
Facility Report



**JHA's 2020-2021
Monitoring Report for
IDOC Women's Prisons:
Decatur and Logan**

Table of Contents

Key Observations	5
Recommendations	6
Executive Summary	7
Population	14
COVID-19	16
COVID Numbers and Vaccinations	18
Early Release	20
Other Ongoing COVID Concerns	22
Outside Communication Issues.....	24
Electronic Communication	24
Phones.....	27
Mail.....	29
Visitation	30
TV	32
Funeral Furloughs.....	32
Discipline.....	32
Restrictive Housing	32
Alternative Sanctions.....	33
Protective Custody	34
Concerns relating to Staff.....	35
Lack of Access and Information.....	35
Lack of Professionalism	36
Discrimination & Favoritism.....	38
Fear of Staff Introducing COVID.....	39
Staff Identification.....	40

Room Searches	40
Privacy Issues	41
Healthcare	41
General Healthcare	41
ADA Concerns	44
Dental	45
Mental Health	45
Substance Use Disorder Treatment	47
Transgender People in Custody	49
Productive Activity	49
Outdoor Time	51
Recreation	52
Education	52
Industry & Dog Programs	53
Work Assignments	54
Boot Camp	55
Religious Services	55
Re-entry Preparation	55
Work Release	56
Sentencing Credits	57
Physical Plant Conditions	58
Temperature and Ventilation	59
Bathrooms and Plumbing	60
Windows, Roofing and Ceilings	62
Electrical Issues	63
Pests	64
Provisions	65

Commissary	65
Clothing & Bedding	66
Indigent Packs	67
Donations.....	67
Cleaning and Hygiene	68
Sanitary Supplies	69
Dietary.....	70
Grievances	72
Hunger Strikes.....	73
Pregnancy in Prison.....	74

Key Observations

1. Living conditions at Logan continue to present serious concerns.
2. Lack of productive opportunity within prisons persists despite population reductions.
3. Some COVID restrictions were inconsistent, difficult to understand, and further impeded essential access to outside information, communication, and supports during the pandemic.
4. Information about IDOC operations and policy that impact people in custody directly was not accessible.
5. Uncertainty about critical matters, such as placement and sentencing credit eligibility, created unnecessary anxiety.
6. Programs that had previously been positives at the women's prisons, such as Decatur's Moms & Babies and Family Reunification program and Logan's pregnancy wing, were either not operating at the time of the visit at Decatur or suffering from many of the same problems as the general population at the prison at Logan.
7. While use of disciplinary segregation or "restrictive housing" is down, many women report with COVID lockdowns that they were still unduly and harmfully restricted.

Recommendations

1. Immediately address physical plant issues and continue to release women and consider housing them elsewhere. Timelines and accountability for these undertakings is essential after years without discernable improvement at Logan.
2. Address barriers to increased programmatic opportunity for incarcerated women and ensure women are not penalized for lack of available opportunity.
3. Do not restrict outside communications unnecessarily or for disciplinary reasons, as this is harmful for family relations and reentry preparation
4. Articulate standards for matters affecting incarcerated people's day-to-day lives including but not limited to out-of-cell time, state-issued items, commissary, and communications access.
5. Make public and available to the population information about policy changes and share clearer guidance.
6. Move to a sentence credit system with more certainty.
7. As use of "restrictive housing" is reduced, other practices that result in long periods in isolation or are excessively punitive must be continually reviewed.

Executive Summary

JHA conducted our first post-COVID-19 monitoring visits of the Illinois Department of Corrections' (IDOC's) women's prisons of Decatur on June 17, 2021 and Logan on July 14, 2021. Decatur is a minimum-security prison, while Logan is considered mixed-security and operates the Reception & Classification center (R&C) or intake for women in IDOC, and has housing for women with higher security and mental health need than are housed at Decatur.¹



Decatur Correctional Center

The most resounding positive development over the pandemic is the reduction of population within IDOC. The female population has dropped more than 43% since March 2020. However, given COVID restrictions, ongoing uncertainties, lack of adequate programming, and physical plant conditions, the women have been largely confined within during lockdowns over the pandemic. The women who remained incarcerated in IDOC did not report feeling any benefit from fewer people being there. Women still felt they were overcrowded due to lack of social distancing and demand for resources, including limited programming opportunities, and most did not feel the impact of extra space due to use of other available housing for medical quarantine and isolation, reductions in use of restrictive housing areas, and increased single celling all taking up additional space within the prisons.

As there are only two women's prisons in Illinois and women entering IDOC now come through the Reception and Classification in Logan's X-house, many women at Decatur discussed their

¹ JHA's last monitoring visit to Logan prior to the pandemic was July 23, 2019, and a [monitoring report](#) with IDOC feedback was issued in December 2019. JHA's prior visit to Decatur was on February 28, 2020, about two weeks prior to COVID-19 pandemic visitor restrictions imposed within IDOC, which lasted over a year. Some feedback from the 2020 Decatur visit and the [visit survey results](#) are also discussed herein. Additionally, JHA conducted a system-wide [COVID survey](#) in April 2020 and input from this effort also informs this report.

perceptions of the prisons in contrast to one another. Unsurprisingly, given the multitude of physical plant issues at Logan reiterated herein, some women at Decatur reported it was safer and cleaner than Logan. In February [2020 surveys](#), 61% of the Decatur respondents agreed they felt safe, while 10% disagreed. As JHA did not use surveys during 2021 visits and 2020 COVID surveys did not cover these issues, the most recent comparable Logan survey results were from [2018](#). At that time, 24% of women respondents at Logan agreed they felt safe and 45% did not. Women at Decatur also benefited from having air conditioning (AC) throughout the prison, which is unusual in IDOC prisons. At Logan the only housing areas that have AC, when it functions, are the healthcare unit (HCU) and special mental health units. Additionally at Decatur some women liked that they did not have to walk outside in the elements to go to dietary, etc. as at Logan, but other women reported that the contained layout of the prison felt claustrophobic.



Logan Correctional Center

Several women at Decatur reported that the prison felt like it was higher security than Logan because of it being more controlled, regimented, or structured. Women are carefully screened to be housed at Decatur and movement is very controlled in part due to the typical presence of children on the Moms & Babies and Family Reunification special housing unit, which had not been used for these purposes since the beginning of the pandemic in March 2020 through the time of the June JHA 2021 visit. In contrast to the structure of Decatur, Logan was described by some staff as the opposite, and by some women at Decatur as “*crazy, not structured*” or as a “*madhouse*.” One woman at Decatur opined that at Decatur “*COs do their jobs but inmates run Logan*.”

Women at Logan during the July 2021 JHA visit explained at that prison there were still “*lots of fights*” and violence, drug use, and it was “*chaotic*,” which some attributed to constant changes to administration. In general, smaller prisons with more uniform population and operations, as well as stable leadership, can be expected to run more smoothly. However, some women at Decatur

in June 2021 also shared that they felt Logan’s staff was better and stated that the difference was that staff at Logan “*treat you like a person*,” and said that they would go back “*in a heartbeat*.” Some administrators attributed this sentiment to women having more “*freedoms*” or fewer enforced rules at Logan, despite it being a higher-security prison. In February [2020 Decatur surveys](#), just 32% of the respondents agreed that most Decatur staff treated them with respect while 36% disagreed. In 2018, in the latest comparable [Logan survey results](#), only 15% of respondents at Logan agreed most Logan staff treated them with respect and 65% disagreed. Concerningly, at Decatur in 2021, some women reported that people have acted out or attempted suicide in an effort to be sent back to Logan, as Decatur does not house women with serious disciplinary issues or non-stabilized mental health issues. While transfers between prisons were limited throughout the pandemic, some did occur.²

Some women at Decatur believed that Logan had more programmatic opportunity than was available to them at Decatur. Even pre-pandemic, women at Decatur felt they were “*stuck doing nothing*” with “*no rehabilitation*” opportunities, which got worse during COVID. A few women expressed that they wanted to be able to transfer back to Logan for this reason. This lack of programmatic opportunity was notably a reported issue especially for women with longer terms left to serve, as programs within IDOC are generally prioritized by outdate, and women with shorter sentences at Decatur continuously bump them later on waitlists. One woman at Decatur listed the positive programs that were no longer available during the pandemic, “*They took the babies, industries, dogs...*” However, women at Logan also reported lack of programming and educational opportunity that left them frustrated and with a lot of idle time on their hands.

Women at minimum-security Decatur also commonly wanted to be given opportunity to go to [work release](#) or be on [electronic detention](#) (ED) and many had only short terms remaining. More than 40% of the women at Decatur at the time of JHA’s June 2021 visit had less than a year left to serve. As of May 31, 2021, IDOC reported only 34 women (~2.6% of the female IDOC population) were housed at the female work release center, which had a reported capacity for 128 women, and only 21 people (perhaps also including men) were on ED in total. There was a perception from some women at Decatur that Logan was more likely to send people to work release or on ED, and that it was harder to get those things at Decatur.

Again, during the 2021 Decatur visit, the dearth of substance use disorder treatment programming was an issue. Many women we spoke to at Decatur were incarcerated for substance use disorder related offenses. [IDOC data](#) shows nearly a quarter of the women in custody are incarcerated for substance use related offense convictions. Administrators reported that a new dual-diagnosis, mental health and substance use disorder treatment program would soon be onsite and available to some women at both Decatur and Logan. However, programming will remain available only to a small subset of women who may benefit due to limited capacity.

In addition to concerns regarding lack of productive activity and idleness at Decatur, women consistently reported in June 2021 that ongoing COVID restrictions resulting in lack of access to phone calls, as well as poor mail delivery impeded outside communications, family connectedness and reentry planning during the pandemic. JHA also continued to receive concerns regarding the perceived arbitrariness of COVID restrictions, and lack of sensible or even available policy. For example, at the time of our June visit, women at Decatur could not use

² Information about intakes, exits, and transfers between prisons is made publicly available in IDOC’s [quarterly reports](#).

phones while wearing a mask next to the same women they were locked down in rooms with, where they were not required to be masked. Women at Decatur could be in dietary and school with people from other housing units but could not go to the gym at the same time as people who lived on other units. Also, they could not use any sports equipment like a basketball, while this was allowed at male prisons. Women at both prisons shared that the pandemic was hard, and it was bad to be locked down a lot.

At Logan, physical plant concerns predominated the July 2021 JHA visit. In JHA's 2019 Logan monitoring report, we wrote, *"While we celebrate some easing of crowding there is still much to be improved, in particular in regards to addressing deferred maintenance needs, as well as improvements that should be free, like improving professionalism and respectful treatment among and between staff and people who are incarcerated. ... Regretfully, during JHA's July 2019 visit, we continued to see some of the same physical plant issues and hear the same concerns regarding safety that pervaded from more than six years prior at the facility's inception."* While some repair projects move forward at Logan, two years later in July 2021, women continue to live in substandard and unfit housing conditions. Logan administrators were frank regarding the maintenance issues, which we appreciated, and most of the concerns JHA heard from incarcerated women related to these problems.

Just prior to JHA's July 2021 visit, Logan lost power completely throughout the prison and had to depend on local fire departments to provide spotlights and emergency generators. Need for plumbing repairs is a constant problem. A ceiling had partially collapsed in a housing unit, and other ceiling and roofing issues were reported and observed, among other concerns. Makeshift repairs are a Band-Aid on serious maintenance issues and scarceness of parts due to the pandemic contributes to urgent – yet ongoing – problems.

Typically, each prison administrative team can give the Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB) a list of their top five physical plant projects that need to be addressed for projects greater than a certain dollar threshold (e.g., \$100,000), and prisons get some funds to address smaller projects in their budgets, but this does not mean the priority projects put forth to the CDB will be funded or funded before they become emergencies. A JHA citizen volunteer commented regarding the 2021 Logan visit that there did not seem to be a comprehensive local, regional, or

IDOC level engineering study of facilities, maintenance, or replacement, and noted that things like roof collapses should be prevented by having a program of inspection and routine maintenance. IDOC in the summer of 2021 contracted for a "Master Plan," which JHA has been told will examine all prisons and maintenance needs as we have long encouraged. However, although the vendor will make quarterly reports to IDOC, the plan is not required to be completed until the June 30,

"I do appreciate your concern but now it's time for action. I'm tired of SURVEYS! I've been here so long and I'm tired so tired of surveys. Nothing comes of the surveys! The plumbing is horrible! The buildings are decayed and falling in! Please don't get me started on the mold and mildew we're breathing in. ... I do understand it could be worse. But please know it could also be so much better." - COVID Survey Response from Logan

2022. It will likely take even longer for this plan's recommendations to be funded and implemented if they are adopted.

In response to JHA's COVID Survey feedback, in June 2020, Logan administrators responded, "Our maintenance department is working along with CDB, developing plans to address the multitude of physical plant issues here at Logan." Yet, physical plant issues persist. Administrators stressed that much of the infrastructure is original in the 90+ year old facility, including plumbing, electrical and coal heat.

While in July 2021 Logan was in the midst of a window replacement project, it was unclear if there had been an assessment as to whether this should have been the top priority, or if anyone had assessed the extent to which window replacement would implicate or aggravate other deficiencies in the physical plant. In fact, during the window project, a structural issue was discovered in a housing unit, which had to be shut down. Administrators reported two housing units were closed at the time of the JHA visit and they had lost 300 beds due to physical plant issues, as windows were being installed in one and the window project had uncovered the structural issue in another. Women who had been incarcerated at Logan since the beginning of it being a female prison said the conditions had been deteriorating and referred to the physical plant as a "dump" or "mess." Some women reported that they had been moved between housing units several times for various physical plant issues, including issues with sewage, and that when they had been moved to other housing units some did not have adequate cable, Wi-Fi, or phones that facilitated their ability to connect with their children, family, and the outside world in addition to having various other physical plant issues. People described being moved into "boarded up" buildings and felt that

there was "nowhere to put them." While Logan administrators stated that they were housing some people according to programming or assignment, they acknowledged they were having to shuffle people around.

"The buildings are falling apart. This facility is inhumane and unsafe to house us inmates. As every time someone comes to check the facility the workers then try to hide and cover the issues. As there is renovations going on to remodel, in my opinion it's a waste of money for Illinois and taxpayers. Illinois has cut the inmate population and there should be a way to move us to another location. Even the COs say this place shouldn't be open. It risks their health as well as they sit in it 8-16 hours a day also." – 2021 letter to JHA from someone incarcerated at Logan

There is an immediate need to fix physical plant issues including severe structural issues at Logan and undertake preventative maintenance – or Illinois must commit to release women or move women who are ineligible for release elsewhere. Logan houses women who are medically vulnerable and operating without adequate emergency generators or backup plans is dangerous and unacceptable. During prior power outages during the pandemic, some women had to be transferred from Logan to Decatur. In 2020 JHA COVID survey comments from Logan, there were concerns about women displaced from the healthcare unit to be temporarily housed in the visiting room. Other women housed in the X-house during prior power outages reported these issues lasted two weeks and that they were traumatized by the

lack of lights and running water. Heat and lack of ventilation continued to also be serious concerns, particularly during power outages.

The day after JHA visited Logan, we visited the Illinois Youth Center (IYC) Harrisburg, an Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) youth prison, which housed 34 boys and had reported capacity for hundreds, while the total population of IDJJ was about 100 youth. In contrast to Logan, Harrisburg, while still in need of some improvements, had relatively recent government-funded physical plant upgrades including a new AC chiller, a roofing project, and back-up generators. It was hard to look at Logan and this youth prison and not question how the state was allocating resources and using facilities.

JHA has previously reported on the challenges of leadership churn and inconsistency in vision at Logan. Some women, particularly those who had served considerable time and been housed at other female prisons, expressed that they felt Logan lacked “*routine*” and “*discipline and structure*,” partly because there was such frequent turnover and lack of consistency and continuity in the administrative leadership positions. During the July 2021 visit, JHA met with the new Logan administrative team, of which the veteran had been an Assistant Warden at Logan for nine months (and at the prison three years), while the new head Warden had been in her role just two weeks at the time of the visit. Current Logan administrators said the physical plant crises had “*brought people together*.” Administrators acknowledged they had some “*big projects*” but said that they had a good team variously described as “*energetic*,” “*excited*” and “*fresh-faced*.”

Administrators stressed that first they must meet the basic needs of women at Logan, including solid housing, referencing [Maslow’s hierarchy of needs](#), which states that physiological needs must be met before other needs can be fulfilled. Administrators recognize that the amount of progress people can make on mental health and emotional issues is limited when they do not have safe shelter.

“We need basic structural needs met before we can focus on self-empowerment programming.” – Logan administrator, July 2021

As a JHA citizen volunteer commented, “*Obviously this would be costly for the State, but citizens should be made aware of the real costs associated with its high incarceration rates. Perhaps this would provide motivation for the State to invest in more effective and less costly alternatives to incarceration. Also, it seems only a matter of time before the physical deterioration of one of these buildings results in tragic consequences. The partial collapse of a ceiling at Logan should be a wakeup call. The next failure may not be so limited and may cost lives, cause serious injury, or result in a serious security breach.*”

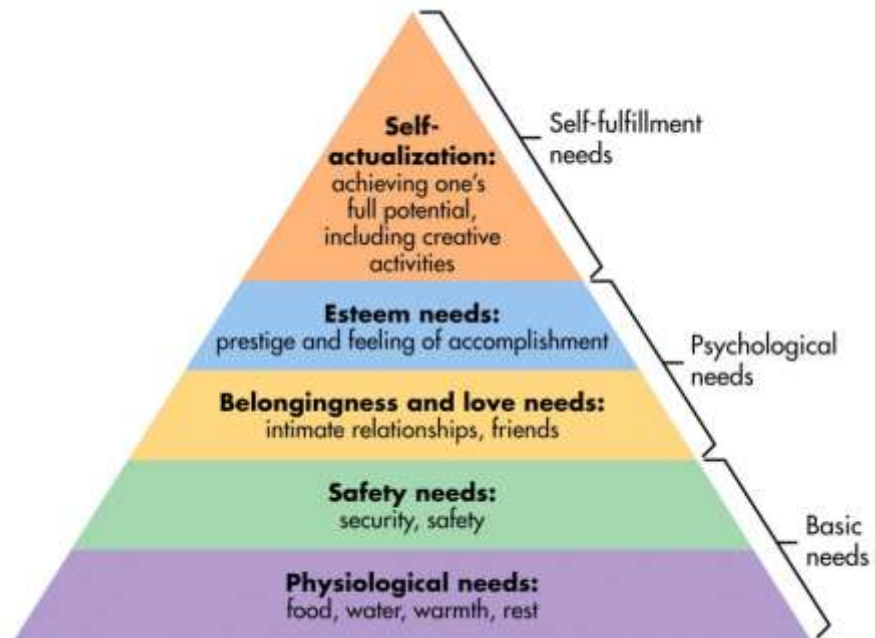


Image from [Simply Psychology](#).

