



JHA 2022 Annual Report

& 2023 Preview

2022 in Review: Our Impact

Prison Monitoring & Advocacy¹



¹ Facilities visited included both of the IDOC female prisons (Logan and Decatur), all five Illinois Youth Centers (IYC) run by the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) (Harrisburg, St. Charles, Pere Marquette, Warrenville, and Chicago) and the following IDOC men's facilities: Centralia, Stateville, the Northern Classification & Reception Center, Pontiac, Lawrence, East Moline, Illinois River, Joliet Inpatient Treatment Center, Murphysboro Life Skills Reentry Center, and Dixon.

- **The pandemic continued to impact people inside and our work.** Prison visits were halted at the end of 2021 due to the Omicron variant of COVID-19, and were not able to resume in full until the beginning of April 2022. JHA visits were rescheduled due to COVID-19 cases, exposure, and precautions throughout 2022. People in prison continued to report COVID concerns and excessively isolating quarantine practices as the world normalized. Monitoring policies and practices around protecting people in prison from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases remains a priority for JHA both in terms of emergent impact and to better prepare for and protect people during future health crises.

IDOC Population and COVID-19 Data

On March 15, 2020, the population of IDOC was 37,648. At the end of 2022, the population was approximately 29,500.

Cases and Testing

On January 24, 2023, IDOC reported that 73 staff and 185 individuals in custody were positive for COVID-19. Since the start of the pandemic, there have been 13,420 staff and 29,905 people in custody reported positive. During this time, IDOC conducted 518,198 COVID tests of staff and 1,424,025 tests of people in custody.

Vaccination Rates

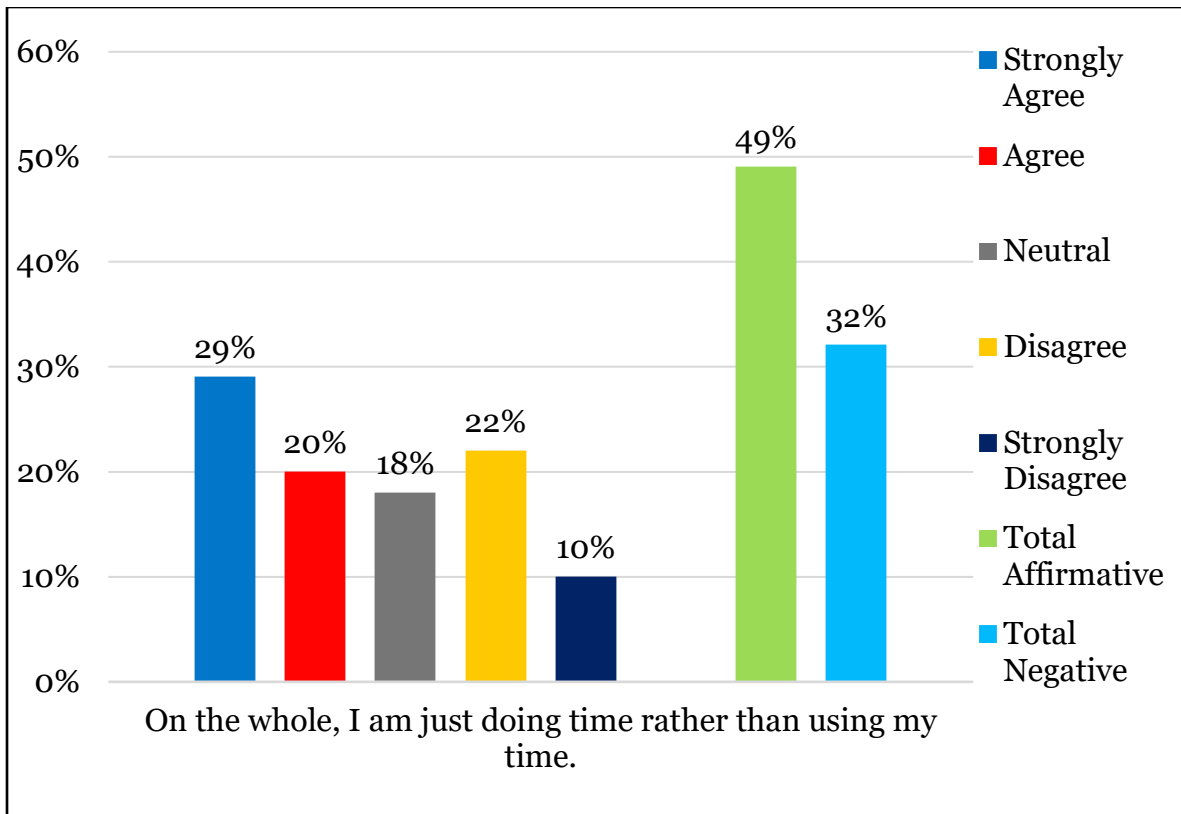
As of October 14, 2022, IDOC reported 79% of staff (9,915) and 69% of people incarcerated (20,531) were vaccinated. They also reported 3,589 staff and 11,405 individuals in custody had booster vaccinations. At that time, only 558 individuals in custody were reported to have had second boosters. The staff vaccination mandate went into effect on January 31, 2022 and was suspended on January 12, 2023.

