CHICAGO, IL. PHOTO BY LOREN TONEY.

Keep learning...



ALICIA VIRANI, THE GILBERT FOUNDATION DIRECTOR OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE PROGRAM AT UCLA SCHOOL OF LAW, POSES FOR A PORTRAIT IN BRENTWOOD, CALIFORNIA. PHOTO BY COURTNEY COLES.

Reading



[Use this Data to Hold Your Local Jail Accountable During the Pandemic](#)

[Association of Jail Decarceration and Anticontagion Policies With COVID-19 Case Growth Rates in US Counties](#) by Eric Reinhart and Daniel L. Chen

[High incarceration rates fuel COVID-19 spread and undermine U.S. public safety](#) by Kristin Samuelson

[*The Protest Psychosis: How Schizophrenia Became a Black Disease*](#) by Jonathan M. Metzl.

[Medicaid's Evolving Role in Advancing the Health of People Involved in the Justice System](#) by Natasha Camhi, Dan Mistak, and Vikki Wachino

[Rikers chief medical officer: Jail needs 'outside help'](#) by Gloria Pazmino

[Reducing Jail and Prison Populations During the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) by Brennan Center for Justice

Podcasts



[Tearing Down the Walls - CHIP Podcast](#) by COVID-19 Hotline for Incarcerated People

[Uncuffed](#) from KALW

[Ear Hustle](#) from San Quentin Prison

70 Million Team

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