A few women at Logan expressed that they believed the new prison administration was trying to improve things. During the 2021 Decatur visit, administrators discussed that it could take a long time between vacancies being posted and them being filled. For example, one shared it had taken over a year for her to get her position. At Logan, it seemed that new staff had to first get oriented, trained, and learn all about the prison, often without the benefit of peers with deep institutional knowledge, and then begin to negotiate the political quagmire of getting assistance to address issues within the Department or Illinois government.

Developing structurally solid safe housing at Logan is a major project. Logan administrators stated that the Chief Engineer at the prison was very responsive and “*can talk your ear off*” because of all the issues. It was unclear whether there were timelines for projects and completions and whether needed work was funded. Administrators stated that a roof project had been funded as an emergency project, but that it was overwhelming because everything was worthy of emergency repairs in the 90+-year-old buildings. Emergency procurement information can be found on the [CDB's website](#). JHA was pleased to hear that Logan administrators were having weekly calls with “Springfield” including the prison’s Chief Engineer and Business Administrator in charge of purchasing. However, it was not entirely clear who was on the calls representing IDOC or the government in Springfield and whether they had the authority to authorize needed funding for physical plant project needs at the prison. During JHA’s July 2021 Logan visit, some women reported that people from “*the Governor’s office*” had recently visited.

In addition to onsite feedback and post-visit follow up with administrators, JHA provided IDOC officials with a draft of this report on October 7, 2021, and the draft was discussed with IDOC, and additional written comments were received from IDOC in the last week of October 2021. In draft review, administrators indicated that Logan had 11 CBD projects approved and that various physical plant work was progressing. In describing some of the work, they stated that architectures and engineers had been onsite, that a heating project to replace the old system with natural gas was approved, that leaks in the tunnels were being addressed, that the roofs were

being patched, and that at that time no part of the prison was running on generators and there was a planned power outage coming up for an electrical grid change over. Decatur administrators similarly reported having many CBD projects in the works. Even when CBD projects are approved it can take a significant amount of time until project completion. JHA hopes to observe improvements on future visits.

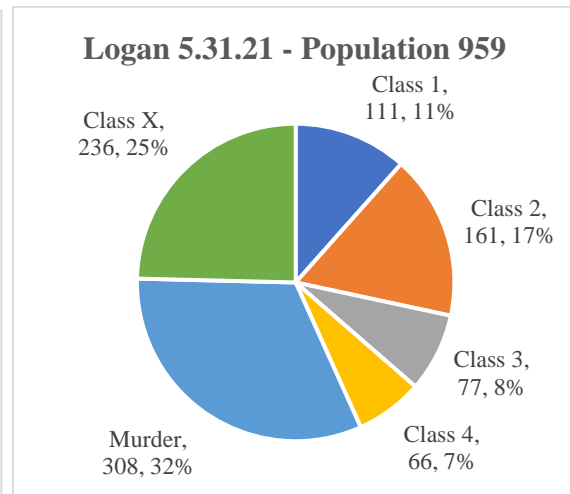
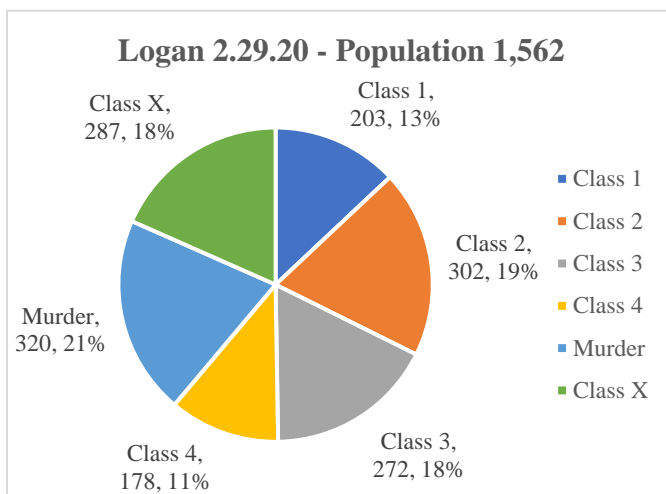
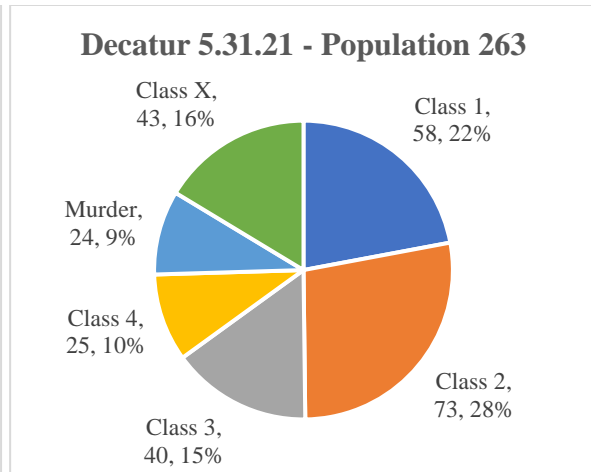
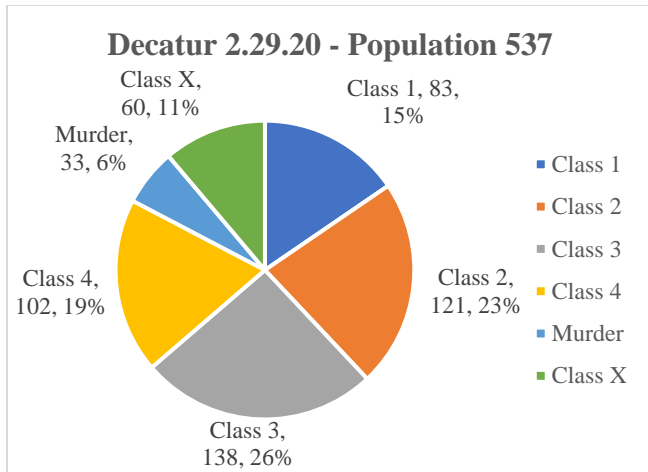
Population

Prior to the pandemic, as of [February 29, 2020](#), there were 37,731 people incarcerated in IDOC; 5.96% (2,249) of which were women. As of [May 31, 2021](#), there were 27,411 people incarcerated in IDOC; with about 4.61% (~1,266) being women.³ The population within IDOC had dropped more than 27% within that timeframe, while the female population dropped more than 43%.

Prior to the pandemic, in addition to the women incarcerated at Logan and Decatur, as of February 29, 2020, there were 124 women in IDOC housed at Fox Valley Adult Transition Center (ATC), the work release center for women; seven women housed at Elgin for in-patient mental health treatment; and 10 women at Dixon Springs Impact Incarceration Program (IIP), or [bootcamp](#). Six people were on Electronic Detention (ED - the report does not specify the sex of these individuals). As of May 31, 2021, the population at Fox Valley was down about 73% to 34 women; there was an unspecified number of women at Elgin (which has a reported capacity of 22 women, but JHA believes this capacity is artificially high as we have never seen close to this many women housed at Elgin at one time, and only 19 people including both men and women were counted as at Elgin on that date), and zero people at bootcamp. JHA was informed that going forward the female bootcamp will be housed at Logan. There were 21 people of unspecified sex on ED, and 18 of unspecified sex reported to be on Furlough Medical Release.

As expected, during the pandemic the percentage of women incarcerated for lower-level offenses within IDOC prisons fell. However, some women JHA spoke to at Decatur were still incarcerated on relatively minor charges; for example, one was sentenced for a theft of less than \$300 with a three-year sentence (at 50%) due to prior conviction. Put another way, the percentages of women incarcerated for higher-level offenses increased while the number of incarcerated women declined. The charts below show how population reductions over the pandemic have affected the make-up of the population at the women's prisons by Offense Type as reported by IDOC in [publicly available reports](#).

³ JHA can no longer be sure of the exact number of incarcerated women as IDOC has ceased providing JHA with requested daily population reports. Further, publicly available data does not have all necessary information, as Elgin's population as publicly reported includes both men and women.



During the visits, JHA spoke to several women who had been sentenced to life or lengthy prison sentences for offenses that occurred when they were minors or young adults. JHA has [published information](#) based on publicly available IDOC data that shows that as of the end of 2020, of the 1,413 women incarcerated in IDOC 1.2% (17) of the women in IDOC were estimated to be 17 or younger at the time they were taken into custody, while 22.43% (317) were under 25. An estimated 3.04% (43) of the women incarcerated in IDOC were serving Life sentences, while 4.39% (62) will have to serve more than 40 years.

Decatur administrators during JHA’s June 2021 visit provided requested demographic information for the population. JHA did not receive this requested information from Logan in July 2021.

The race of 271 women at Decatur as of June 8, 2021 was reported as follows: 69.5% White (189), 21.7% Black (59), 7% Hispanic (19), 1% Unknown/Other (2), and 0% American Indian (2). Based on JHA’s initial analysis of IDOC’s publicly available [dataset of the population](#), as of June 2021, at Logan, the population by race was reported as about 49% White (460), 39% Black (367), 9% Hispanic (88), 1% American Indian (6), 1% Asian (8), 1% Bi-Racial (13) and 0% Unknown/Other (3). As of [June 30, 2021](#), the race of all women within IDOC was reported to be 53.9% White (677), 34.2% Black (430), 8.8% Hispanic (111), 0.4% Unknown/Missing (5), 0.6%

Native American (8), 1.3% Bi-Racial (16), and 0.7% Asian (9). As of [June 30, 2021](#), IDOC's total population was reported to be 31.8% White (8,712), 54% Black (14,815), 13.3% Hispanic (3,641), 0.2% Unknown/Missing (45), 0.2% Native American (44), 0.2 % Bi-Racial (55), and 0.4% Asian (101).

The average age for women at Decatur was reported to be 41. Thirteen women (4.8%) were under 25, and 63 (23.2%) were over 50. Based on JHA's initial analysis of IDOC's publicly available dataset of the population, as of June 2021, at Logan 44 women were under 25 (4.7%) and 184 were over 50 (19.4%). As of June 30, 2021, the average age of women in IDOC was reported to be 39.6 and of IDOC's total population was reported to be 40.2 years old.

Decatur administrators shared data showing that the committing counties for women at Decatur were not primarily Northern; 42.9% (151) were from Central Illinois, where Decatur is located, 14.2% (50) were from Southern Illinois, and 4.8% were from the Metro-East area, while only 15.9% (56) were from Cook County, another 10.8% (38) were from the Collar Counties, and 11.4% (40) were from other Northern counties. Administrators at Logan stated that only about 30% of the women at Logan were from Cook County. Based on JHA's initial analysis of IDOC's publicly available dataset of the population, as of June 2021, at Logan about 35% of the population was from Cook County and another 9% were from the Chicago Metro region. As of June 30, 2021, 60.7% of IDOC's female population was reported to be from areas other than Cook and the Collar Counties, while in total 43.3% (11,871) of IDOC's population was from Cook County, with another 11.1% (3,053) from the Collar counties.

In information provided by Decatur administrators at the time of the visit, it was reported that all the women at Decatur were classified as low escape risk. Only 3.1% (9) of the women were classified as having some gang affiliation. No women at Decatur were reported to have more than 20 years left to serve; only 2.5% (7) of the women housed at Decatur had more than eight years but less than 20 left to serve, 7% (19) had five to eight years left, 26.2% (71) had two to five years, 20.7% (56) had between one and two years, and 43.5% (118) had less than a year left to serve.

Logan is considered mixed-security and has the capacity to house women who are classified as higher security or higher mental health need than Decatur. At the time of the JHA's July 2021 visit, Logan's non-mental health higher security housing unit, the X-house, housed women in intake, Restrictive Housing, protective custody, and a wing of people who were considered general population but were single-celled, including six women who were considered high escape risk, or "Level E." Some women who were assigned to boot camp were also housed in the X-house.

COVID-19

In response to [JHA's 2020 COVID surveys](#), a woman at Decatur wrote "*The only comment I have is that the officers in this institution are not properly trained to deal with this situation. I've had officers tell us that 'we're all going to get the virus because it's airborne.' It would be helpful if the officers would be educated properly and trained to deal with us in a more sensitive manner. This is stressful enough and having officers yelling at us, not answering some of our questions, doesn't help.*"

Women also commented that pandemic lockdowns felt like punishment to them. For example, women wrote "*not only do we feel unsafe and afraid, we feel like we're being punished*;" and that they were being treated "*like it's our fault*."

Issues JHA heard about in COVID surveys earlier in the pandemic included concerns that women were not being properly screened and protected. Throughout IDOC by April 2020 everyone within prisons was generally expected to be masked, although people are not required to be masked within their cells or sleeping areas. Mass surveillance testing was not used within IDOC until late in 2020. At the time of JHA's visits to the women's prisons in 2021, staff and women were being tested once a week and we were told the frequency of testing is based in part on the county's COVID numbers. Some women reported that the COVID tests offered weekly were "*optional*" or that they were not given their test results. It was unclear whether people who had tested positive in the prior 90 days were being required to test. Additionally, in June at a male prison we were told that staff who were vaccinated were exempted from surveillance testing. There remains continued need for IDOC to be transparent with COVID protocols and expectations as practices change.

Many women and their families wrote about early release, and concerns about being cut off from communication. Additionally, many people shared difficulties with obtaining medical treatment for non-COVID issues.

"I fear for my health and safety every single day and it's terrifying to know that if I do get sick this place won't take me seriously and that I could be left to die. It's such a scary and stressful situation and I know my family is scared and worries about my well-being too. It's sickening to know that we're stuck and don't have a voice."

- Decatur

"I was in quarantine for 5 days with possible COVID-19 and wasn't able to call family and let them know."

- Logan

"I'd be afraid to report it [COVID symptoms] in fear of how much worse it would make our living conditions."

- Decatur

In JHA's June 2020 COVID survey feedback we encouraged IDOC to enhance communication, let women feel heard on their concerns, and explain what is occurring and why, which we believed could help women feel safer and better supported. We also continued to support release as the most effective pandemic control mechanism.

After vaccine availability, COVID restrictions and complete lockdowns started to slowly ease, and some visitation resumed in May 2021 at IDOC's women's prisons. IDOC's Office of Health Services (OHS) reportedly decides based on various thresholds including positives in the community and prison when quarantines occur and activities can resume at the prisons. Decatur administrators stated they communicate COVID information to the population on the institutional tv channel, via memos on units, and on tablets. At the time of JHA's 2021 visits to Decatur and

Logan staff also shared that they were being told the prisons would be “*opening up*” soon but they were not given a timeline. The reopening procedures are determined at the state level. Some staff suspected that there was a vaccination rate that needed to be reached statewide before they would be allowed to resume more normal operations. Women wanted it to “*get back to be normal.*” Some noted they did not understand why this could not occur when in their housing area most women were vaccinated, or they had not had a positive case. Unfortunately, with the Delta and other variants it is unclear after these visits what direction things will go.

By the time of the June 2021 Decatur visit, administrators stressed that they were not as open as the state of Illinois at that time. They were increasing activities and programs were starting back up, but they were still limiting the number of women, such as by splitting groups into morning and afternoon cohorts or letting women out to dayroom half a housing unit at a time in hourly rotations. They stated that they were starting to have more Leisure Time Activities and more outdoor time, noting that having patio access adjacent to housing units was helpful. However, many women at Decatur shared they felt there was no logical consistency for COVID restrictions and that they felt the COVID rules only kept them away from their families and anything enjoyable.

At the time of the July 2021 JHA Logan visit, some activities had resumed post-COVID, including dietary lines (limited to 66 women in the dining area at once for spacing), yard for a limited number at a time, in-person school by housing unit supplemented with packet work, and dayroom by wing in 30-minute increments. For intake, at the time of the visit, JHA was told women who came in vaccinated were being quarantined for a week to 10 days and those who were not vaccinated were quarantined for 14 days. We were told that the backlog of women waiting to come in from county jails was only about 40 women at that time. JHA has received increased concerns about women’s treatment and crowding in some county jails during the pandemic and some women compared IDOC housing to county jails favorably.

COVID Numbers and Vaccinations

As of the end of August 2021, IDOC reported over the course of the pandemic there had been positive COVID tests for 68 staff and 86 women in custody at Decatur, and 257 staff and 598 women at Logan. One woman in her 30s shared with JHA visitors that she caught COVID at Decatur, and that her roommate was very sick but not taken to the hospital. Although both women eventually recovered, it seemed to have been a traumatizing experience. IDOC has not publicly reported hospitalization numbers, however current case and test numbers continue to be updated on [IDOC’s COVID page](#). People in the prisons continue to want information about COVID at their prison to be made available, such as the number of cases, and administrators stated that this information is provided. IDOC as of October 2021 had not published death or vaccination information to their COVID online dashboard but some is [publicly available](#).

There had been [88 deaths](#) reported as due to COVID by IDOC since the start of the pandemic through the end of March 2021. In September 2021, another man at Shawnee died, bringing the total to 89 deaths as of the end of October 2021. Two of the deaths attributed to COVID by IDOC were of women, one each from Logan and Decatur. The woman who was incarcerated at Logan died of COVID in December 2020 and was reported to be Black and in her 60s, and the woman who was incarcerated at Decatur died in January 2021 and was White and in her 70s.

During JHA's 2021 visits at Logan and Decatur administrators reported they had polled the population and staff about whether they wanted the vaccine prior to the mass vaccination dates onsite and had also asked questions including why people might not want to be vaccinated. At Decatur, administrators said they received responses indicating people had fear of the unknown or that they felt they did not have enough information. One woman at Logan in July told JHA that she did not get vaccinated because she thinks the vaccine was developed too quickly and she does not trust the government due to being a Black woman. As at other IDOC prisons, women were reportedly given an opportunity to ask healthcare staff questions about the vaccine. Decatur administrators noted that prior to the second-round mass vaccination date on April 5, 2021, several people signed up after having more education, and perhaps due to seeing others be vaccinated without incident. Administrators also reported that the visitation rules relating to whether people were vaccinated or not also motivated some people signing up. Some women reported to JHA that they felt administrators were attempting to pressure people to get vaccinated because unvaccinated people cannot have contact visits.

Decatur first offered the Moderna vaccine during a mass vaccination effort on March 8, 2021, with the second dose or the Johnson & Johnson vaccine for people who had changed their minds and decided to be vaccinated after that date offered in a mass effort on April 5, 2021. During the June 2021 JHA Decatur visit, administrators shared data showing that as of April 5, 2021, after the second mass vaccination effort at the prison, 200 women in custody had been vaccinated, and that the race of these women choosing to be vaccinated was 70.5% White (141), 21.5% Black (43), 6% Hispanic (12), 1% Bi-Racial (2) and 1% American Indian (2). This approximates the make-up of the population at Decatur as set out in the Population section above. Women who chose to be vaccinated appeared to be of various ages and races. Among the staff who chose to be vaccinated there was not a clear trend in type of staff, e.g., some healthcare staff and educators were reportedly unvaccinated.