- **JHA issued 19 influential reports, statements, updates, and testimonies, including prison monitoring reports for [Centralia](#), [IYC Warrenville](#), [Murphysboro LSRC](#) and [Menard](#).**

Other reports from 2022 visits and monitoring work are expected in 2023, including a comprehensive report on our visits to the five juvenile facilities.

- **Collaborations with our partners** [Correctional Association of New York](#) and [Pennsylvania Prison Society](#) continued as we conducted multi-day joint visits to each of Sing Sing Correctional Facility in NY, SCI Coal Township in PA, and Stateville Correctional Center in Illinois. This type of comparative and collaborative work allows us to observe prisons in other states and to jointly develop best practice monitoring techniques and universal oversight metrics to move the field of prison oversight forward both locally and nationally.
- We also jointly launched **an evidence-based survey for incarcerated people called “[Measuring the Quality of Prison Life](#)” (MQPL)**, which is adapted from a best practice survey developed at the Prison Research Centre at Cambridge University in England, which is used throughout Europe as a tool to collect information on the experiences and perceptions of people who live and work in prisons in several different domains related to people’s health, wellbeing, feelings of connection and safety, to name of few of the areas. JHA has fielded it in 13 IDOC facilities to date, receiving more than 3,800 responses, representing approximately 31% of the population of the prisons surveyed. JHA plans to use the survey systemwide in IDOC’s remaining prisons this year. Once completed the survey data and comments will allow JHA to gather and share deeper understandings and analysis of prison experiences. Our partners in NY and PA are also using the modified MQPL, which will enable us to compare and contrast results within the USA. JHA also piloted the corollary quality of life survey for staff. *(Chart on next page shows a sample of survey results from East Moline CC; photo to the right shows unopened surveys at JHA’s office.)*





- JHA continued to read, track, and respond to letters, calls, and emails from incarcerated people, their loved ones, and concerned community members. This information is a vital part

First off, I would like to start off saying thank you deeply from the bottom of my heart. I understand that no changes have been made yet, but the fact that you have given every one a chance to voice their concerns is a true blessing.

of our monitoring work, giving us both qualitative and quantitative information which allows us to spot trends, learn more about issues, and connect with those inside prison. In 2022, we received 1,087 letters and 489 calls/emails from incarcerated people and people on the outside.²

² Quotes shown throughout this document are taken from letters and survey comments written to JHA from people incarcerated in IDOC facilities unless otherwise indicated

- JHA staff members shared the information we receive from people in prisons and observed during our monitoring visits,



through our presence on a variety of **task forces, commissions, working groups, stakeholder convenings, and boards**, including the Mayor’s Re-entry Task Force, Illinois Re-entry Council, Detention and Correctional Facilities Committee of the Disabilities Task Force, National Association of Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE) Jail and Prison Oversight Committee, and [Higher Education in Prison Task Force](#). (Photo: JHA’s Gwyn Troyer (L) participating in a NACOLE 2022 panel entitled “The value of comparative prison oversight across state boundaries”)

Prison conditions & treatment of incarcerated people

- **A key theme we heard regularly during our visits in 2022 were the poor living conditions inside our state’s prisons**, observing for ourselves the decrepit and decaying state of many facilities. In May, JHA issued a [statement calling for the closure of old, unsafe facilities](#). We pointed out that given a shrinking population, statewide staffing vacancies in IDOC, old and decrepit prisons or living units that are not fit for human habitation, and lack of resources for programming and treatment, both short and long-term plans for system reorganization and change must be made and shared publicly.
- **Understaffing throughout IDOC continues to be a huge problem**, negatively impacting almost every aspect of life inside the adult prisons – JHA is and will continue to stay focused on this issue.
- We continued to **push for IDOC to address and resolve ongoing commissary issues** – since fall of 2021, IDOC has been dealing with major commissary shortages impacting the ability of incarcerated people to purchase needed items such as personal hygiene and cleaning supplies, food, bottled water and materials for write outs from commissary. People in prison rely on commissary for items that are critical to meeting their basic human needs. We issued an [update on commissary in February 2022](#), and fielded an online survey to gather information on this issue, using the information to inform our advocacy efforts ([results published July 2022](#)).

been in big muddy etc, since 2000 or so
 The living environment is unfit. We went
 month's with out having the things we
 need such as toothpaste, underwear, socks
 short's, laundry soap. Commissary is
 always out of everything. They only sell
 1 kind of laundry soap which is a 1\$ a
 box some people only receive \$13 a month.
 T.D.A.C gives a bottle of water daily

- As the commissary crisis persists, **JHA has continued to call for IDOC to provide necessary items to incarcerated people and provide further clarity on contract issues and expected changes.** We were pleased that IDOC issued a December 2021 memo titled “Core Hygiene Items and Common Necessities” which detailed items such as soap and toilet paper that are supposed to be provided to everyone in all prisons upon intake and on a periodic basis at no cost, as well as other items that are supposed to be provided upon request. Throughout 2022 we have monitored implementation of practices consistent with this memo and raised with IDOC where there have been deficits of reported supply items, as well as where practices must be improved upon going forward.
- Of particular note is that **incarcerated people have been receiving some free write-outs** (postage paid envelopes), which JHA has advocated for over the past several years due to the great need for them expressed to us by people in prison. JHA was shown the materials at one facility and excitingly, we have received some letters that make use of the free write-out supplies.

- JHA called renewed attention to **water quality and sanitation system issues affecting multiple prisons,** repeating and

they have a notice to visitors in the
 visiting room telling pregnant women
 not to drink the water here and none
 of the correctional staff drink the
 water here and when we ask why
 we get (bullcrap) responses.
 How are we to better ourselves?

strengthening the call for routine health and environmental inspections inside prisons. In June, [we collaborated with a group of advocates to request](#) that the Capital Development Board include in its review process of IDOC facilities which was underway an in-depth,