Women shared with JHA that they chose to be vaccinated to protect others, particularly their families, in hopes that it would ease pandemic restrictions within prisons, because they knew people were getting sick, or so that they could get employment both within and outside the prison. One woman said she got vaccinated so she could "[see her grandbabies](#)." At the time of the visits, administrators stated that they were not requiring vaccination of incarcerated people for any work, assignment, or transfer. Women were transferred to work release who were both vaccinated and unvaccinated, for example. Since the visit, JHA has seen some prisons limit some work assignments to incarcerated individuals who are vaccinated and has again asked IDOC to clarify its policies and make them public.

Some women at Decatur who had initially chosen not to be vaccinated in April had since reportedly changed their minds by the time of JHA's 2021 visit but had not been able to be vaccinated as of June 17, 2021. JHA was able to obtain information from IDOC stating that as of September 2021, 32 additional vaccinations had been given at Decatur since our visit. Because Logan had an R&C, vaccine availability there seemed more regular. We were told that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine was offered every two weeks.

On August 4, 2021, Governor Pritzker [announced](#) that people working in state-run correctional facilities would be required to be vaccinated by October 4, 2021; in September, this date was extended to November 18. Prior to this mandate, staff had reportedly been incentivized by having a special state employee lottery for which only vaccinated employees were eligible. It also may have been motivating that people who were vaccinated were not required to be surveillance tested. Some staff expressed medical privacy concerns regarding sharing vaccination

information. IDOC reported by the end of August 2021, 42% of Decatur's staff (91 of 219) and 63% of the population (168 of 265) were vaccinated. It was unclear how IDOC was accounting for people entering and exiting prisons in the vaccination data provided. As Decatur reported 200 women had reportedly been vaccinated there as of April and it is likely that some of those women paroled or transferred since, so it seems that IDOC is providing a static count of vaccination rate of the current population and not the total number of vaccinations at a prison (whereas testing and case numbers are presented as totals since the start of the pandemic). At Logan, 38% of the staff (227 of 603) and 74% of the population (745 of 1010) were reportedly vaccinated.⁴ In total 40% of IDOC staff and 67% of the population were reported to be vaccinated.

During JHA's June 2021 Decatur visit, administrators stated that one incarcerated woman had tested positive for COVID-19 and was being housed in healthcare. Due to this single positive, three housing units were on medical quarantine status. One of these three units was reportedly being used for women who were quarantined because of contact tracing to the woman who had tested positive, but who had tested negative themselves. Decatur administrators stated for contact tracing, they test people who have had close contact with the person who came up positive, e.g., roommates, but do not test the whole unit. A separate Decatur housing unit was being used just for intake medical quarantines for women entering Decatur. JHA was told that OHS made the call regarding whether housing units were quarantined. The fact that one case had resulted in restrictions on multiple housing units suggested to JHA that the women were not tightly cohorted or that staff who had tested positive had been working amongst multiple cohorts. We were told by staff on a quarantined unit at Decatur that women on the unit would get 20 minutes out of their rooms for phones and showers during his shift, but that during second shift any time out was "discretionary," which seemed to mean it would not be likely to occur. Decatur administrators were not sure of the method of introduction of the virus for the positive individual in custody.

Some women were upset during the visits that staff were not required to be vaccinated. Some who were vaccinated did not feel that they had seen any benefits in easing of their restrictions. One woman shared that she felt "tricked" into getting the vaccine because she felt it did not lessen restrictions. Women reported everyone had to go on a 60-day lockdown at Decatur for medical quarantines despite being vaccinated. Some stated that people got the vaccine to relax restrictions, but now they have it and nothing has changed.

Early Release

During the June 2021 JHA Decatur visit, administrators explained that they had used medical furloughs and electronic monitoring to get women out due to the pandemic, with women in the [Moms & Babies](#) and Family Reunification programs prioritized. The Moms & Babies program allows women to live with their children born while they are incarcerated. Participation in this program was capped at eight women, but other women live on the housing unit and participate in the Family Reunification program, which during non-pandemic times allows for women to visit with children on the unit. Administrators stressed that they had always been careful with people who were housed at Decatur because of the presence of the babies, so their population was in some ways pre-screened for likelihood of dangerousness. Therefore, women at Decatur were good candidates for early release. Decatur administrators reported many women had been

⁴ Interestingly at the women's work release, Fox Valley ATC, it was reported that only 24% of the staff (18 of 74) but 95% of the women assigned to work release (53 of 56) were vaccinated.

released early, mostly through the granting of Earned Discretionary Sentencing Credits (EDSC), with some being placed on ED or medical furlough. They commented that some women who were placed on medical furlough had since died, been paroled, or been placed in healthcare settings or nursing homes that were better able to meet their needs and had their furlough extended. JHA spoke to one woman at Logan during the July 2021 visit who had been out on a medical furlough from work release but had an issue with her placement and had been returned to prison.

Some felt that at first IDOC was releasing women and "*giving out days/good time at a speedy rate when the virus first came out, but then all of a sudden stopped.*" One woman at Decatur reported in JHA's 2020 COVID survey comments that she was told that she was going home but that this was recalculated at the last moment so that she had to stay another month. She wrote she was told "*to pack out, so I did. Took parole picture and everything to leave ... and I turned in my state clothes back to them. 2 to 3 hours later, they told me I could not leave. This is crazy. I have no underwear, smock, pants, shoes, socks, or bra because I threw it all away knowing I was leaving. I am still here.*"

At the time of the June 2021 JHA Decatur visit, administrators reported from March 1, 2020 through June 15, 2021, they had 39 women transfer from Decatur to ED. Some women reported to JHA during the visit that the ED process was slow. For example, one woman reported she had signed her release form in May but was still at Decatur. A woman at Logan said that her paperwork was sent to Springfield for ED, but nothing has happened. Women believed it took "*forever*" to get the ankle monitor. JHA heard from loved ones of women incarcerated during the pandemic who were trying to do everything they could to assist in getting them released. People did not understand why women who were low risk, many of whom needed treatment they were not receiving in custody, could not be with their families. People caring for children on the outside also reported they needed more help as childcare options and school were restricted during the pandemic. Some reported being told their loved ones were getting out months earlier due to early release efforts, in situations where they had multiple young children at home, but they were still waiting. They felt that no one in IDOC had answers.

JHA inquired what the expected timeframe from ED approval to release should be, but were told to ask other IDOC departments.

Families reported similar difficulties getting answers. Some reported that while the prison said the paperwork for release was pending with Springfield, people in Springfield said the issue was at the prison.

In responses to JHA's 2020 COVID-19 surveys women wrote about wanting to be considered for early release. Many women reported that the choice of individuals who were released early due to the pandemic seemed arbitrary to them. For example, someone wrote "*The only people getting out are the ones with 6-9 months because they're giving them good time with no criteria which sends home a lot of violent offenders. ... I feel like they pick and choose who they give good time too as well.*" One woman wondered, "*Why can't the non-violent inmates that have DUIs [Driving Under the Influence convictions] go on ED? Even though they're approved to go to work release. Being on ED, you're still doing time, and they have something that can detect alcohol.*" Someone else wrote that a decades-old offense was preventing her release on ED. Another wrote that she was very active in education and treatment programming and "*trusted to work outside perimeter*

detail, but yet here I sit being punished for good behavior.” Some women who had served time on more serious offenses felt that “releases should be based on health risk, time, and rehabilitation. We’ve done all the work necessary to rehabilitate ourselves, so we deserve to go home to our families as well.”

Some mothers wondered why other mothers were released during COVID when they were not. For example, a woman asked “*Why did the inmates with babies get to leave when they could send their babies to live elsewhere and continue to serve their sentence under previous circumstances clearly that has changed so when they left so should have we. Most of us are mothers, grandmothers, daughters, aunts etc. We need our family at this time too!*” Someone wrote “*I have small children too, let me go.*” Another woman held on a non-violent Class 3 offense wrote “*Please help me. My child needs me. If my mom gets sick, my [child] has nobody... It was a slap in the face watching the moms and babies go home, some with more time than me... Don’t my children matter too?*” Some women also said that they had other family caretaking duties, such as caring for their elderly parents. Others wondered how past disciplinary issues were affecting their chances at early release; someone wrote “*They told me I can’t get the 6 months because after my baby passed away, I got into some mess. But, I cleaned up my act since then. I am grieving very bad but staying prayed up and not giving up hope or losing my faith. ... I would give up anything to be with my other kids. They keep telling me my ticket is stopping me but somebody went home before me that have multiple tickets, I’m just saying, they also went to seg with me...*”

Other Ongoing COVID Concerns

At Decatur in June 2021 one woman reported that prior to JHA’s visit, staff made sure that everyone was wearing masks. At Logan in July 2021 JHA observed some outdoor line movement where people were not distanced or only some women were masked. It was not clear whether IDOC was relaxing masking outdoors, although we were not informed of any official policy change. At Logan, some women told JHA that they were only required to wear masks because we were visiting. One said people who are incarcerated never wear their masks, and they were instructed to put them on for JHA. Others reported that they were usually not required to wear masks and only put them on when someone comes through to check. Some women shared that they do not normally wear their masks correctly and instead wear them below their noses or on their chins because their masks do not have nose wires, so it is hard to keep them on the right way. JHA continued to receive concerns about improper fit of masks lacking nose wires and observed masks slipping down on people’s faces during visits. **JHA has opined that the tradeoff of not having masks with nose wires, thus having ill-fitting masks with less protection against the virus, for “security reasons,” does not seem to be necessary in many cases within IDOC. The rule for many should not be made based on the concern for a few, who could have a case-by-case security review.** Concerns regarding lack of staff compliance with wearing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) are discussed in the staff conduct section below.

Maintaining the recommended physical distance from others in prison remains an impossibility. In responses to JHA’s COVID-19 surveys, women reported that social distancing is basically impossible in both sleeping and common areas. Some also reported that staff did not adhere to or enforce social distancing when necessary. Several women wrote about how closing units “*crammed*” them together with new people. Lack of cohorting of units and even transfers between prisons was a concern. For example, someone at Decatur expressed concern that women were transferred to the prison from Logan due to a power outage, and JHA later spoke to a woman at

Logan who had been moved between the prisons for this reason. Many women reported that, due to the closing of various housing units, they are housed together with other individuals in rooms or cells with poor ventilation, e.g., "*We are packed in here like a can of sardines,*" and "*I live with 3 other inmates whom I can high five from my bunk.*" Regarding dietary, many women reported that they all traveled 50+ at a time to eat meals and while they attempted to create spacing by seating each person two seats apart, many women reported that others were seated directly across from them within three feet while eating and unmasked.

Women during the 2021 JHA visits continued to report the prisons were not following social distancing protocols. Being closely confined with others continued to be a source of stress. One woman reported that she is now in a two-person cell rather than a six or eight-person cell, which is an improvement. Another woman reported she would like the four-person cells to be divided into two two-person cells, because that way an annoying cellmate would only bother one other person rather than three. Women also continued to express concerns regarding lack of cohorting. Someone at Decatur also reported that prior to JHA's visit, staff made sure that there were not too many people in the dayroom, but that usually both sides of the unit are out in the dayroom at once, which is opposite of what we were told by administrators who said the women were cohorted for dayroom by side of the unit. Women pointed out that they went to school with people on other cohorts, so they did not understand when they were being mixed or cohorted for reported safety reasons. Someone at Decatur wrote about concerns of seeing women from other housing units waiting in the healthcare unit. As noted above the fact that at Decatur multiple housing units were quarantined based on one positive case in the population suggested some mixing of cohorts was occurring. Some women at Decatur shared that they did not like that they did not see women from other cohorts during the pandemic.

Some women had concerns that vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals were not separated, and woman who had chosen to be vaccinated reported they did not like that they were housed with other women who were not vaccinated.

Women were tired of being under quarantine lockdowns. For example, one woman said that she was quarantined for two weeks when she transferred from Logan to Decatur then she had one day off lockdown and then was lockdown again for 60 days. She said that at Logan she was locked down all the time since the beginning of the pandemic. In Logan COVID-19 survey responses, women reported there were more fights in rooms due to lockdown and lack of consequences for fighting because they were already locked down. For example, someone wrote "*We haven't been outside [in over a month] everybody's going crazy, fighting and more.*" Logan administrators responded to JHA survey feedback that "*Additional out of cell time has been added to the housing unit schedules. All reported fights are investigated and handled appropriately per policy and procedure.*" JHA has repeatedly commented on the layout of Logan making safety difficult to assure. During JHA's July 2021 Logan visit we continued to hear reports of lockdown, fights, and interpersonal roommate conflict that women felt they could not get addressed. Women at Logan reported that it is "*very easy to get into fights*" and that there are "*a lot of fights.*" Some women in general population at Logan reported having trouble in their housing from being locked down and "*mixed with crazy people.*" One woman opined that there were a lot of people at Logan who would be better off in a mental health facility. JHA spoke to a woman who wanted to sue because she had been burned by another incarcerated woman, whom she reported was designated as seriously mentally ill (SMI), throwing hot water in her face, and she felt that staff were covering up that this had occurred. This was not the only report about this type of incident that JHA received. Fights and assault numbers are now publicly reported in [quarterly reports](#), which provides some basis for comparison to what is reported by people in prison. Some women

in mental health housing also found the environment and being around others with high needs difficult. One woman wrote, "[Although I take my prescribed medication I'm not court ordered to take, I deal with inmates who do not and it is a burden and a stressful environment that causes me to become overwhelmed with anxiety and duress.](#)"

Concerns about lack of cleaning and hygiene also still came up in relation to COVID, discussed further in that section below. For example, one woman reported that her roommate does not cover her sneezes in their room, and she is not allowed to hang up a barrier.

JHA continued to receive concerns regarding lack of information about COVID in prisons from people incarcerated. Administrators stated they communicate COVID information to the population on the institutional tv channel, via memos on units, and on tablets. JHA notes IDOC shared some statewide memos to the population on their [COVID webpage](#); however, as of October 2021, the latest update seems to be from nearly a year prior, November 2020.

Outside Communication Issues

Early in the pandemic JHA issued [recommendations](#) including that IDOC should provide free communications, ensure prompt review and approvals for communications, make public information about barriers to communications, and explore a state loan program for tablets ensuring Wi-Fi functionality. Reliable, prompt outside communications were especially important as visitation was restricted and people had considerable anxiety about loved ones' well-being during the pandemic.

JHA noted a concern that one woman at Logan from Illinois who had been housed out of state but since returned to Illinois was still not findable in [IDOC's online locator](#). This made it impossible for her loved ones to see where she was housed. During the Logan visit, we also spoke to other women from other states who could not be found online, which is typical for people within IDOC transferred to Illinois from other states. **JHA believes all people should be locatable while in custody unless there is a compelling safety reason to keep their location secret.**

"Limited access to connections to family that are difficult or impossible to navigate for both us and our families with the phones limited, GTL and its poor quality of service, as well as restrictive and biased physical visitations. (4 phones for 144 women.)" – 2021 letter from someone incarcerated at Logan

Electronic Communication

During JHA's February 2020 visit to Decatur, there were reports that vendor GTL's system supporting technology including tablets and video visitation was frequently down, and there were not notices or reimbursements despite people paying for a monthly service. Women also reported very limited functionality when service was available. Similarly, we were told that the law library

kiosk for electronic legal research capabilities, also provided through the GTL contract, was inconsistently functional. Decatur had been a pilot site for the GTL technology rollout within IDOC, so JHA was very concerned that technological issues had not yet been worked out there.

In 2020 JHA COVID survey responses, people throughout IDOC reported that video visits were frequently canceled, staff were not there to facilitate the visit, or that there were issues with both audio and video. For example, women at Decatur reported seeing white screens, their visitors not being able to see them, and not being able to hear one another. Some women mentioned that iPhones have issues in particular with video visits. Administrators advised that the technology works better through outside users' Wi-Fi connections than cellular data. People reported by the time technical issues were fixed their visits were cut very short. People reported their families are not refunded when they pay for dysfunctional or malfunctioning services.

In addition, women reported often "*Video visits are all cancelled, or 'rescheduled' as they are putting it.*" A woman at Logan reported she had video visits canceled and that she was having a rough time without being able to see her baby, who had been born months earlier, as she had been able to do in county jail, and that this was a particular hardship because her other child had been recently murdered. Logan administrators responded to JHA's COVID survey feedback "*Issues throughout the system have been reported to GTL for resolution... All issues are reported for repair upon receipt of notification. GTL addresses all repairs/tech support.*" Administrators also replied that in the case of the particular woman mentioned, they were able to confirm she had subsequently had successful video visits and that prior to the survey she had video visits scheduled where her visitors had not checked in.

Some women in COVID survey responses reported they were still waiting for video visitation approvals – some for as long as eight months – and there was confusion because young children did not have to be on in-person visit lists but had to be on the list for video. Administrators stated, "*All persons requesting video visit must be listed for approval regardless of age.*"

Other people reported that their family or children had difficulty setting up video visitation or did not have a credit card. In discussing this issue with IDOC administrators, JHA opined that the Women's Division should be proactively trying to help with such issues, as the GTL services do not seem very user friendly. Administrators replied, "*GTL provides all direction and tech support. Facilities are not able to address these issues at this time.*"

In COVID survey responses, women at Logan said Wi-Fi does not reach their rooms where they were confined for much of the pandemic, and that they were not allowed to use tablets in halls, dayrooms, or bathrooms where the signal reaches. Logan administrators responded "*WIFI signals are set for dayrooms at this time. During this Administrative Quarantine, our offenders are encouraged to follow social distancing guidelines. Therefore, accumulating in bathroom and gate areas are discouraged at this time.*"

On June 22, 2021, IDOC issued a memo to staff stating "*the Department will no longer use the term "offender" to refer to individuals in our custody. Instead, staff are now required to refer to members of the incarcerated population as Individuals in Custody.*" Administrators' responses to JHA's 2020 COVID surveys pre-date this change, which is one that JHA strongly supports.

During 2021 JHA visits, there were again complaints about electronic communications, including about video visit quality or that it takes a long time to connect. One woman stated while her family pays for 15 minutes, they usually only get 10-13 minutes to talk because of connectivity issues. Women stated that there is always some problem with the video visits, like there is no audio or they do not connect. Some women reported other women crowd the video visitation and phone areas making it difficult for them to hear and that staff do not enforce social distancing. Families also reported that there are poor connections, and that when they call GTL to seek reimbursement they have to wait for long periods of time or are told the problem is at the prison and not on GTL's end. Some women reported that they had not been able to update their visiting lists. Women continued to report that the fact that tablets do not work in cells inhibited communications. Some women at Logan reported that the kiosk on their housing unit regularly does not work. Some also commented that emails were taking a long time to be approved, taking days to over a week to reach their destination. Some women also reported that if they complain about conditions to their family in an email, staff confronts them about it. At Decatur, people reported that staff commented on personal things in their emails. Several women also reported that people in their families do not use email, and given mail delays and issues with phone access, discussed below, they had difficulty having adequate outside communications.