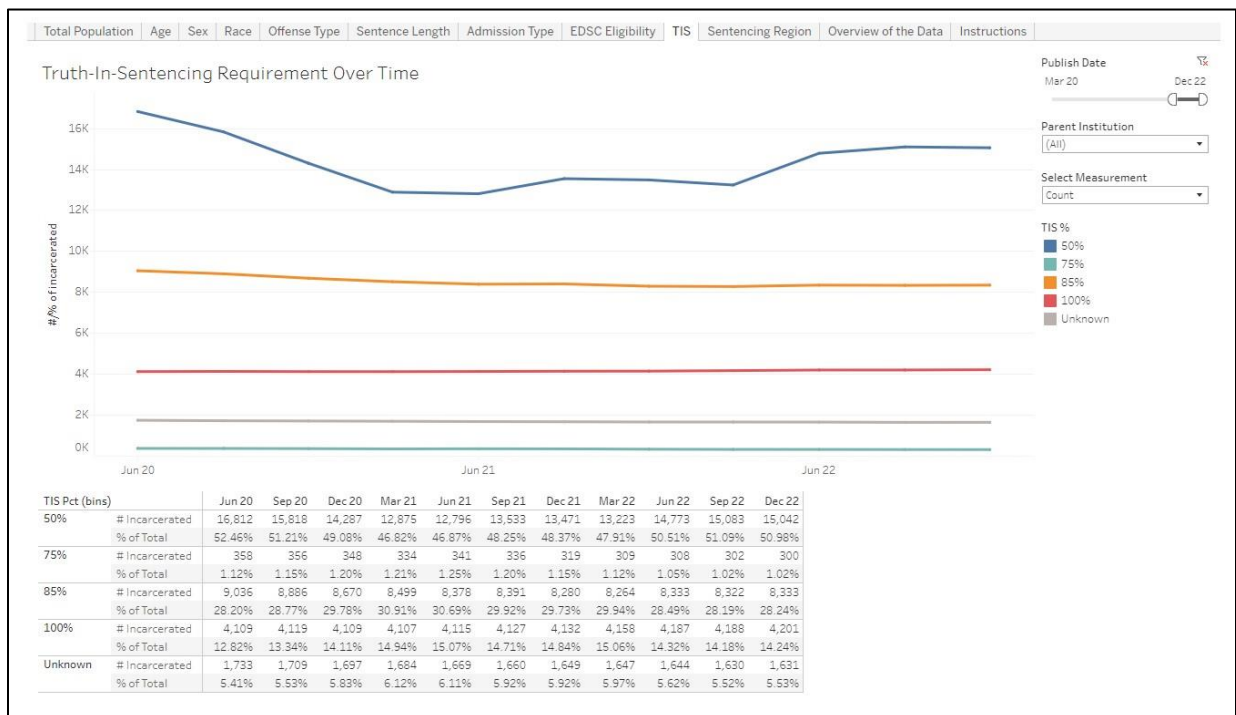
system-wide analysis of the drinking water and sanitary sewer systems in Illinois prisons and include needed, comprehensive, and lasting fixes. We await publication of this contracted-for systemwide physical plant review report, which will help guide our advocacy work in 2023. We also joined these advocates to issue [a joint statement on water concerns in November](#) following yet another prison water emergency, this time at Stateville.

- **We persisted in calling out the need to address the failures of the IDOC grievance system.** Little has been done to further the efforts IDOC started a few years ago to assess and improve the grievance system, leaving people in Illinois prisons with little recourse for having issues resolved or addressed and removing even the pretense of any procedural justice for people who are incarcerated.
- We regularly **highlighted the need for legal assistance and information services** for people in prison in Illinois in our conversations with government leaders and stakeholders. This is an issue we are keenly aware of due to our communications with people in prison who share with us their inability to access needed information.
- **We continued to push for improved and expanded communication- opportunities for people prisons** – both access to and quality of – including pushing for tablets to be universally available along with improved Wi-Fi capabilities inside facilities. We will continue to urge IDOC to end disciplinary communications restrictions, and will be looking into how we can get no-cost phone calls for people in prison in Illinois.
- JHA provided testimony at the appropriations hearing for [IDJJ and IDOC, in order to better shine a light on Departmental uses of resources](#), including providing recommendations to strategically utilize funds to improve conditions, treatment, and outcomes for people in state custody.

“When the law library is closed, we have no other means by which to make photocopies or have documents notarized. For at least the past 18 months, the law library has been open and accessible for an average of 2.5 days a week with one of those days reserved for notaries only.”

Transparency and Accountability

- Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA):** JHA led the effort to bring Illinois into compliance with the federal DCRA; knowing more about deaths that occur in criminal justice agency custody is critical to identifying preventable deaths, abuse, and neglect and addressing these problems. Although passed into law in July 2021, tracking and reporting mechanisms took time to develop. We were thrilled that in October, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority released their new [DCRA reporting tool](#). JHA will continue to monitor compliance with reporting requirements and obligations by criminal justice agencies that hold people in custody.
- JHA continues to support federal legislation that will create **mandated oversight of the federal Bureau of Prisons**, as well as efforts to establish additional oversight of carceral spaces more locally.
- We launched a new resource to allow people to better understand and analyze Illinois' prison population: [Data Visualization Tools for IDOC Population Public Datasets \(2005 – 2022\)](#). This tool is designed to allow people to accurately analyze the prison population by different features and characteristics, to make comparisons by facility, and to look at changes over time, on their own. *(Chart below shows Truth-In-Sentencing Requirement Over Time)*