As is common throughout IDOC, people want to be able to make calls or video calls from tablets, or have access to information or education, etc. JHA has frequently noted that many people would like expanded services on tablets, but it seems that first basic functionality of equipment and services, supported in all housing areas where people are confined, should be assured. As of October 2021, IDOC is still attempting to contract for improved electronic communication services.

JHA has repeatedly pointed out the need for IDOC to hold vendors accountable for providing quality service. In addition to the healthcare context, this is particularly critical for communications providers, where technological malfunctions or other inefficiencies impede people's family contacts and access to the courts. People perceive that the vendors and the Department are pointing fingers at one another, and no one is taking responsibility to fix longstanding issues and to assist incarcerated consumers and their outside supports. The lack of transparency around the contracting process as well as the actual contracts fuels inefficiency and unfairness to the people who are incarcerated. All IDOC contracts should be made publicly available on the Agency's website, and correctional administrators, end users and the public should all hold vendors responsible for their performance or lack thereof.

Administrators at Decatur provided information that at the time of the June 2021 Decatur visit, 123 women (~45% of Decatur's population) had tablets. The cost of the GTL Tablet 2.0 was \$124.99, a charger was \$9.99, earbuds were \$7.49, a message was \$0.30, a song was \$1.80, and there were various bundled units at a discount. When women leave custody, the tablets have little utility since they only work off prison networks.

Phones

During JHA's February 2020 visit to Decatur, there were several reports that people's phone lists had not been updated in significant periods of time; two months was commonly reported, but someone said she had not been able to add numbers in more than six months. Such delays reportedly prevented family and attorney contacts. People also reported lack of counselor access was a barrier for them being able to submit phone lists.

In 2020 COVID survey responses, women reported that showers and phones ran at the same time, and they had to choose. One woman at Decatur wrote "*According to the memo Springfield sent us we are entitled to one 20-minute phone call and showers. A lot of the staff have been extremely disrespectful screaming and yelling at us to get off the phone when we haven't had our full 20 minutes. Sometimes the person would be on the phone 10 minutes and the COs are threatening us to give us tickets.*"

In responses to COVID surveys, women in intake at Logan reported long waits of over a month for phone calls. For example, one woman wrote "*I haven't been allowed to use the phone at all and I've been here since [March]. Phone list still not approved and it's [more than a month later] and given numerous request slips. Try to speak to staff and they walk away.*" Other women reported they still needed phone list approvals, with some women reportedly waiting about six months. Administrators responded "*Phone lists are submitted to Securus upon receipt. Securus is responsible for adding/deleting all telephone numbers.*" However, IDOC is responsible for enforcing contracts so that vendors deliver adequate services. Some women reported that special calls were not approved at Logan in COVID survey responses. For example, one woman wrote that her mother had just died and she had been unable to call her children, whom her mother had cared for, because of not having a phone approval for the children with their new guardian. Administrators responded that this woman had been able to call her sister and that they had no record of a request to call her children. Again during 2021 visits, some women said it was taking a month or more to get phone lists approved. During the July 2021 JHA Logan visit, a woman reported she had recently lost her mother and although she had been allowed one phone call with family, her phone list had still not been approved despite having been at the prison over a month.

In COVID survey responses from women at Logan, people reported that even with scheduled phone times, the ratio of phones to women made it impossible for everyone to make calls. For example, someone wrote "*They don't make sure everyone gets on the phone once. Some get several calls while others go days without, especially dietary workers.*" Women also reported some nonfunctional phones and that phones were not cleaned between use. Some people reported they had to choose between phone use and checking email during dayroom time, while some reported not being able to use the phones at all for one to two weeks. Administrators replied "*Nonfunctioning phones are reported to Securus for service. Per housing unit schedules, during Administrative Quarantine, all offenders are offered an hour and a half daily for showers/telephone time. ... The housing unit scheduling allows for phone/shower/dayroom. Offenders may utilize the email kiosks during dayroom/phone times. ... Porters are assigned to all units. These porters are responsible to clean the phones between each use. Cleaning supplies are available at all times.*" Again, during the 2021 July JHA Logan visit, women at Logan reported that some phones did not work. Another issue that was reported at Logan multiple times was people's Personal Identification Numbers (PINs) being changed, likely because they were being stolen or used improperly by others, and then women not having money on the new account to call their family. One woman stated she had filed a grievance about this and had not received a response. When

there is scarcity around phone access, it is more likely that people will use it improperly, creating such issues.

During JHA's June 2021 Decatur visit, administrators had cut the number of phones in use to just three per housing unit at a time, reportedly to allow for social distancing. Some woman reported that the phones were "*the only thing*" where social distancing was used. They contrasted the spacing required for phones to school lines, where people were close together and coming from different housing area cohorts. Women pointed out that they have four to eight people in their rooms, and they did not see why they could be close together in their rooms but not on the phones. JHA visitors observed that women in dayroom together were generally not social distancing.

Decatur administrators provided data showing that in March 2020 there had been 49,038 phone calls made from the prison, but as of May 2021 there had been 21,769. While the data does not indicate number of users, we can see that although Decatur's population decreased by more than half during that time, use of phones decreased by more than would be expected. Additionally, the data shows a low during that period of only 15,773 calls in December 2020, when COVID cases were high.

People had to sign up to be able to use the phones at Decatur and were permitted to sign up just once per day. Administrators acknowledged there were complaints about having to sign up and phones being inaccessible at times that women wanted to use them. They stated that if a phone was open it could be used. Women reported that they have only gotten to make one call a day for the last 15-16 months during the pandemic, while typically minimum-security prisons have fairly open access to dayrooms and phones. People were required to wear their masks on the phone, which reportedly made it hard for their families to hear them. Women said that with three phones open and 80 women on a unit some people were not getting phone time. They reported that sometimes they can only sign up for phone times when their family members are at work or school. Some said that they felt that staff was not understanding of this being a hardship. One woman said, "*they don't care if we talk to our families, that's sad.*"

One woman pointed out that at some male prisons they had dividers for the phones, and she did not see why they could not have that at

Decatur so more phones could be used. Another woman talked about how she was very close to going home after having been incarcerated for many years, since she was a young woman straight out of high school. She stated not being able to talk to her family was a hardship and she felt she was not able to have the communication necessary for re-entry planning "*to get her grown-up life together*" on the outside. While she did appreciate that staff had provided a re-entry packet, she noted that "*everyone is different, I just need to talk to my family.*"

Some women pointed out that they have family they want to speak with in different households and limiting calls to one 20-minute call a day prevented them from connecting with multiple people. Women pointed out that there is an app for phone service on their tablets that could be enabled and monitored. One woman shared that she felt she needed more phone time because she could not communicate with her grandma using her tablet. Another woman shared that it had been hard not being able to call when her mom had COVID. Another example was not being able to call a

friend who was suicidal. When JHA inquired if women were able to get special circumstances calls from counselors, we were told that they maybe see their counselor once a week if the counselor is working. Women also shared that they believed there was a backlog of request slips.

During prior visits, women reported that being on [disciplinary grade restrictions](#), or C graded, and not being able to speak with their children was a particular hardship. **JHA opposes eliminating communications as a disciplinary measure and views outside family communication as a human right and not a “privilege.” JHA continues to recommend that communications not be restricted for disciplinary reasons as this is harmful for family relations and reentry preparation.** There were nine women on C grade at Decatur on the visit date. JHA was pleased to hear that during the June 2021 Decatur visit, disciplinary grade phone restrictions were still suspended. JHA notes we had heard the opposite for men in prison at Sheridan the day before. One woman in disciplinary restrictive housing at Logan during the July 2021 visit reported that people in C grade were getting two 15-minute phone calls a week but that if she calls two people and the lines are busy, that is still all the outside communication she gets for the week. JHA continues to stress the need for IDOC to be clear about expectations for phone access.

In draft review, Decatur administrators stated that as of the end of October 2021, there had been no change to the protocol relative to the use of the phones on the housing units.

Mail

Women stressed that mail is really important to them, particularly because the phones are so inaccessible. During JHA’s February 2020 and June 2021 Decatur visits, there were concerns that staff did not handle legal and privileged mail properly. Several women expressed concern regarding mail tampering and expressed doubt that JHA would get privileged mail communications despite being a [privileged mail recipient](#) under the Illinois Administrative Code. JHA spoke to a woman at Decatur during the 2021 visit who reported that she had written to us and not received a response, which is somewhat unusual because although we have not been able to send individualized responses, we do mail a response letter to each person we hear from to confirm receipt for letters.

Women at Decatur in 2021 stated they are not told when a piece of mail coming in for them is rejected despite the requirement of [written notice](#) to the sender and recipient. People reported they could not figure out why things were not permitted. For example, a woman reported that the exact same package had been sent to her from Amazon three times and was sent back the first two times but accepted the third time. One of the women was told by her mother that the apparent inconsistency and confusion surrounding the enforcement of the contraband rules was a deterrent to sending her things. A woman told JHA she was sent a family portrait from her daughter that was thrown out in the mailroom because the envelope was torn. Women also reported that they are not allowed to receive drawings from their children, and they were not clear on what the actual rule regarding such drawings was or whether drawing just get rejected so frequently that it is practically a rule. IDOC states on its [webpage](#), which is not accessible to people in custody, *“Please do not decorate the envelope with stickers. We strictly enforce the prohibition of stickers since they may be used to introduce contraband materials. Any document received at a prison that has stickers attached will be returned. ... Mail containing stains of any type, including but not limited to perfume, lipstick, oily substances, unusual stains, body fluids, etc., is not allowed. Mail which includes the use of crayon, highlighter or other markers on the paper, glitter, or other foreign*

or unknown substance on the paper is not allowed. Mail written or printed in colored ink is permitted.”

Several women at Decatur reported that mail was being delivered only two or three times a week. Some women reported that mail had not been delivered five days a week for the past two or three months. There were reportedly nine days where no one got any mail because no staff was working in the mail room. Some reported up to three weeks without mail. Some women reported that they believed the staff assigned to the mailroom was only temporarily assigned and had no experience. This commonly occurs and disrupts mail service within prisons.

Many women reported mail delivery delays. One woman at Decatur had just gotten a piece of mail that was sent by a family member on June 1 on the visit date of June 17, and the women agreed that was not bad compared to how long mail sometimes takes. Some reported waiting a month or more. Others shared receiving a Mother’s Day card two and a half weeks after it was sent, four days after the holiday; receiving a birthday card in June when her birthday was in April despite knowing the card was sent before her birthday; and waiting on mail she knows was sent about two months prior. Some women stated they thought that the outgoing mail was good, in contrast to mail receipt. Women reported that whether mail goes through right away or takes forever seems completely random. Women stated that they were told when they wrote grievances regarding mail that the issue was “not grievable.” Such grievance responses are not constructive.

At the time of the 2020 Decatur visit, there were a few reports from women that they had other family members in IDOC, and Decatur was not allowing mail contacts. **JHA recommended that since communications can be monitored and are generally helpful to people’s well-being, that they be permitted where consensual unless there is a specific articulatable reason not to, e.g., a court order.** Administrators at that time responded that “*Approval is generally granted for mail correspondence to other IDOC facilities. The exceptions would be the inability to confirm the relationship of both offenders and or a potential safety or security threat to either facility.*” During JHA’s 2021 visit at Decatur, we were pleased to hear several women report they retained contact with loved ones also in IDOC and during the JHA 2021 Logan visit, we were able to help a woman get assistance from administrators to seek approval to communicate with her husband in jail.

Visitation

On JHA’s prior Decatur visits we had observed that generally the Decatur visiting room appeared more child friendly than Logan’s. **We recommended letting women and visitors have input into these spaces, such as holding a design contest for murals.** Decatur also benefits from having outside patio visitation space, which we were told was going to be used as visitation reopened in 2021. We noted the more like typical settings as the outside world visiting can be, the better. In line with this, on prior Decatur visits we commended the liberal visiting policy on the Decatur Family Reunification wing, which is decorative and conducive to family friendly activities, and where women reported they were appreciative of such opportunities.

At the time of JHA’s 2021 Decatur visit, the facility was planning on increasing the number of visitors allowed in the visiting room at one time from 10 to 20. JHA observed Plexiglas set up as dividers. In-person [visitation](#) resumed in May 2021, moved to Phase 2 June 1, and remains in this phase as of October 2021. Visitors must all be masked but vaccinated and unvaccinated people

have separate visitation times and people who are vaccinated can eat and take photos and have a brief hug and kiss at the beginning and end of the visit, while unvaccinated visits are non-contact. Children who were too young to be vaccinated could only visit during the unvaccinated, non-contact visitation times.

Some women shared that reopening visitation did not impact them because their families did not want to deal with the long drive to visit them. One woman at Decatur shared that current visit limitations made it unattractive to her because they were limited in the number of visits and visitors; given that she had four children these limitations would pose difficulties for her family. She also had grandchildren who were too young to visit during Phase 1 and who would have to visit during the times for people who are unvaccinated in Phase 2. She said she wanted to see her family together and be able to share food and go back to normal and have a good time. She cherished the last photo her family had been able to take together pre-pandemic.

During JHA's July 2021 Logan visit, we were able to see some of the new visiting room renovations, including Plexiglas dividers made in part of church pews salvaged from the closed Dwight women's prison, which had also been turned into shelving for a children's play area. The shelving was empty because there was no toy-sharing due to COVID. The floor in the play area had foam padding and there was a TV, and an area where children can hang drawings. There were new murals painted with popular children's cartoon characters such as Paw Patrol, Cars, Winnie the Pooh, and Minions. JHA saw two visits with adult visitors taking place during the vaccinated visit time. One visitor requested that vending machines be stocked. The area outside of Logan's visitation room is heavily landscaped, which administrators said also distracted visiting children from being in a prison environment. A woman commented regarding landscaping in contrast to housing unit conditions, "*IDOC just cares about aesthetics, what it looks like on the outside.*"

During JHA's February 2020 Decatur visit, several women requested assistance with getting to visit with their children. For example, one woman had a small baby and a Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) case that had been determined to be unfounded, yet she reported she could not get visits with her child. Another woman reported she had not had visits because DCFS could not get in touch with anyone at Decatur. After the 2020 JHA visit, Decatur administrators responded to these concerns raised stating "*The Women's Division has a DCFS Liaison that we work closely with us to assist our offenders with their various DCFS needs. Offenders should send a request slip to ... our Family Services Casework Supervisor at Decatur and she will assist with any DCFS concerns and or contact our Liaison if needed.*" Unfortunately, JHA received renewed concerns regarding such issues and difficulty obtaining helpful staff assistance during our June 2021 Decatur visit. One woman said that she could not get in touch with her children's social worker to get visitation and staff did not assist. In addition, during the July 2021 Logan visit, JHA was concerned to hear that women who were pregnant did not feel that they had good DCFS connection (discussed in that section below).

JHA was pleased to learn from other advocates about [Incarcerated Survivors Project](#) at Ascend Justice created in March 2021 to assist incarcerated women with civil legal issues including child custody, divorce, and visitation, for women clearly need greater assistance.

TV

Many people in prison rely on TVs to get news of the outside world and to see information about things within IDOC that are posted on institutional TV channels. Women at Decatur reported lack of cable in their rooms. They reported antennas were not working well or had to be affixed to the wall to get reception, but this was not allowed, or they did not have materials to affix them. Some women reported without cable they got fewer than 10 channels. Administrators indicated that installing cable would be a big project and would involve digging under the building. In 2020 JHA COVID survey responses from Logan, it was noted by that the prison did not have an institutional TV channel. People also mentioned the lack of movies and that some housing units did not have cable. Administrators replied *“Logan is currently in the process of repairing our TV network. Funds have been approved and the project will begin as soon as possible.”* Some people without TVs also reported really needing some activity to pass the time during quarantines. During the 2021 visits, some women reported there still being issues with TVs or cable in their housing areas.

Funeral Furloughs

During JHA’s February 2020 Decatur visit, there was an impression that multiple women were denied [funeral furloughs](#) from the minimum-security facility. **JHA advised that policy regarding furloughs should be made clear and evenly applied.** In 2021, it seems that this practice has improved, which is surprising given the pandemic restrictions and lack of unnecessary movement within IDOC over the last year. **IDOC administrators have shared that they are making efforts to permit people to attend funerals and even subsidizing some of the costs in some cases. JHA recommends that this information be made available to the population and clearer guidance be shared.** One woman who JHA spoke to at Logan in July 2021 reported she had recently been allowed to go to her mother’s funeral and that it cost about \$400. Several other women JHA spoke to at Logan during the visit reported having family members that had died, some of whom expressed that they would like to be able to attend funerals.

Discipline

Restrictive Housing

JHA has been pleased to see the decrease of use of disciplinary segregation, now referred to within IDOC as “Restrictive Housing” (RH), as well as of disciplinary transfers from Decatur to Logan. Some information regarding use of these forms of discipline by IDOC is reported publicly in [quarterly reports](#) and [operations and management reports](#) (OMRs). IDOC’s RH policy was revised in [November 2020](#).

During the June 2021 Decatur visit, JHA visited the empty RH unit. Some women at Decatur expressed the belief that whether people are put in RH depended on whether there were enough staff for it to be open, not on people’s behavior or need for disciplinary housing. At Logan during JHA’s July 2021 visit, there were 21 women reported to be in RH status; three were in that status in mental health housing, while the rest were housed in a X-house wing. During the visit, JHA spoke to one woman who had been in RH for 11 days who stated that a Correctional Officer (CO) falsely said she assaulted another woman and she reported that the other woman who was

reportedly assaulted would also say that is not what happened. Another woman said she was put in segregation for being in a fight after someone else attacked her. She was frustrated that she was being punished for defending herself when she felt like her life was at risk. Another woman in RH stated she was in that status for refusing to move to a different housing unit where she said someone had threatened to throw hot water in her face; however, staff stated that they were moving her because she was abusing privileges with her girlfriend. Another woman also reported that she was in RH status for housing refusal, which she said was due to her being placed in a housing area that she said was unsafe and was a “*drug house*.” Some women reported they felt that Internal Affairs (IA) was “*broken*” and did not properly investigate allegations. Some women also reported that other people were not disciplined, for example for threatening or bullying them.

JHA was pleased to speak with one woman in custody at Logan who had been held in restrictive housing for years who was now doing well in general population. She had also had some sentencing credits lost for prior disciplinary tickets restored. Restoration of lost credits is an important way IDOC can improve fairness for people who suffered extreme isolation and speed up release dates resulting in population decreases.