Juvenile Justice

- **Increasing oversight of Illinois' juvenile detention facilities:** JHA is leading the charge to expand the jurisdiction of the Office of the Independent Juvenile Ombudsman (OIJO) in order to give youth in county custody access to the protections provided by this office. While there are roughly 120 youth in state custody, on any given day in Illinois there are anywhere from 400-500 youth in county-run juvenile detention centers, many without access to trusted adults – and these youth need safeguarding. Oversight is critical to both protecting people in custody and increasing transparency so the public is aware of the realities of incarceration.
 - [Read our December statement on this topic here.](#)
 - Led by JHA, HB5273 (Gonzalez Jr.) / SB3648 (Villa) passed the House, but did not make it out of the Senate during the 2022 legislative session. These dedicated legislators have re-introduced this legislation; JHA will be fighting alongside them to get this bill passed and signed into law. Both HB2762 and SB2197 passed out of committee and are moving forward.
- JHA continued to collaborate with stakeholders **to close the five remaining Illinois Youth Centers and transform Illinois' juvenile justice system** to focus on treatment and rehabilitation utilizing community-based supports and interventions, rather than incarceration. Related, we will repeat our call where appropriate to repurpose juvenile facilities for specific adult populations in order to improve the care they receive and conditions they live in.

Supporting Reentry

- **Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR) reforms:** 2021's SAFE-T Act also included a second initiative led by JHA, which were first steps towards modernizing the statute governing post-release supervision by shortening MSR terms in order to reduce the likelihood of unnecessary and detrimental reincarceration. Subsequently, further modifications were included in 2022's fall veto session. JHA is currently seeking guidance on how the law as enacted will be interpreted and implemented, and will share information as we receive it. We will also continue to push for further modernization of MSR to improve outcomes and to better allocate resources.

Office changes and updates

- **We onboarded three new staff members:**
 - Nick Rohm, Prison Policy Manager
 - Chris Garcia, Prison Communications Manager
 - Victoria Rose, Prison Communications Fellow



- We finalized our **2022-2026 Organizational Strategic Plan**, which outlines our key objectives for the next four years in the area of programming, infrastructure, leadership, and external relations.
- We began the process of revising our **Mission** and creating both a **Vision** statement and a set of **Guiding Principles** to more accurately capture who we are and how we work; we look forward to sharing these publicly this year.
- Because of the gracious support of one of our funders, JHA was able to participate in our first staff **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion training sessions** led by the group [Justice Informed](#). We have continued to create space for our staff to discuss DEI and identify ways we can ensure it is embedded in our work and culture.

JUSTICE **INFORMED**

2022 in Review: JHA in the News

In 2022 JHA continued to be a leading source of information on Illinois prisons and system change for the press. We are grateful for journalists highlighting our reports and statements which helps fuel awareness and reform efforts, leading to more system change.



A sample of JHA in the news in 2022:

- [The hiring process for people who investigate abuse in Illinois prisons is mismanaged, the state says](#), WBEZ, 12/27/22
- [As Temperature Drops, Incarcerated People Brace for Dangerously Cold Conditions](#), Truthout, 12/25/22
- [Prison health care is only available if you can afford it](#), PRISM, 10/31/22
- [Records: Lying Officers Unpunished in 2018 Inmate Death](#), U.S. News & World Report, 10/30/22
- [Groups call for water infrastructure testing in Illinois prisons](#), WSIU Public Broadcasting, 7/18/22
- [Advocacy groups celebrate reform: new law gives incarcerated people access to IDOC files](#), Illinois Times, 7/7/22
- [The Landscape of Recent State and County Correctional Oversight Efforts, Brennan Center for Justice](#), 3/15/22
- [Low vaccination rates among IDOC staff having trickle-down effect, activists say](#), ABC, 2/15/22
- [How the Lack of Items Is Affecting Incarcerated People in Illinois](#), WTTW, 1/18/22

[Visit our website](#) for more press featuring JHA.