Alternative Sanctions

JHA has expressed concern regarding whether data regarding use of alternative sanctions was being captured and reported. During the 2020 Decatur visit, women told JHA about use of room restrictions, referred to by women as “*brown shirt*.” Generally, JHA opposes use of stigmatizing clothing. We noted uniformity in use and tracking of discipline across prisons is necessary to promote fair practice and for people to understand consequences. Sanctions should be clearly defined, uniform, knowable, and tracked and reported upon.

In 2020, Decatur administrators replied that “*Room Restriction is our alternative to placing offenders in Segregation. Room Restricted offenders wear brown shirts to assist in differentiating how an offender on room restriction is programmed daily. While in room restriction status offenders are programmed slightly different and they are not able to participate in day room or other recreational activities. We have designated rooms on two housing units for our room restricted offenders. Offenders placed in Room Restriction can be tracked via Offender 360.*” At that time, administrators also reported that “*We have identified specific staff that are able to serve on the Program and Adjustment Committees. We are providing additional training to those individuals which will assist in ensuring consistency and the use of progressive discipline. Our staff are also being trained on Gender Responsiveness which will also play a role in the discipline being given.*” During the June 2021 visit we were told that room restrictions were still occurring on housing units at Decatur.

While use of RH has been on the decline, some women at Decatur in 2021 still referred to security staff as “*ticket-happy*.” One of the women gave an example of

Individuals are not to be involved or attempt to involve others in trafficking or contraband and may not give, loan, trade or receive anything from another person.

– Decatur Orientation Manual, revised 5/10/21

having been ticketed for giving her bread pudding to a friend, which is technically against the rules.

Women stated that staff hold tickets over the heads of people who are waiting to go out on work release. One woman reported that she had been ticketed for something her supervisor asked her to do on a road crew and lost her job and was C graded over the incident and staff would not check to verify what she said occurred. Another woman reported losing her work assignment in dietary also for being C graded. Loss of employment and related potential sentencing credits seems to be a harsher sanction than necessary. **JHA again encourages IDOC to apply disciplinary sanctions singularly and progressively.** It is critical for incarcerated people to have notice of consequences and that use of these consequences be tracked and reported.

One woman in disciplinary restrictive housing at Logan during the July 2021 visit expressed issues specifically related to being labeled C grade. In addition to concerns relating to phone and commissary disciplinary grade restrictions, she reported she wanted the option to move up grades by having some program that *“lets you knock time off your status as C grade.”* People are supposed to be able to get grade reviews and cuts, and JHA has been told by IDOC administrators that people are supposed to come off C grade when they leave RH; however, it is not clear that any of this is reliably occurring or that this is communicated to people in custody. This woman reported as things are currently, she thought she could not earn her way off C grade, and she felt like she had nothing to lose. She said that staff just add more time to her status as C grade and she stated she was C grade for all of last year and has another year left in C grade. **JHA has repeatedly advised IDOC to review and reduce lengthy C grade terms.**

JHA spoke to a woman who was classified as a high escape risk and housed in Logan’s X-house who reported that the restrictions were put on her due to an escape incident that occurred in more than 15 years prior, for which she felt she had already been punished. She reported she cannot get treatment or good time credits and nothing she can do will change her status. She would especially like to receive substance use disorder treatment of some sort, and her conviction history contains drug offenses. She will soon be released at the end of her custodial sentence. **JHA commonly speaks with people who would like their escape risk to be reevaluated and hopes that IDOC will undertake thoughtful review and explanations of these decisions during their planned reclassifications and reorganizations.**

Protective Custody

JHA was pleased that Logan had Protective Custody (PC) status available as it may be necessary for women. However, we are concerned that conditions for women in this status who were seeking to get away from situations where they felt in danger may be overly harsh. Women in PC status were held in Logan’s X-house on a wing that also held women in other statuses. One woman in PC during the JHA July 2021 Logan visit said that she gets 30 minutes out of her cell each day. Another woman in PC at Logan stated she was being let out of her cell only every other day for 30 minutes to use the shower or phone. She reported having trouble contacting various staff from

her cell and felt “*kind of alone.*” JHA also had a concern that PC status was being used when housing issues were not being adequately addressed and not because the person genuinely needed a severely restrictive, isolated, and protected status. One woman described the incident that led to her being placed in PC as starting as a housing issue in general population where a roommate was reportedly being racist, threatened her, spit on her, and wanted to fight. She said she tried to speak with a supervisor all day (more than 12 hours) and was denied. Finally, she “*had to act like idiot, raise hell, and cuss to get response,*” and she was ultimately placed in PC.

Concerns relating to Staff

Lack of Access and Information

Many women commented on the lack of communication and answers to questions during the pandemic and that this added to their anxiety. Women noted old postings and information on the institutional TV channel from 2018 as examples of how they felt they did not have access to up to date information, or noted that COVID information was outdated or not about their prison. JHA observed some outdated postings on housing units during visits.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, several women reported that they would like more access to the Wardens, presumably because they would have more authoritative information or input than other staff. People reported that staff do not respond or explain things. Worse, women reported that some staff told them to go away and that this made them feel “*helpless.*” At Decatur during the June 2021 visit, women expressed some positives about some staff but said that there were not enough who would help and some also acknowledged staffing issues were at the root of many of their problems.

In COVID survey responses, some women mentioned infrequent supervisor rounds and poor administrator visibility during pandemic lockdowns. We noted that ideally administrators would minimally make weekly visible rounds on housing units and be perceived as approachable and responsive to concerns. JHA believes IDOC has since adopted a practice that Wardens make more frequent and thorough rounds, and administrators reportedly tour one housing unit with a team weekly and are supposed to address questions. The assigned Duty Administrative Officer is required to make rounds to all units every two days.

During the 2021 Decatur visit administrators noted that they make regular rounds on housing units bringing with them staff representing the Business Administrator, records, clinical, and other departments, stressing that the Wardens look to department heads for answers. From these tours administrators anticipated that JHA would receive concerns relating to commissary, phones, mails, and sentencing credits. All of the anticipated issues were indeed raised by women to JHA. However, during the 2021 Decatur visit again some women expressed that the administrators were “*too busy*” for them and “*just coming by to sign logbooks.*” Some women said felt they could tell administrators their issues, but there was no response. At Logan in July 2021, some women were extremely eager to raise their individual issues to the Wardens, suggesting positively that they believe these administrators would help, and negatively that they did not think issues could be resolved by staff with whom they had more regular contact. Some women said specific administrators were helpful.

During JHA's February 2020 Decatur visit, we observed that at least one housing unit was out of request slips and reportedly had not had them for several days. Again, during our 2021 Decatur visit women expressed that they believed that their request slips were backed up in mailroom. Administrators did not think that this would be the case or how the slips were processed, but the women's impression was based on lack of timely responsiveness, despite administrators' reports that many issues could be best handled by women making such requests. Similarly, in COVID survey responses from Logan, women stated that they did not receive responses to their request slips.

During JHA's 2020 Decatur visit, impressions of counselor access and knowledge were nearly universally negative. In [survey responses](#), only 9% of the women responding felt their counselor was effective while 75% disagreed. JHA visitors received several questions about things during the Decatur 2020 visit that people were clearly asking us because they had not had the opportunity to ask someone at the prison or did not know how to get their issue addressed at the facility. Women commented on the lack of information provided during orientation and reported needing help with getting identification documents for upcoming release. Multiple people in multiple locations reported the counselor was often not accessible on the unit during the minimal twice weekly scheduled time. Reportedly paperwork had been lost. There was also a report that a counselor avoided eye contact with women. JHA observed at that time that even if Decatur were to have all of the prison's counselor positions filled, the caseloads would still be high and better training and accessibility was needed. JHA supported putting counselor offices on housing units and requiring sufficient hours on units to enable women to get access.

Again in 2021 during the Decatur visit, people reported difficulty with most counselors. Women believed that counselors did not submit them for programs and "[lied](#)" to them. Women reported that their counselors were ineffective in helping them address or understand early release and sentencing credit issues. At both women's prisons, people reported not seeing counselors to be able to get and submit forms for visiting and phone lists. Some women expressed concern regarding counselors being related to other staff and the conflict this created, particularly in relation to getting unbiased review of grievances. Administrators said in response to concerns regarding staff having family members who also work at the prison that the staff contract does not prohibit family working together.

Lack of Professionalism

"A lot of the staff are good, a lot are bad." – Decatur 2021

During JHA's 2020 Decatur visit, women reported that some staff call people names and are rude, e.g., say things like "[shut the hell up](#)." As one woman put it, "[the majority of staff are peaceful and considerate, but some have nasty attitudes](#)." There was a report that newer or younger COs did not act professionally and that they belittled women, e.g. "[They curse and horseplay and talk down to us](#)." Another woman shared, "[They treat us more like animals](#)," using words like "[moo](#)" and "[chow](#)." Someone stated that a CO mocked a woman's way of talking and walking in front of others. Another a woman observed, "[If inmates talked the way they \[staff\] do, we would lose privileges](#)." A few staff members names came up multiple times during that visit as people who were disparaging and unprofessional to incarcerated women. Several women specifically reported that some staff in the commissary and clothing areas responded to any issues with them hostilely and "[screamed](#)" or "[yelled](#)" at them, "[cussed](#)," and were "[territorial](#)," only wanting to give items to the women that they favored or did not have issues with. There were also multiple reports

these staff made demeaning comments to women, e.g., “*you need to quit eating*,” implying that clothing replacements were due to the women gaining weight. In response to JHA visit feedback Decatur administrators responded, “*This issue has been addressed with all staff.*”

Again, in responses to JHA’s COVID-19 surveys from Decatur, there were many concerns about lack of respectful treatment and some staff names were provided. There were again several reports of staff “*screaming*” or “*yelling*” at women. Women reported being told to “*shut up*” by staff when they tried to ask questions. Others reported staff “*jokes*” that were cruel, such as pretending to cough during the COVID-19 crisis.

Many women reported retaliation for filing grievances. Other concerns about lack of assistance from staff including counselors remained common. A woman at Decatur wrote, “*We have counselors that do the bare minimum even when our families call with concerns they are disrespected and turned away with contradictory information. The staff here especially the newcomers feel it’s okay to talk to us in a condescending manner. I’ve been incarcerated for [many] years and I’ve never felt so disrespected and the sad part is that when we try to voice our concerns some staff members threaten us with a disciplinary action which is known for retaliation.*” Some women reported staff sleeping on the job.

Similarly in 2020 COVID survey responses from Logan, as in the past, there were many reports of rude staff and inappropriate, unprofessional conduct ranging from name-calling and cursing to Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) sexual abuse allegations. There even were reports that some staff, including healthcare staff, told people they hope the person does come to harm or gets COVID. Logan administrators responded, “*All allegations of staff misconduct are taken seriously and investigated.*”

Unfortunately, JHA continued to receive reports of unprofessional conduct and verbal abuse by some staff at the women’s prison during 2021 visits. Examples given of COs being disrespectful at Decatur included that they called women things like, “*fatass*” and “*retarded*” and told them to “*shut the fuck up.*” At Logan a particular staff member reportedly calls incarcerated women “*bitches*” and “*stupid,*” and she will write people up and take people to RH if they react to her abuse. One woman described that she speaks up when stuff happens, but then she gets retaliated against. For example, she reported that she had received a ticket for “*harassing an officer.*” Other women reported staff “*yelling*” and “*cursing.*” Administrators stated during the 2021 Decatur visit in response to concerns raised that Internal Affairs (IA) will investigate reports of staff being disrespectful. They said that women can write slips about staff behavior, and those go directly to IA. They acknowledge women will not necessarily know if there was any staff discipline outcome.

At Logan some women described that they felt they were not being offered coping skills to change their criminal thinking, mentioning in relation to this that staff “*scream and yell*” and are disrespectful to them.

Some women reported that staff had “*personal issues*” with incarcerated women. Some stated the COs are overly friendly and call women by their first names and act like they are friends and become offended if the women tell them it is inappropriate. Some women reported that staff said sexually suggestive things to them. One woman thought that prison officials changed her diagnosis so that they could claim that she was “*hearing voices*” and discount the abusive things said to her.

At Decatur, several people expressed that they felt staff were trying to make their time harder. One woman at Decatur stated she felt she was stuck in criminal thinking because staff would just deny women things when they were asking for something logical. Several women shared general mistrust of staff, in particular relating to the widely held and longstanding belief at Decatur that staff take donations meant for the women, discussed in the donations section below. In addition, some women at Logan during the July 2021 visit alleged that a particular staff member misappropriated funds intended for visiting room improvements to purchase a fan for her work area. JHA has no way to investigate this, but we mention it as this impression is telling of mistrust and the demand for better temperature control. Some other women at Logan also seemed very mistrustful or fearful of staff.

In addition, there were several reports of staff not being appropriately responsive to concerns, particularly as they relate to conflicts between women in their housing. For example, a woman JHA spoke to at Logan reported she was trying to get moved because she did not want to have an altercation with a roommate and she was “*not trying to regress*,” and she reported she had written to administrators, placement officials, and spoke with supervisors but had not heard back or was told that they “*can't do anything*.” Women need to have a clear method for attempting to resolve such issues, and staff should have expected timeframes for response.

At Logan, a woman stated she would like to be surveyed in the future, in addition to healthcare, about “*misconduct/mistreatment by the COs. As some treat us horrible call us names, threaten us, disrespect us and more. Also, some inmates are really bad/aggressive and force is needed. I have seen a lot in the times I have been here and Decatur. As so far the respect has got a little better for us. As this is the first time the COs called us "ladies" before it was bitches, hos, inmates or several other names.*” Another woman stated she was at Logan three years ago and could tell the administration was trying to make improvements and that CO conduct towards incarcerated people has improved, which she found encouraging.

Discrimination & Favoritism

During JHA’s February 2020 Decatur visit there were multiple reports that Internal Affairs (IA) discriminated against women who are perceived to be LGBTQ as well as some concerns regarding discrimination based on minority status. One person told us that she felt like she could not have friends because she was perceived as gay and was highly scrutinized and felt “*threatened and targeted*.” There was a specific report of a particular IA officer using inappropriate language likely rising to the level of a PREA sexual harassment claim, although the woman reporting it did not make that allegation. Some people, including staff, also reported that staff members were also discriminated against based on sexual orientation or race. Administrators responded to post-visit feedback in 2020 that “*As of July 2019, Implicit Bias training has been*

incorporated in our annual cycle training for all staff. Each staff will receive Implicit Bias training annually. Currently all IDOC training has been placed on hold due to COVID-19.”

In 2020, some women at Decatur also reported that there was “*lots of racial stuff*,” which JHA interpreted to mean concerns about equal treatment and discrimination. Some staff also reported concerns regarding this being an issue for them at the prison. The racial “balancing” of the rooms was viewed as discriminatory because of the impression that a room could not have only one white woman housed with other non-white women but would have one non-white woman and three white women and that that would be considered “balance” by the facility. In response to JHA 2020 visit feedback, Decatur administrators stated, “*Decatur Correctional Center is predominantly Caucasian at 71.5% The balancing is done statewide for the safety and security of all facilities. This is done to assist in preventing discrimination, gang issues, etc.*” However, very few women in IDOC, and particularly at Decatur, are identified as gang affiliated.

In Logan COVID-19 survey responses some people reported that some women got away with things and others did not. One woman at Logan wrote, “*The placement staff here is biased and places certain privileged individuals where they choose to be while purposefully placing other inmates on units with known enemies that have violent history. They refuse to give inmates protective custody and will not move inmates to safe housing units. Certain officers bribe inmates and vice versa to achieve outcomes, living arrangements and more.*” Administrators responded “*Placement of offenders is determined by security classification and the safety and security of the offender and facility. All requests for protective custody are investigated thoroughly.*”

In 2021, some women continued to report that there was staff favoritism for some women and not others. JHA received reports that staff would deny assignments if they did not like the person or due to a woman’s race. Another example given was that two women would be in an altercation and the punishment would be unequal, or that some women were allowed to go to work release with under a year left on their sentence while others were not. Many people at Decatur reported lack of consistency from staff, including not being consistent with rules. At Logan women reported similar concerns. For example, a bi-racial woman reported that she believed a particular administrator “*only likes Black women.*” Another woman opined that “*If you’re ugly, you get treated better. If you’re attractive, you get treated worse,*” which seemed to relate to investigations into inappropriate familiarity or involvement with staff.

Under a [2019 policy, 1.02.350. Addressing and Reducing Disparate Treatment and Impact](#), IDOC is supposed to be reviewing various practices to ensure fair treatment on the basis of race, color, or ethnicity. Administrators report COVID has delayed some of their work on this initiative. Decatur administrators provided some information showing that they are now tracking assignments, grievances, and discipline by race, as required by this policy. JHA commends this effort.

Fear of Staff Introducing COVID

“I do appreciate how hard they [staff] are working. I know it’s a hard time for everyone and that the staff is learning how to handle it just like we are. I just feel like some try really hard, and others just walk around with no mask, no gloves, and it is a little scary.”

– Logan COVID Survey Response

As JHA has previously reported, many incarcerated people and some staff throughout the pandemic and IDOC have expressed concerns regarding staff not wearing or wearing PPE improperly. In JHA COVID-19 survey responses, many women at Decatur reported that while staff were provided with masks and gloves in April 2020, they rarely wore them correctly. Many women reported that staff wore masks below their nose or around their neck. One woman at Decatur said she had asked a particular staff member to wear his mask, to which he reportedly replied, "[Grieve it.](#)" Additionally, earlier in the pandemic when there was greater concern about surface transmission, people were very concerned about cross contamination through staff. People had concerns about staff shaking down cells and touching their things without PPE or without changing gloves. There were concerns about healthcare staff touching things and parts of their own body while passing medications. For example, someone at Decatur wrote, "[They came around and took everyone's temp, didn't change gloves, but were touching doorknobs in gloves.](#)" Women also expressed concerns about staff hygiene such as lack of handwashing and failure to cover coughs and sneezes. Several women at Decatur mentioned fear regarding staff who had gone to work at Stateville where there was an early COVID outbreak reporting back to Decatur without quarantining.

During the June 2021 Decatur visit, JHA observed some masks worn under people's noses, including by an incarcerated worker in the staff dining area, suggesting that staff tolerated this. Some women at Decatur also reported that, in particular, vaccinated staff were not wearing masks at that time, which may have been an adopted practice but was not stated policy. During the July 2021 Logan visit, JHA visitors observed some men walking through a hallway without any masks and when we asked administrators escorting us about what was going on they said that everyone should be masked. In no instance during our visits to the women's prisons was lack of masking or improper mask wearing among staff challenged by other staff or administrators. Some women reported grieving staff not using PPE and said there was no change. Administrators said that they will review camera footage regarding complaints about staff not using PPE and that the safety officer also makes rounds to ensure compliance.