2022 in Review: Annual Event

We were thrilled to be able to return to hosting our annual event in-person after a two-year hiatus; a virtual viewing option was also offered. [\(If you missed it, you can watch it on our website.\)](#) Our event successfully raised more than \$150,000 for our prison monitoring and advocacy work. Event highlights included:

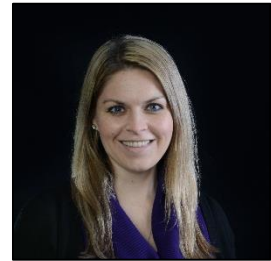


- Keynote speaker [Keri Blakinger](#), The Marshall Project’s first formerly incarcerated journalist. Keri was joined in conversation by **WTTW’s Brandeis Friedman**, discussing prison reform and Keri’s new memoir “Corrections in Ink.”
- Personal stories of JHA Board Members **Renaldo Hudson** and **Alderman Walter Burnett, Jr.**
- Livestreaming of the event at IDOC’s Logan and Decatur’s Correctional Centers for women
- Donation of copies of Keri’s memoir to IDOC’s three female facilities Logan, Decatur and Fox Valley Adult Transitional Center



We were also pleased to recognize the following individuals at this year's event for their commitment to JHA and criminal justice reform; be sure to watch their acceptance videos using the links below:

- **Volunteer of the Year:** [Caitlin Van Ort, Data Scientist, Guerrilla Games](#)
- **Excellence in Oversight:** [Joanna Carns, Risk Management Officer, Office of Independent Investigations](#)
- **Changemaker of the Year:** [Orlando Mayorga, JEO Initiative/McCormick Reentry Policy Coordinator at Office of the Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton](#)
- **Partnership Award:** [Patrick Griffin, Deputy Director Policy & Communications, Center for Criminal Justice at Loyola University Chicago](#)



Thank you to all of our generous event sponsors:

- **Platinum:** Bluhm Family Foundation; Project 1-11; Regenia Stein; Paul & Sarah Jane Titterton/GATX Corporation
- **Gold:** Anonymous; Ariel Investments; Exelon; Terry & Annette Faulk; John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation; Brian Massengill/Mayer Brown; Kevin McCall/Jenner & Block; Jennifer Steans; Patricia Unsinn
- **Silver:** ASU+GSV Summit and Pearlmark; Clune Construction; John & Bozena McLees; Deb & Rens Sherer; Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP; Dick Sullivan; T5 Data Centers; Susan Warso; Wintrust
- **Bronze:** Jane Addams College of Social Work; The Chicago Community Trust; Arthur Don & Arlene Don; Craig & Rebeca Huffman; Jawanza & Preeya Hughes; Rebecca Janowitz; Levenfeld Pearlstein, LLC; Loyola University Center for Criminal Justice; SAFER Foundation; Winston & Strawn LLP; Joseph Vosicky, Jr.

2022 in Review: Additional Events



“Jarrett Adams: From Defendant to Defender”: This virtual event featured Attorney Jarrett Adams (left), who was convicted at age seventeen of a crime he did not commit and sentenced to twenty-eight years in a maximum-security prison. After serving nearly ten years and filing multiple appeals, he was exonerated with the assistance of the Wisconsin Innocence Project. Adams used the injustice he endured as inspiration to become an advocate for the underserved. Jarrett was joined in conversation by Cook County Public Defender Sharone Mitchell, Jr. (right); they discussed prison reform and Jarrett’s story as told in his memoir “Redeeming Justice - From Defendant to Defender, My Fight for Equity on Both Sides of a Broken System”. ([Watch event here.](#))

JHA’s Annual Toast to Justice – hosted by our Young Professionals Board –featured a virtual panel delving into programs that introduce visual arts practice to incarcerated people across Illinois. We thank Damon Locks and Pablo Mendoza from Prison + Neighborhood Art Project and Laurie Jo Reynolds from Photo Requests from Solitary for joining our panel. ([Watch event here.](#))

Thank you to all of our event sponsors, raffle item donors, contributors, and attendees.

2022 Year in Review: Our Supporters

Thank you to everyone who has supported JHA this past year; we could not do our work without your generosity and partnership. Almost 400 donors made at least one gift last year. We would specifically like to recognize the following supporters for their 2022 partnership of the John Howard Association:

- | | |
|---|---|
| Arnold Ventures | John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation |
| Baskes Family Foundation | McGuffin Creative Group |
| The Baskin Family Foundation | Medline |
| Bluhm Family Charitable Foundation | Michael Reese Health Trust |
| James B. & Jane R. Bradford Endowment | Mills Family Charitable Foundation |
| Chicago Community Trust | Project 1-11 |
| City of Chicago | Charles & M.R. Shapiro Foundation |
| Carylon, Julius & Marcie Hemmelstein Foundation | Tawani Foundation |
| The Kadens Family Foundation | University of Chicago |
| Lotta Fund for Aiding Discharged Convicts | Women's Justice Institute |
| | Woods Fund Chicago |



"I am very grateful to JHA for their dedicated work in ensuring that returning citizens are given the services and supports they need when coming home. Having a state ID makes the transition to employment, education, and housing much easier. I am amazed at the steadfast focus by JHA staff on our returning citizens and am immensely appreciative of their support and guidance."

—Maria, one of the first people to exit an IDOC prison with a state ID

Looking forward to 2023

System change takes a village. We deeply appreciate all of our supporters, allies, donors, volunteers, board members, and staff. Our success is based on the efforts of everyone who works for and with JHA, as well as all those who support the organization in countless and myriad ways. We are grateful for our partners in this work, who include stakeholders and advocates working on criminal justice, public health and civil rights issues facing disenfranchised citizens.

Prison monitoring is ongoing, constant work, while advocacy can take years to reap results. Our priorities are thus often the same from year to year, depending on where we are in the process of listening, researching, identifying, exposing, educating, calling for change, proposing solutions, or monitoring implementation. We are committed to recognizing the humanity of the people in our prisons, persistent in pushing for increased transparency and relentless in our pursuit of reform.

In addition to priorities already covered in this document, JHA’s 2023 agenda includes:

- Completing visits to IDOC’s four Adult Transitional Centers and two Life Skills Reentry Centers as a part of a project to better understand and share the current reentry preparation for adults and see what specific improvements are needed
- Calling for increased early release opportunities and mechanisms, including advocating for the reinstatement of a parole system in Illinois.
- Identifying policies not yet posted on IDOC’s website and seeking their publication.
- Monitoring the implementation and compliance of revised standards used to monitor county juvenile detention centers, increasing transparency of such facilities.
- Pushing to update the standards for county-run adult detention centers
- Making ourselves available to educate and guide other jurisdictions working to build independent correctional oversight, including participation in a Prison & Jail Innovation Lab national conference on prison oversight and reform in Texas and membership in NACOLE.
- Increasing the call for prisons to receive routine inspections by state and local health departments –prisons should be held to the same health and safety standards as every other public institution.

- Partnering with Loyola University Chicago's Center for Criminal Justice for a course on Prison Reform, offering students a unique opportunity to learn and apply research skills in order to better understand Illinois' prison system and engage in efforts to improve it.



Thank you again for your commitment to prison reform. We look forward to continuing to work together in 2023 to improve the safety and well-being of everyone in IDOC and IDJJ, to increase transparency, and to effect system change.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Vollen-Katz
Executive Director, JHA



I have reached out to you in order to gain a voice for the voiceless.
Thank you for reading my words.

Q15 Please write any other comments or feedback on this survey below.

Thanks for taking time out to be concerned on how life is here for us. Get us off lock down please!!!

Get involved!

Illinois' criminal justice and prison systems impact the public safety and community health of all Illinois residents. It takes significant resources to fully understand and monitor these complex systems. JHA hopes that you will learn more about Illinois prisons and our justice system, fight for critical reforms, and support our work. There are many ways to do this:

Be the first to receive our reports and statements

Please visit [our website](#) to sign up for our email list.



Invite us to speak to your organization

JHA regularly visits schools, community organizations, religious institutions, and other events large and small to speak on issues related to prison reform.

Use [our online contact form](#) to tell us more about your event.



Join our Young Professionals Board!

This group supports JHA's mission by encouraging young professionals to support criminal justice reform and engaging the support of the community. Apply via [our website](#).



Donate today

We rely upon the generosity of individuals, foundations, and corporations to fund our programming – your support makes our work possible. Please [donate online](#) today.



Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at (312) 291-9183 or jvollen@theiha.org