Staff Identification

After the February 2020 Decatur visit, JHA inquired regarding when we could expect staff names to be made visible on uniforms and administrators replied, "*IDOC is working closely with ICI [Illinois Correctional Industries] to have names embroidered on all IDOC staff uniforms. Staff have the option to pay out of pocket for their names to be embroidered if they do not want to utilize ICI. Discussions are still ongoing regarding this issue.*" During the June 2021 Decatur visit, JHA was told by administrators that staff are no longer required to have their name visible on uniforms, but they have to show identification on request. We were also told new staff would be issued embroidered polo shirts, but that with the ICI shutdown, both for the pandemic and due to reorganization, it was unclear that this was happening.

Room Searches

During JHA's 2020 Decatur visit several women reported that cell searches for compliance checks were not being conducted per protocol based on prior experience and were conducted as shakedowns, which was traumatizing. Administrators responded that "*Compliance checks are conducted daily to ensure offenders' room are clean and in accordance with our policies. We conduct shakedowns if deemed necessary for the safety and security of both staff and offenders.*"

The Women’s Division is providing Gender Responsiveness training to all staff which emphasizes on Trauma Informed Care and gender responsiveness for our offenders. Our staff are being provided with Search Procedure cards to use as a reference and to assist them with the proper procedures for a gender responsiveness shakedown.” They also stated that search training “is addressed with all staff during annual CYCLE Training. All staff are trained to conduct searches in a consistent manner using trauma based practices.” In responses to JHA’s COVID-19 survey, women expressed concerns about possible cross-contamination through staff searches.

Privacy Issues

In addition to physical plant concerns relating to living conditions, JHA also received some physical plant concerns relating to women’s lack of appropriate privacy. Lack of privacy can make people feel unsafe and traumatized. JHA has noted previously and again during the 2021 Logan visit that the “bubble” control room in a mental health housing area should be a female post as camera feeds from crisis cells have a view of the entire cell including the toilet. This camera view can also be seen by anyone passing the bubble in the hallway outside. While it is not a requirement that crisis cells be female posts in female facilities, it is **required** that people have the ability to avoid exposing themselves to nonmedical cross gender staff absent exigent circumstances or incident to routine cell checks, and watches are not considered cell checks. A simple solution is to use something to obstruct or blur the camera view of the toilet on the screen.

Some women at Logan reported that they usually hang sheets around their beds for privacy and were instructed to take them down for JHA’s visit. Generally, it is considered a safety concern in prison for people to obstruct views, although some privacy is reasonably expected from cross-gender staff for changing, showering, and toileting, although within IDOC people commonly have to use toilets in cells in view of their cellmate. Some women at Logan reported that, in a housing unit that JHA did not visit, barriers between the toilets had been knocked down, which could raise privacy concerns. Additionally, some women expressed privacy concerns in relation to COVID housing, e.g., someone wrote in response to JHA’s COVID survey about being in quarantine, *“Cameras in area I had to shower in while ill in isolation cell.”* Administrators replied that women were housed in an infirmary isolation cell, which has a shower in it, but did not indicate whether this area had camera coverage that would be a privacy concern. Some women at Decatur reported they wanted privacy dividers for showers and reported shower curtains had been removed due to mold. In 2020, Decatur administrators responded to JHA visit follow-up stating that the shower dividers were removed due to poor condition and noted they were still considering use of dividers, although lack of dividers had not been found to be problematic during their PREA audit. During the July 2021 Logan visit, some women reported that their shower areas lacked curtains.

Healthcare

General Healthcare

“The nurses have given me the wrong meds 3 times and got angry that I pointed it out. That doesn’t bode well for our safety.”

– Decatur COVID Survey Response

"We have been mistreated with our healthcare system on every level."

– 2021 Logan Letter

During JHA's 2020 Decatur monitoring visit, some people reported having to put in multiple sick call requests before being seen, and several shared that they did not think their medical concerns were taken seriously. JHA was disappointed to hear several women report that some nurses were very rude, unpleasant, unprofessional, or obstructive of proper care. For example, one nurse reportedly *"puts her finger in people's faces."* There were also a few concerning reports where people were reportedly perceived as *"faking"* by nursing staff, resulting in delays in treatment and emergency care being required.

In response to JHA's COVID surveys, women expressed general concerns about healthcare and wondered how IDOC would be equipped to handle COVID-19 cases. Someone at Decatur wrote it was taking three or four days to be seen for sick call and *"half the time, they don't even take you seriously."* Similarly, a woman wrote that because of prior dismissiveness of healthcare staff, she would not seek out healthcare again for any reason.

Women believed they could not sign up for sick call for anything other than COVID and some people reported they had given up trying to see healthcare because they had been repeatedly ignored. A woman in RH at Logan reported that she had put in four sick call requests, and it took five days for her to be seen. Administrators replied *"Daily sick call is done on the housing units and emergency care has been and is the priority, as the Office of Health Services has defined primary duties during Administrative Quarantine. Offenders are able to sign up for sick call. The more serious medical concerns are a priority after the emergency care. This practice is what outside medical providers are doing as well, triage care to minimize the exposure risk."* Some women reported issues with medication refills not being timely and medication errors were raised. Administrators stated, *"issues with medication are addressed immediately with the provider and any error corrected."* Women with asthma issues or attacks reported they were told they could not receive treatments. Administrators responded, *"at no time would any offender be denied medical care if they are having difficulty breathing. Asthma concerns or attacks are considered either priority care or emergency care."*

Other women with serious medical conditions reported not being able to get healthcare attention. For example, a woman reported she had an emergency grievance granted regarding a breast lump a month prior but had not heard back; a woman reported she was supposed to be seen for a mammogram follow-up due to cancer concerns and has heard nothing; a woman reported not being able to move her bowels and having issues related to a new pacemaker; a woman reported being told bleeding from her rectum did not merit medical attention; a woman reported her roommate had a severe tooth infection; and another woman was told she would be taken to an outside cancer specialist appointment *"after"* the pandemic. Administrators responded *"Logan CC has followed all protocol issued by OHS, which includes triage care of medical issues in order to reduce exposure risk. Outside medical providers have also triaged their appointments and procedures. These type of appointments are being made as the outside provider allows. Emergency dental treatment has been handled on a case-by-case basis with oversight from the HCUA [Health Care Unit Administrator] or DON [Director of Nursing]."*

In 2021, one woman shared that she thought the healthcare at Decatur was *"iffy,"* but in contrast to Logan, you can get treatment if you *"push."* JHA did not visit the Decatur healthcare unit (HCU) during the June 2021 visit due to a woman with active COVID being housed there. At Logan there were 12 women who were considered to be live-ins in the HCU. Logan's HCU also has three

crisis rooms and two isolation rooms. At Logan a housing unit located closer to the HCU houses many women with greater healthcare or Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) needs.

Women felt they were disbelieved regarding the severity of their symptoms. One woman at Logan reported that the prison would not send women to outside hospitals for care except in the most vital scenarios (e.g., if they stopped breathing, were seizing, or were unconscious for a sufficiently long period) and she believed this was due to the for-profit healthcare vendor's (Wexford) policy. Other women reported issues being seen by specialists. Some women said that they had heard of the [Lippert class action litigation](#) regarding inadequate healthcare within IDOC but they did not know how that case could help them or that many of the issues they reported were part of it.

JHA received several reports from women regarding lack of pain management. Some women reported denials of MRIs. JHA spoke with a woman at Logan who had a recent surgery for which pain medication would be expected, who reported that although her outside doctor had prescribed pain medication for her, and both the doctor and her mother had repeatedly contacted the prison, she was not receiving the prescribed medication. She said that staff told her it is all in her head and she did not need the medication. She was afraid of retaliation by staff for speaking to JHA. One woman told JHA that the nurses do not believe that her pain is intense, and that one nurse told her that “*god gives us pain for a reason.*” Some of the women who spoke to JHA about inability to access pain medications had drug convictions.

Another woman at Logan shared that she had back issues requiring surgery and that she had filed two emergency grievances during the pandemic and was supposed to be seen within three days, but that did not happen. Someone else at Logan reported that she was in pain, her legs were swollen, and she was supposed to receive an x-ray, but it was delayed, and healthcare staff would not even give her Tylenol for her pain. One woman reported it had taken her years to be evaluated for Hepatitis C and that she was told that she was not sick enough to be treated. Some women expressed concerns about the Logan HCU, including that it is not properly cleaned, or that it was running out of oxygen. Other women reported healthcare was poor and that women had to sign up for a healthcare visit three times before they saw anyone, and then were generally put off with the advice that painkillers and time would solve the problem. One woman reported that she had a bad knee and only after repeated complaints did she receive a foam knee brace, which she thought was inadequate to treat the problem. JHA visitors noted that some women seemed more upset about the poor healthcare provided to others than themselves. One woman wrote in the context of women being unable to access appropriate healthcare at Logan, “*Feelings of worthlessness is common among inmates.*” A few women reported that people had ringworm, MRSA, or scabies, and were not treated.

A woman at Logan reported that her friend was defecating blood for a year before she was sent to medical, where she was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer. She said this woman was told to treat blood in her stool with Tylenol and water. Women at Logan also reported that another woman found a lump in her breast, but the doctor said she was too young (in her 20s) for breast cancer, but it turned out she had stage 4 breast cancer.

“Nurses don’t even check intakes for lice before they are cleared and put into population. I have witnessed nurse handing over kits of Rit – to delice themselves back on their housing units – a product that could poison someone if they chose.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

JHA also received some concerns regarding healthcare privacy or concerns from incarcerated women regarding possible violations of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Women also reported that they were not given unspecified preventative medications and that health issues are compounded by bad diet lacking fresh fruits and vegetables.

ADA Concerns

[Equip for Equality](#) is Illinois’ federally funded Protection & Advocacy agency, which has the authority and mandate to monitor and protect rights of individuals with disabilities, and people in custody should be able to contact this organization.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, we found that some ADA physical needs of the women incarcerated there did not appear to be accommodated. Some women did not appear to understand how to get needed medical passes for accommodations. Women with apparent needs such as use of a cane or lack of teeth reported to JHA that they wanted a slow walking or eating pass, which had not been provided. Lack of ADA bars and shower chairs in showers was a reported issue for others. In response to JHA’s later COVID-19 Decatur surveys, someone wrote, *“Handicap inmates still must shower in common area without safety shower bars. This was brought up Feb. 28th when you came in for the last survey.”* In follow up to JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, we again also stressed concern that it may be an ADA violation for people to be [pay restricted](#) when they cannot score above a sixth-grade level on the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) or participate in mandatory ABE classes. The administrative code gives administrators the authority to waive pay restrictions but as a practical matter this rarely occurs and results in people doing the same work assignments as others but making less money. Some people reported that pay restrictions, as well as lack of opportunity to retest and potentially improve scores and be able to earn higher pay, prevented them from being able to buy needed items on commissary, including items necessary for hygiene or healthcare, which arguably IDOC should provide. It was also reported that older, less agile women had difficulty getting jobs, and we asked that administrators consider how to fairly make good time credits available to those who are medically unassigned.

In 2021 one woman at Logan JHA spoke with was hard of hearing and reported she had difficulty understanding people due to mask usage and the noise level in dayrooms, on top of the fact that her hearing aids were malfunctioning. Encouragingly, she reported she was receiving some help with her hearing aids and said she was also supposed to get a watch that gives notifications because she misses announcements. JHA was pleased to hear her report that women who are hard of hearing were allowed to use the phones on the unit after others so they could hear with less background noise, but we are not sure if this is IDOC policy or just based on the kindness of particular staff.

Dental

Some women reported they were unable to get dentures and that eating was difficult. Other women reported concerns regarding dental care generally. We were told by women during the 2020 Decatur visit that denture adhesive was provided at Logan while it had to be bought at Decatur, and that this was exhausting some women's resources. **JHA recommended review of this policy and again stressed the importance of uniformity across commissary within prisons.**

Mental Health

"I was labeled with major depression when I was five-years-old had 2 see a counselor twice a week. I continue 2 hear n see things Devils n Demon. Blood is pouring from my walls. I haven't had a one-on-one since [more than four months as of time of writing]... This is the Devil's playground we live in. Trust no one suspect all. I don't feel safe. I'm hopeless n helpless. I continue 2 tell them when I call a crisis n grieve them once again. I haven't been to sleep in days barely. ... At times I just want 2 die like I say I feel like I'm alone in this ... People plotting 2 kill me in my sleep ... My mind ain't 2gether right now it's out of control I continue 2 see dead bodies in my room ... I'm suffering mentally physically. I don't want 2 be bothered. Groups aren't helping any longer. We living on hell on earth. Can't wait 2 go 2 Heaven away from all this confusion. ... I believe I really need 2 go back 2 Elgin Hospital mental wise."

– 2021 Logan Letter

Counts of people on the mental health caseload in IDOC and identified as seriously mentally ill (SMI) are publicly reported monthly in [operations and management reports](#). As of July 2021, the mental health caseload at Logan was 805 women (~84%) and at Decatur was 209 (~79%). There were 362 women (~38%) identified as SMI at Logan compared to 88 (~33%) at Decatur. At Logan at the time of the JHA July 2021 visit, 86 women were reported to be living in mental health designated housing areas.

Women reported in JHA 2020 COVID survey responses that the lockdown and concerns about family were causing a lot of stress, that they were afraid, and some commented about lack of mental health support. Someone at Decatur wrote "*Lockdown and we get absolutely zero support.*" Someone else wrote, "*Since the COVID-19, they still have people here that have severe health and mental health problems that can't have the proper meds here like they can at home. I myself am one of those people with severe mental health, and they have taken away all my meds but two of them. But, my important ones I've been on for more than [X] years that really help me and are the best for me, I cannot have.*" Women wrote a lot about grief and loss. Some women reported issues related specifically to being mothers such as untreated post-partum depression or difficulty coping with being separated from their children. Someone at Decatur reported seeking help due to a family member's COVID-19 death and being told "*you're always in some kind of crisis*" by mental health staff. One woman at Logan whose mother died said that she was just given a packet on grieving in response.

Some women reported that calling a crisis was the only way to receive attention. At Logan some women reported non-responsiveness to crisis calls, e.g., "*The staff is also refusing to give inmates access to mental health crisis. An inmate attempted suicide because the staff ignored her cry for help for several hours prior to suicide attempt.*" Administrators responded "*Mental Health has*

been present on all housing units throughout the COVID crisis. Calls for crisis are answered within the appropriate time frame and addressed on every occurrence.” Some information regarding suicide, attempts, self-harm and use of crisis watch by IDOC is reported publicly in [quarterly reports](#) and [operations and management reports](#).

Administrators at Decatur during JHA’s June 2021 visit stated that having more one-on-one mental health treatment had been a positive during the pandemic and stressed that mental health staff had been making rounds on housing units, providing handouts, addressing triggers, and recognizing the “*importance of play*,” and stated that mental health staff were “*walking with the women throughout*.” A woman during the visit reported she had waited 12 days for a mental health response. Some women shared that they felt staff at the prison “*pushed medication*” for mental health treatment.

At Logan in July 2021, JHA visited mental health housing for women. In a higher-level area, staff reported that women had the opportunity to go to yard for an hour and a half three days a week. JHA visitors noted a cracked window in a cell door in a cell that was not in use, and we were told it had been broken for four months. Some women we spoke to seemed very low functioning or ill. We spoke to one woman in higher level mental health housing who reported she was soon “*maxing out*,” or being released due to the expiration of her sentence and her parole or Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR) term; this means she will be released without being on any further supervision. It was unclear what resources or supports were available to this woman upon release, raising concerns about how to ensure that people with higher needs who may benefit from a supervised handoff to community services receive care and assistance.

During interviews with women in mental health housing, sometimes it was unclear whether women were recounting things that had happened at Logan, Elgin, somewhere else, or if they were delusions. Regardless, we take all their reports and perceptions seriously, as listening to their concerns is the first step to addressing them and helping them feel safer. JHA spoke with someone who shared that she felt that some staff were inciting women and not stopping them from hurting themselves. Some women believe that no one is watching for crisis watches. Someone reported women are cutting and not telling, and said that after 8pm there are just COs and no mental health staff onsite. Someone said that mental health staff do not have any power. A woman described hitting her head on a wall and being told to “*bang it harder*.” Someone recalled that during her time at Elgin, she got a staff assault ticket because she had climbed on a sink to try to cut herself on a light, and while staff were pulling her down, she accidentally kicked them. One woman shared that she has a history of mental health institutionalization, she has habit of slipping cuffs, and that when this happens within IDOC she gets tackled and maced. Some security staff reportedly “*spray [mace] before they talk*.” A woman described being maced and strapped to a bed. Some information regarding use of chemical agents by IDOC is reported publicly in [quarterly reports](#) and [operations and management reports](#).

One woman in general population at Logan shared that a cellmate overdosed on seizure medication and her friend had to do chest compressions. A CO yelled at her and tried to pull her off the other person and would not believe that the cellmate was not breathing. Nurses ended up finding a very faint pulse. Afterwards, COs strip-searched the women because they blamed them for their cellmate’s overdose.

Some women expressed that they did not want to be housed in mental health housing and did not believe they were being appropriately reevaluated.

"My treatment plan meetings all went the same every 2 months, sometimes more. We never discussed a future date for recommendation or a goal to work towards ... So my treatment plans would not get updated, my progress was never charted all the treatment team brought up were when there was an incident. They never gave me credit for going months with good behavior and never planned to send me to a step-down unit."

– 2021 Logan Letter

Some women in mental health housing reported disciplinary issues that seemed to relate more to staff perceptions and lack of de-escalation skills, and not incarcerated women's actions. One woman wrote, *"I have been housed [in mental health housing] and sent back and forth to segregation for officers making false reports that I was threatening and intimidating them. And that I was appearing to be aggressive. I've been in group therapy and medication compliant with Logan mental health and I have had to deal with aggressive officers (male) and female inmates."*

One woman shared a confusing report that seemed to involve calling the PREA hotline and that there was particular Internal Affairs staff member who *"talks sexual"* to women and maybe was involved in sexual misconduct. JHA strongly encourages people to report any concerns regarding sexual abuse or harassment.

One woman in mental health housing reported that she has difficulty wearing a mask because of PTSD and past abuse. She wanted to be able to resume her work in the kitchen because she finds working therapeutic, but she could not without wearing a mask. JHA was pleased to hear that she was given an excused pass from her dietary work assignment, which we believe means she would continue to be paid. In the meantime, she reported the wing had no assigned porter and she was cleaning the wing to keep busy. **JHA is unsure why women could not have a paid porter assignment on a mental health wing with appropriate staff supervision and recommends this be reviewed.** In draft review, administrators stated that women in mental health housing are reviewed and considered for work assignments when they express interest.

Some women in mental health housing reported that COVID had been *"hard"* or *"rough."* Due to COVID, their dayroom time was severely limited, though some staff did not follow the schedule strictly and were more lenient. Some women said they had no issues to report and that groups were happening at the time of the July visit. Some reported they felt they had very good and understanding mental health staff. One woman praised the group therapy she has received and said it had helped her immensely. Women reported they had movie day, and JHA saw women doing activities in dayroom, like filling in advanced coloring books (purchased on the outside and sent in) and listening to music on tablets. One woman noted, as was discussed above in the electronic communication section, that the Wi-Fi in the rooms is not sufficient to reset tablets and they have to take them to the dayroom where reception is better for updates.

Substance Use Disorder Treatment

In follow up to JHA's February 2020 Decatur visit, we noted that the prison needed to provide substance use disorder treatment. The prison had been without a formal substance use treatment program since 2012, when a 120-bed program at Decatur was cut. In JHA's [2013 Decatur report](#)

we noted that women were “*deeply worried about their recovery, reentry, and sentencing credit eligibility.... Several women at Decatur expressed feeling trapped in cycles of addiction and crime that they wanted help to overcome.*” During the 2021 Decatur JHA visit, administrators expressed an understanding that almost all the women in custody suffer from trauma and addiction issues where drugs or alcohol may be used as a “*numbing agent.*” At the time of JHA’s June 2021 Decatur visit, administrators stated that outside vendor [WestCare](#) would be providing a 26-bed dual diagnosis (mental health and substance use disorder) treatment program but were waiting on some licensure to begin. Logan also reported that there was a forthcoming 26-bed WestCare dual diagnosis program coming to that prison, and there was already a substance use disorder treatment program on one housing unit. JHA looks forward to learning more about these programs on future visits.

In draft review, JHA requested more information about participation and waitlists for substance use disorder treatment programming, as well as information regarding the number or percentage of women identified as needing such programming at intake. Decatur administrators provided some information for WestCare programming stating that of the 96 women screened since July 1, 2021, when substance abuse treatment programming staff returned on grounds, the number of individuals in custody determined to be eligible for services, waitlisted or enrolled in programming was 86, or ~90%. Additionally, Decatur administrators stated that since October 1, 2020, clinical staff have completed a total of 244 assessments with individuals in custody, and 33 have had a case plan completed indicating they have had programming, treatment, educational or other needs of some kind identified, 11 women at Decatur were assessed but still awaiting case planning appointments. However, they stated that case planning has only been completed at Decatur within the last few months and they do not generate a case plan for individuals who score low on the tools used or who are within 12 months of their Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR), or parole, date, which is a high percentage of the population. Decatur administrators stated that individuals who are within 12-24 months of their MSR date are prioritized for case planning purposes.

The IDOC Women & Family Services division offers some drug education programming and “drug awareness.” However, the majority of substance abuse treatment programming throughout IDOC is provided by volunteers through programs such as Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous, which like other volunteer programming, has been suspended throughout the pandemic. Some women stated that the available substance abuse educational offerings, which were not considered formal treatment, were too short and of too limited availability. Administrators in 2020 reported: “*There were 120 Offenders that participated in Substance Abuse programing while at Decatur Correctional Center in 2019. We provide Drug Education Class which is a 12-week course for 5-days a week, and Drug Awareness class which is also a 12-week course. Every Offender in the Women’s Division is screened at Logan Correctional Center R&C with a Texas Christian University substance abuse assessment tool. In 2019, 533 offenders were given a Texas Christian University screening score. There were 366 offenders that met that criteria. The current waitlist at Decatur Correctional Center for the Drug Education class and Drug Awareness class is 220.*”

During the 2021 Decatur visit, some JHA visitors were particularly struck by the number of women with aggravated DUI offenses with no real resources or plan to deal with their addictions. JHA spoke with many women who were incarcerated for drug or alcohol offenses, many of whom were on a second or subsequent prison term for substance use issues. Some people reported they felt like no one in IDOC had read their file because they clearly needed treatment that they were not receiving. This also related to frustrations with counselors who were seen as supposed to be

helping women. One woman with multiple IDOC incarcerations, some of which involved driving under the influence of alcohol, described herself as a “*hard core addict*” and expressed concern that there was no programming or treatment for her substance abuse problems, including no AA. Administrators shared that some women took advantage of AA books and used electronic communications to stay in touch with their sobriety mentors. However, many women shared they felt there were not rehabilitative services for them, particularly those who had reported need for substance use disorder treatment. One woman shared that she was mandated by the court for substance abuse treatment but that only women with mental health dual diagnosis would be eligible for the program that was planned to start at Decatur. At Logan one woman said that she knew the dual diagnosis program was coming, but she felt that the eligibility criteria would exclude the people who most needed it. Another woman expressed she was happy to be in prison because it kept her from using drugs; however, she had less than half a year left to serve and was not in substance abuse treatment or on the waitlist despite wanting to be.

Transgender People in Custody

At Logan in 2021, administrators stated that transgender people could be housed throughout the prison. They noted that there were five trans men housed at Logan in addition to an unspecified number of trans women. Some trans women were housed in mental health housing and in the X-house. An incarcerated woman working in the X-house described that she cares for the trans women housed there and has people in her family who are trans, so she feels she has to look out for them. Some other women expressed particular concern about the treatment of trans women at Logan by staff and other incarcerated women. Others expressed concerns about transgender people having sex or fighting. For example, one woman reported being worried about trans women having sex in the prison because there are not condoms available and she is concerned about HIV, and she opined that trans women who have not had bottom surgery should be separated from other women. Some women stated that they did not want to live on a particular housing unit, which was reported to be a sort of “honor dorm” area, because in addition to having physical plant issues, like many other housing units, they believed that trans women would be housed there, and some people are reportedly not comfortable living in the same housing unit as “*men*.” As reported in JHA’s 2019 Logan report, IDOC is supposed to be offering additional transgender training to staff and implicit bias training to both staff and the incarcerated population. Housing for transgender people should be determined on a case-by-case basis. There is ongoing [class action litigation](#) relating to treatment of transgender people in IDOC.

One trans woman shared with JHA that she felt staff were discriminating against her. She reported getting many tickets over a short period because staff would write her false intimidation tickets in an attempt to get her transferred. She felt she is mostly treated well by other women now although it took a long time, and she reported that previously other women would make false PREA allegations against her in attempts to be moved out of X-house. She did not like being single-celled and reported she self-harms as a result of the isolation, and then staff uses that as a reason to keep her in mental health housing as opposed to general population.

Productive Activity

In responses to JHA’s 2020 COVID-19 surveys people continued to want more programming. One woman wrote, “*Why can’t all of us stuck in our rooms sign these contracts and start getting*

days, maybe help keep our minds occupied and expand our knowledge.” One woman at Decatur stated during the pandemic that women there just *“Lay on beds 14 months.”* Another woman asked, *“How are we being rehabilitated if just in our room?”*

At Decatur women reported lack of programming in general. During JHA’s February 2020 Decatur visit we noted puzzles in use, which brought color and imagery and some activity to units. By the time of the June 2021 visit, one JHA citizen volunteer commented that jigsaw puzzles appeared to be the main or sole activity available for many women. Apparent ongoing use of shared jigsaw puzzles and card games in dayrooms also contrasted with requirements for distancing for phone use and prohibitions on other recreational activities. Administrators stressed that women need to look for opportunities on their own in the absence of available formal programming and begin their studies or rehabilitation efforts where they can, and noted they have been encouraging people to work on things their own through self-help books from the library, etc. when they cannot get into programming. One woman at Decatur reported she was doing a paralegal class through the mail on her own, which she had to pay for. **JHA continues to recommend that IDOC establish a formal program to train incarcerated law clerks and increase access to paralegal training for individuals in custody.**

Overall, women complained of lack of productive activity. People in IDOC are reasonably most interested in programs, groups, and work activities where they can earn sentencing credit, or “good time.” One woman at Logan reported that women were being assessed for some groups, but those groups were not happening. There was a common perception at Decatur that there was no programming available for long-termers. Several women mentioned the need to give people with long incarceration terms some hope. It seemed that in order to get into programming people needed *“Goldilocks time,”* e.g., time that was not too little or too much but that was just right, making it hard to qualify. One woman who was serving a long sentence was upset that because programming was determined by outdate and women who had been in trouble got into programs over people with good behavior if their outdate was sooner. Another stated that since programming is focused on people who are being released, every time there is a transfer of new women in, she gets kicked back on the waiting list. Some women also believed that people were not spending sufficient time in programs when prioritized by their outdates. For example, they reported women would spend just a week in class before release.

While at Decatur administrators stated that everyone (post-intake quarantine) will have a work or school assignment, at Logan many women are unassigned. Decatur administrators reported that as of March 2021 there were 254 women (~94%) with program assignments and 209 (~77%) with job assignments. JHA did speak to some women who also reported they still wanted assignments at Decatur. Some women at Logan stated they believed there was not any activity for the vast majority of the population, particularly people with who were not eligible for day-for-day sentencing credits or were sentenced under Truth in Sentencing (TIS). In draft review, Logan administrators stated that 31% of their population was unassigned but of those women only 24% were considered eligible to have an assignment. They stated for the 7% who were not eligible these individuals may be on C Grade, mental health housing or housed in healthcare, but they clarified that people considered ineligible for assignment will be continually reviewed and have individual case plans to determine whether they can be assigned, and that these statuses alone do not preclude someone from being assigned and some people in these statuses do have assignments.

In draft review, in response to JHA’s concerns regarding lack of productive activity during ongoing COVID restrictions, Decatur administrators responded that as of the end of October 2021, *“There has been no change to the protocol relative to movement within the facility; however,*

programming did begin again in the early months of 2021. This allowed the women to participate in programming in the LTS area of the institution. There have been intermittent medical quarantines which did impact various housing units. During this time programming did continue with informational packets. The women have had access to the gym, patio and yard when not in quarantine status during 2021. There has been virtual programming that the women have enjoyed in recent months. Additional virtual programming will be discussed as the opportunities for this type of programming become available. The Leisure Time Staff have done a phenomenal job in ensuring that the women continued to be afforded an opportunity to take part in the services offered in this area of the facility.”

Outdoor Time

“We are no longer allowed outside at all. We are locked in our rooms 24 hours.”

– Logan COVID Survey Response

JHA has been very concerned by pervasive reports of lack of outdoor recreation during the pandemic within IDOC over prolonged periods and has shared these concerns with administrators. For example, in JHA’s COVID-19 survey responses from Logan, largely from late April and May 2020, a few women mentioned that the only time they had been outside since the beginning of the pandemic was walking outside on the way to their a once-a-month telepsych appointment. Women expressed desire to go outside in responses to JHA’s COVID survey, notably in Logan’s mental health housing, where JHA has received prior complaints regarding yard limitations. In JHA’s COVID-19 surveys at Decatur, only 13 women in survey responses reported having access to yard. Someone wrote, *“Yard was scheduled to open in April [2020], but we are not allowed to go - even though we get herded to chow in groups of 50 without social distancing. At least at yard, I could practice social distancing.”* Another woman wrote, *“Please let us go to yard. Not the patio but the yard.”*

As mentioned briefly above, Decatur benefits from having a “patio” outdoor space accessible from housing units. In survey comments from Decatur, there were many reports of having some access to patio, but some women said they had none. For example, someone wrote that staff on their unit was *“just not feeling like being bothered with opening our patio,”* and some women wrote about their unit having less access to patios than others, e.g., *“C and B [housing units] have to share a patio, so we get patio three times a week. This is not fair!”*

In Logan COVID-19 survey responses, some people reported getting threatened with moves to segregation and C grade tickets, which were perceived to also be cutting people off from outside communication, for trying to walk in the housing unit halls for some exercise during quarantine lockdowns. Administrators responded that *“During Administrative Quarantine, all women are to remain in their rooms unless going to the restroom or attending scheduled dayroom/phone/shower/patio/yard.”*

During the June 2021 Decatur visit, JHA observed many women taking advantage of the large outdoor patio spaces, with some walking laps, and with others just getting fresh air. Some women reported patio areas had not been open for their use during the pandemic until sometime in March 2021. It is typical that IDOC restricts outdoor activity at certain temperatures. Women described having been in *“lockdown”* with *“no ventilation”* for the majority of the pandemic. Women continued to report that they were told there was not enough staff to run yard and that they were repeatedly told *“yard will be rescheduled”* but it never was, and women at Decatur reported they had not had

yard for two weeks prior to the JHA visit. Some women described the posted schedules to JHA as “*lies*.” Also, some women reported that patio time sometimes overlaps with dietary times. At Logan, women also reported that when a shift is short-staffed, they do not get to go to yard. JHA has also continued to receive similar lack of outdoor time concerns from male prisons.

Recreation

During the 2020 Decatur visit, multiple people reported that access to Leisure Time Services (LTS), the gym, and activities were positives at this prison. Prior to COVID, LTS offered monthly tournaments, CrossFit, and yoga. During the pandemic LTS staff posted workouts that women could do on their own. At the time of JHA’s June 2021 visit, one woman at Decatur shared that she had stopped exercising on her housing unit because it was so repetitive. Women said they were not allowed to jump rope or run. At that time, the gym was reportedly open for three hours a day, compared to pre-COVID when the hours were 7am to 3pm. At the time of the visit, staff stated they were not allowed to have events or use equipment. JHA visitors were told the gym capacity limit was 50 at once, but they have never been close to that and sometimes, as was the case during our visit, there were only a couple of people there, although half of a housing unit was reportedly allowed to go to the gym at once. Women noted it did not make sense to them that they can go to school or dietary with people from other housing units but could not go to the gym with the same people.

At the time of JHA’s June 2021 visit, the Decatur gym was in use but only by two women who were doing classroom non-physical Pride month craft educational activities. Another example of the supervised, staff-guided activities for women included knitting. Staff noted they just got art supplies the day before. Leisure Time Services (LTS) staff wanted to open up gym activities but was currently limited in what could be offered. One woman stated that she wanted to be able to work out. Others stated that they wanted to play volleyball or basketball, do CrossFit or aerobics, and use equipment. Such activities had been restricted for over a year. People said that administrators said over and over that tournaments were going to come back soon, but they had not. They noted that gym or game equipment could be sanitized, and that physical activity was a stress release. Staff reported at one point Decatur had five LTS staff, but currently there was one and a position posted.

One positive was that for Mother’s Day, LTS at Decatur was reportedly able to take photos of women without masks to send home to their families. However, at the time of the visit, people reported that use of cameras was “under review” so incarcerated people could not get their pictures taken, which is an activity they enjoyed.

Education

Prior to the pandemic, at the time of JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, 43.76% of the Decatur population were in formal educational programming; 180 women were reported to be in educational classes (Adult Basic Education (ABE) or Adult Secondary Education (ASE)) and 55 were in vocational classes (custodial, culinary, or horticulture). As of February 29, 2020, at Logan 12.54% of the population were in formal education programming; 153 women were reported to be in educational classes (ABE or ASE) and 43 were in vocational classes (construction, cosmetology, nail technician, or horticulture).

As of May 31, 2021, 46% of the Decatur population were in formal educational programming; 101 women were reported to be in educational classes (ABE or ASE) and 20 were in vocational classes (career technologies, culinary, or horticulture). As of May 31, 2021, at Logan just 11.36% of the population were in formal education programming; 102 women were reported to be in educational classes (ABE or ASE) and seven were in vocational classes (construction or horticulture).

During JHA's 2020 Decatur visit, women reported not being able to retake the Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) and this resulting in pay restrictions. **JHA noted that retesting should be made available, as well as strongly recommending peer education tutoring be made available to help women improve their educational levels, as formal programming was not adequately available to meet needs.** During COVID, JHA heard from several prisons that they had not been TABE testing people and had to catch up. In 2021, a woman at Logan reported she was trying to get into school but had not had a TABE test in many years.

Several women at Decatur reported that they were taking college classes at Logan and lost that opportunity on transfer to Decatur. **JHA advised that Decatur should offer college credits so that women would see being moved to this minimum-security prison as a positive, or at least not detrimental, transfer from Logan.**

During JHA's June 2021 Decatur visit, some women reported that their GED teacher was missing classes and that they did not get packet work when they could not go to class, so missing classes meant they were not earning credits. Women also reported that class shut down for a week because of new intakes.

Many women reported that because programming is based on outdated, they were not able to be in school. There is a waitlist for school, and women getting out sooner jump to the front, continually pushing back people serving longer sentences. One woman had a forty-year sentence and commented that she wanted to be in school because she needed something to work towards. During JHA's Decatur visits, women requested that the beauty shop provide certification and license upkeep for participants. JHA supported this idea as it would be a good use of space and efforts already in place. Administrators stated that they had tried for years to get a cosmetology certificate program at Decatur but not been successful. Logan has cosmetology and nail technician vocational programs.

JHA was not able during this visit to view the new Northwestern University classroom at Logan, but administrators were proud to have this new volunteer higher-education opportunity at the prison and JHA looks forward to learning more about this new initiative on future visits.

Industry & Dog Programs

During JHA's February 2020 Decatur visit, JHA was pleased that the Illinois Correctional Industry (ICI) warehouse for garment making was offering a forklift certification program and 10 women had been certified. There were about 40 ICI positions at Decatur. Women also reported really enjoying the dog grooming program, although only about eight women participated. One wrote in her survey response, "*I work in the dog grooming class and although this program needs more space here it is a blessing to learn and be able to go home with a new trade.*" Administrators boasted that women who participated in that program had a high rate of post-incarceration employment. There were about 30 positions in the garment ICI program. However, during the

2021 Decatur visit, the ICI programs were suspended, including the dog grooming program. After, JHA's 2020 visit, we had inquired regarding ability to increase participation given the grooming program's impressive post-incarceration employment rate and the therapeutic benefit of the program. Administrators at that time indicated that there were ongoing conversations about how to perhaps expand the program with a dog obedience component, and also agreed that having a therapy dog onsite (as has been the case in the past at Decatur and as at Logan) would be beneficial. We were told that the Decatur industry programs are supposed to come back eventually, but at the time of the visit, no one reported that they had heard anything about when that would occur. They just knew [ICI was going to be changing](#). JHA enjoyed seeing that the [dog training program](#) was active at Logan during our July 2021 visit. The dogs were furloughed at one point earlier in the pandemic, but we were told this program was ongoing through COVID. Some women housed in the unit where this program was located expressed significant concerns about physical plant conditions, which JHA observed, and some expressed that they felt that staff paid more attention to the dogs than people on the programming housing unit. Given that several women who participated in the Logan dog program had long sentences left to serve, it was unclear what the planned reforms to ICI and increased focus on giving people skills for release would mean for continued eligibility for participation.

In draft review, IDOC officials stated that Decatur was going to be a pilot site for new vocational training. They reported that in the future, *“Individuals in various correctional facilities will have the opportunity to experience a construction simulator and explore construction trades as a post-employment opportunity. The simulator is a training tool for individuals to learn how to operate heavy equipment, such as a bulldozer, excavator, end loader, and others, all within the correctional setting. Individuals utilizing the simulators are seated on a moving platform and are able to work the controls and view a virtual reality situation, as they perform the virtual “work.” The simulators can provide participants with high demand skill sets for entry in the job market. The usage for individuals can be tracked and each individual can demonstrate their competencies on each piece of equipment. The individual in custody can also be provided their training record with test scores on the different training modules which they are allowed to give to a potential employer. Specific to the female population, research has indicated that women are some of the best individuals to complete this training as they are currently considered a minority in the construction industry, thus enhancing their ability to obtain employment post-release.”*

Work Assignments

Women at Decatur reported wanting to get work assignments, work release, and to create more opportunities for their children and themselves. Some women JHA spoke with at the minimum-security prison reported being denied certain jobs within IDOC due to criminal history but noted that others with violent offense convictions, such as murder, were allowed those jobs or placement in work release. One woman described being denied assignments because of her offense but noted that she was convicted under accountability theory for someone else's violent conduct, which likely did not result in bodily harm based on the charge, and which she was appealing. Another woman with a relatively short incarceration term – so presumably not a serious offense – also reported having trouble getting a job in prison even though she has no disciplinary tickets and was willing to do any job. At Logan, JHA spoke with supervisors and workers who reported that the stability of a steady job helps with incarcerated people's mental health. Several women reported they wanted jobs despite having long sentences. A woman in general population at Logan with a very long sentence, likely indicating a murder conviction, reported she had been waiting four years for a job. Another reported she had been waiting 10 months so far. Women

raised the question of whether women with Driving Under the Influence (DUI) offenses that resulted in a bodily harm or death would be approved for certain work assignments at Decatur. Some women thought lack of assignment was due to administrators exercising discretion. Work assignment preclusions should be transparent. At both prisons staff reported not having as many incarcerated workers as they would like to have, particularly in dietary, which suggests that IDOC should consider assigning more people, even while using smaller cohorts of workers. Unfortunately, with COVID restrictions, JHA has seen fewer workers on longer shifts instead of IDOC offering shorter shifts to more people.

Boot Camp

Administrators explained that the [boot camp](#) program (also known as Impact Incarceration) for women was going to be “re-booted” onsite at Logan instead of Dixon Springs where it had been located in the past and would be on a specific housing unit. One stated this was because “*We know what to do with women.*” In contrast, they seemed to feel that the prior Dixon Springs program was too men-centric and did not have the right resources for women. Female boot campers had been returned to Logan during the pandemic from Dixon Springs and were housed in a wing of the X-house. Some women had dropped out of the program during the pandemic because they were more restricted than the people who were not in the program at Logan. This is unfortunate because boot camp offers the best sentencing reduction of any IDOC program: a one to eight-year sentence can be reduced to time served upon successful completion of a 120-day boot camp program.

Religious Services

During the 2021 Decatur visit, women reported there were no religious services, that some people did not have bibles, and the prison was without a Chaplain. A woman said that her COVID symptoms were so severe she feared death and desperately tried to get a bible to pray but could not. Administrators replied that they do their best to reach out to individuals like the Chaplain at Lincoln to fill needs, but that 90% of religious services are volunteer-run, and at the time of the June 2021 JHA visit were still not occurring. They stated that the Decatur Chaplain position has been vacant for a long time, and it was hard to fill temporarily because of the need for a specific certification. In Logan 2020 COVID survey responses, some women wrote about lack of religious services. Administrators responded, “*Religious services are being offered, the schedule has been altered,*” explaining that the Chaplain conducts rounds weekly and was holding Christian services each Sunday, the Rabbi comes once a month, and that they were working with a Catholic priest and an Imam to develop a schedule to visit at Logan, as those services had not been offered during the pandemic. During the July 2021 Logan visit, some women commented that church services were still not occurring.

Re-entry Preparation

In 2020 surveys, only 9% of the Decatur respondents agreed that rehabilitative programming was adequate and 14% reported helpful re-entry information was provided by staff. During the 2021 Decatur visit, women continued to report concern regarding lack of programming, and some requested more re-entry programming, but others noted being given re-entry information. As noted above, 43.5% of Decatur’s population had less than a year left to serve on their sentence and another 20.7% had between one and two years. Nearly two thirds of the Decatur population

will parole in two years or less – and it is likely to be less, given time left to serve is calculated without the application of possible sentencing credits that will further reduce incarceration length.

In contrast to what was anticipated at the time of JHA’s prior Logan visit, the Life Skills Re-entry Center (LSRC) for women based at Logan seemed to be a diffused effort during the July 2021 JHA visit. Administrators stated they offer re-entry assistance wherever women are housed. Women in the LSRC housing area were able to finish their contracts via packet work but there was some concern that the dedicated housing for the program might be resulting in over programming. Providing too much treatment or too much treatment to people at low risk can have negative effects on outcomes.

Administrators at Logan proudly mentioned that women had written for and collaborated with the publication “[Two Roads](#)” out of Kewanee LSRC and may be involved in a podcast. Administrators stated that during COVID there was no traditional “parole school” offered, which orients people leaving prison to Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR), or parole, requirements, because they could not mix people from different housing units. As of July 2021 at Logan, administrators reported women who are paroling soon come into the resource room by unit, where they can do things like sign up for food stamps and work on getting IDs. They stated that this set up allows for a more individualized process.

JHA spoke to one woman at Logan who was doing dead time (or was incarcerated past her projected MSR date) due to not having approved housing. She was aware of the [Murphy class action litigation](#) that attempted to address the issue for people on the sex offender registry who could not find housing. She felt that IDOC staff was not helping her find somewhere to go; however, she has since paroled. JHA has [published information](#) based on publicly available data from IDOC that shows that as of the end of 2020, 3.11% of the women in IDOC were incarcerated for sex offenses and another 0.21% were incarcerated for registry violations.

Administrators noted the need for better re-entry connections to non-Cook counties. At Logan, as only about 30% of their population is going to be returning to Cook County, they are building bridges in other communities. They stated that mental health staff will help arrange appointments in the community but noted that sometimes they do civil commitments to mental health facilities from Logan. For example, one person went to a mental health nursing home.

Work Release

Women at Decatur in June 2021 stated that no one had been approved for [work release](#) from the prison for weeks, and there was a rumor that there are not enough workers at Decatur to keep things running, so staff were holding people back from work release so they could work jobs at the prison. Some women also reported they believed that Logan kept sending people on work release, but those approved at Decatur were not sent. Some women said that it took three months for someone to be approved, but then they would arbitrarily be kicked out. One woman at Decatur shared that she had been approved for work release, but that her participation was delayed because of COVID and by the time it opened back up, she was ineligible because she had under a year left to serve. Other women said some people were allowed to go to work release with under a year left to serve, while others were not, as an example of staff favoritism. The administrative code states that a person just needs more than two months left to serve; however, with the

uncertainty of sentence credits, this may be impracticable and need to be revised. Again, preclusions should be transparent.

Sentencing Credits

At the time of the June 2021 Decatur visit, prison staff were waiting for IDOC’s legal counsel to clarify how the [new sentencing credit](#) policy would be implemented as of July 1. Women were desperate for information about this and there were lots of rumors. Seeing as laws are implemented months after they are passed, it would seem to make everyone’s jobs easier if guidance would be issued further ahead of implementation dates so that people could plan ahead, and the process could be expedited. One woman said that security staff had told women that there was a list of people who would be out the door on July 1, which she thought was maybe said just to tease them. It would make a huge difference in this woman’s life if she was getting out in July instead of months later, but she had no way to know. Some women referred to memos from the law library that they reported said things that were likely misunderstandings or incorrect

Women were concerned that the law library was limited due to COVID and that there was only one notary for all of Logan. Women continue to seek more help for post-conviction relief as well as civil legal issues. One woman wrote to JHA seeking help with getting word processing capacity while access to libraries is restricted.

based on JHA’s understanding of the legislative change. Not having access to the actual laws, memos, or knowledgeable staff input was likely causing spread of misinformation. Someone at Decatur asked, “[Why can’t new laws be posted on our units? Not everyone goes to the library.](#)” Tablets could also be better used for sharing more departmental and other information, as also noted in [JHA’s Spring 2021 Communication Response Summary](#).

Uncertainty surrounding sentencing credits remains a major stressor for people within IDOC. People reported that the criteria for discretionary credits are unclear, and it seemed like a lottery or that there was unfair application. JHA observed that many women who appeared to be doing all they could to be positive and successful were feeling defeated

seeing others get credits when they did not. Receiving sentencing credits can make a huge difference in people’s lives and outdates, for childcare plans, etc. **JHA again strongly recommended moving to a system with more certainty, e.g., proactively granting credits in advance that are people’s to lose, as the current lack of certainty and seeming arbitrariness is very hard on people. JHA also continues to encourage IDOC to make more current data available regarding use of sentencing credit.** One woman who reported she was denied good time for “[no reason](#)” had a conviction history including aggravated battery of a peace officer, which may have precluded her. We noted that there are many rumors circulating in the population about people getting credits that we imagine could be disproved if data were made available, e.g., people with 100% are getting it, or that some facilities give it and theirs does not.

A Decatur administrator stated that women could contact the records office via request slip to find out eligibility for sentencing credit and that they go over this in orientation and noted that hope of

sentencing credit time off is dangerous because it is not guaranteed and sometimes it is calculated wrong.

Some women expressed that they do not think it is fair that no sentence reduction or sentence credit programs apply to women incarcerated under Truth in Sentencing (TIS), e.g., those serving sentences at 85 or 100%. JHA spoke to women who were sentenced under TIS who wanted to be able to get good conduct credit or at least have their conduct noted in their files, which could be considered in clemencies, or in case laws preventing them from being eligible for such sentencing credits change in the future and are applied retroactively.

Based on JHA's initial analysis of IDOC's publicly available dataset of the population including information about holding offense and the current legal eligibility requirements for sentencing credits, as of June 2021, about 82% of women at Decatur would be eligible for sentencing credits,⁵ while only about 47% of the women at Logan would be eligible.

Physical Plant Conditions

During the 2020 Decatur visit, women reported that repairs, such as fixing lights, took a long time. In 2020 surveys, 63% of the Decatur respondents disagreed that when something was broken it was fixed in a timely manner, while 14% agreed. Broken tiles, mold and peeling paint were observed in several locations, and JHA noted the same or similar issues in June 2021.

As noted in the Executive Summary, physical plant concerns dominated the July 2021 Logan visit. While JHA visited several areas with poor living conditions, we were told by women and staff of even more locations with maintenance issues. For example, women expressed concern about asbestos or water in the gym, which was not a location visited and it was not in use due to COVID. One woman said of Logan simply "*The place is falling apart.*" Another described conditions as "*not livable.*" Others believed there was no funding for repairs.

Women throughout Logan reported issues with things broken in rooms and cells, water leaks, and standing water in bathrooms. Some women opined that maintenance does not do their jobs or stated that it takes several weeks for maintenance issues to get fixed. One stated that the plumber used to keep up, and that lately there were "*shenanigans.*" Some reported that COs do not submit work orders, while others felt that the work orders submitted did not get addressed. A woman told JHA that the roof that collapsed had a work order in for three years.

In addition to ceiling and roofing issues, women reported, and JHA observed, holes in walls and floors. Someone at Logan told JHA that the wall around the floor of her cell is black and they patched it up with tape and sanitary pads, and then got in trouble for stealing tape. JHA observed another wall was patched with feminine hygiene pads. Someone stated "*The walls are caving in.*" Several women reported holes let in pests.

JHA was disturbed to hear several women report that staff think that they do not deserve better living conditions. Others said that staff treat them "*like we're ruining it,*" when the deterioration of

⁵ However, IDOC's dataset also counts women at Fox Valley ATC work release at the parent facility of Decatur, so they would be included in this percentage.

their living areas is largely beyond the women’s control. One stated that an administrator had said the sewage issues were their fault, e.g., from flushing inappropriate things. One individual in custody yelled out to JHA visitors something about women there being used to “*living in outhouses*,” and that “*things happen, it’s okay*.” We are unsure if this person was being sincere in parroting what other women told us they hear from staff, that these conditions are somehow acceptable for women in prison, or if they were being performative for staff or ironic.

Temperature and Ventilation

“We have no windows that open. It’s super hot. I have an 8 inch fan which I need. I have asthma as well. They say we have 2 stay in our rooms or go outside when it’s over 90 degrees and extremely hot in our rooms n outside. This isn’t right or fair. Unprofessional. [Someone] died not 2 long ago from a heat stroke.”⁶

– 2021 Logan Letter

“Living in a building where the heat has gone out for days – in Jan 2020 we froze 4 days with temps inside 19°. I slept in my winter coat, hat, and I was lucky others didn’t have full body jackets and four blankets. I had cold burn on my cheeks (the only body part exposed) for a week afterwards. This is a regular occurrence since I have been in prison.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

During JHA’s February 2020 Decatur visit, women reported some rooms were very cold. One woman stated that it took two weeks to get an extra blanket. Reportedly women had been requesting plastic to cover the windows in rooms or trying to prevent drafts from poorly sealed windows. The window in an eight-woman room was reported to be icy, and women said they were moved out of that housing on the day of JHA’s visit. The disciplinary segregation unit was also reported to be cold. In 2020, Decatur administrators responded: “*The room temperatures are monitored closely by our Stationary Engineers. The room temperatures may vary. Some rooms particularly the 8-person room tend to be colder than others due to the cold air returns in the room. Currently our population is low which allows affords us the ability to keep the 8-person rooms vacant. In the event we need to utilize the 8-person room, our maintenance department will seal the windows and ensure there is plastic on the windows to prevent the additional air.*” Although Decatur benefits from being one of the few IDOC prisons with air conditioning in all housing units, women reported it had been nonfunctional at times during the 2020 JHA visit. However, during the June 2021 Decatur visit, JHA was told that new chillers were installed in the last year and we did not receive complaints.

At Logan, women discussed issues with heat. Some reported it was stressful, particularly with recent power outage issues, not knowing if they will have access to fans or cold water. It was unclear if AC was reliably working for areas housing women with medical or mental health issues. JHA continued to receive reports of extreme heat and AC being out in some areas into August 2021. Some women reported that they were only getting ice from the ice machine once a day at 8pm, but they really needed ice during the day when it was the hottest out. Others reported that

⁶ In draft review, IDOC administrators stated that although the death occurred on a hot day, it was not heat related. JHA requested any additional information that could be shared, to date no other information has been provided.

the X-house, which housed women in RH, intake, and other statuses, reportedly lacked an ice machine.

At Decatur there were reports that air vents had not been cleaned in a long time and some people reported related sinus issues. In June 2021, one woman said “*dirt snows*” from vents in rooms. Women at Decatur reported lack of ventilation on housing units and in bathrooms. At Logan some women said that their housing unit usually feels like a sauna, due to poor ventilation. Others noted ventilation is poor in the X-house. Ventilation in bathrooms is discussed in that section below.

Some women at Logan also expressed concern regarding smoke from people burning things outside.

“Living in buildings where there is not ventilation to be subjected to burn materials (such as our mattress pads they took), toxic to inhale materials. We are subjected to every summer, fall, and spring months. (Not just the coal burning.) The smoke gets inside our building, choking us, burning our eyes, nose, and throat for hours on end, giving us headaches and making us nauseated and most likely to cause cancer in the future.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

Bathrooms and Plumbing

“Both of these prisons [Decatur and Logan] are fairly old and falling apart. They both have black mold issues all throughout the campus. Certain wings/houses have closed due to mold issues. ... [In Logan’s X-house] there is mold all over inside that building even in spots you can’t see. As some inmates have bad reactions/allergies to mold and the healthcare does nothing about it. The X-house also has plumbing issues really bad. As several cells are closed due to sinks and toilets being broken. Some can’t be flushed and get covered with a plastic bag over the toilet that creates even more mold. In some of the “houses” there is mold in the bathrooms really bad plumbing issues in there too and rooms/cells have mold by the windows due to them being open a lot because there is no air conditioning.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

During the 2020 Decatur visit, women in various locations reported issues including broken showers, sinks and toilets, leaks, and lack of water pressure. At the time of the visit, administrators reported a plumber vacancy. There were also several reports of concern regarding mold and rust, and discoloration in various areas was observed. Some women at Decatur reported concern regarding possible asbestos exposure because workers were wearing masks when working on the showers, but the women did not have any protection, and some reported that the showers vent directly into their room and this was “*scary*.” People reported that showers are typically unclean, and that silverfish are present in the drains. In 2020 Decatur administrators responded, “*Our showers are cleaned daily by a designated shower cleaning crew. Our showers are inspected by our Safety and Sanitary Coordinator. If the showers are in violation of a Safety and Sanitation standards, our maintenance department addresses the concerns immediately. This would include any reports of mold.*” In JHA’s later 2020 COVID-19 Decatur surveys, women continued to report concerns about shower cleanliness, including mold and bugs.

JHA visitors observed during the 2021 Decatur visit that some showers were not clean and had mold. Women also reported some of the shower heads did not work or that showers closer to the

doorway flood into the hallway when in use. Some women reported black mold (which they feared had negative health effects) in the showers. One woman shared that she thought Decatur was more sanitary than Logan, but still not great. In September 2021, JHA received a report that Decatur lacked hot water and women were told it would take a long time to resolve and there were concerns that people were not showering.

In response to JHA's COVID survey at Logan, we received many concerning ongoing reports of physical plant issues. For example, some women reported having no running water or working toilets for days. In COVID survey feedback JHA raised these issues to administrators and wrote, *"Plumbing issues, in general, as always, were frequently raised. Are you actively working to address such issues or is plumbing not considered essential? People's concerns about non-functional plumbing and standing water were heightened due to COVID-19 concerns. ... Many of the same physical plant issues, such as bathroom and ceiling conditions, observed and reported on for years at Logan continued to be raised."* Administrators responded *"All physical plant issues have been reported/documented. Our maintenance department is working to mitigate the issues daily, as quickly as possible."*

During the July 2021 Logan visit, women reported broken fixtures and other plumbing issues on various housing units and reported things were broken for extensive periods. On the X-house, JHA noted cells doors posted with signs, e.g., *"no lights, toilet broke."* A JHA visitor was told that incarcerated women made these posts to alert staff of maintenance needs. JHA spoke with a CO in the X-house who also identified maintenance issues as the most important concern, noting that in that area they have been trying to cut down the number of cells that cannot be used. Some staff stated that toilets were broken because women would not stop flushing inappropriate things. JHA noted that many cells were posted that they had plumbing issues and were not in use; a JHA visitor counted that there were at least 15 cells posted indicating broken toilets. It is at least a slight improvement that Logan is proactive at identifying plumbing issues as women reported they can be on lockdown two to three days and stuck in cells with toilets that do not flush.

At Logan, women in various housing areas reported having been housed in locations with only one working toilet. Some women at Logan reported that in June at one point there had been just one functional toilet for 60-66 women on their housing unit wing for a week. At the time of the visit, women reported that there were two working toilets (with another still broken and flushing non-stop), two sinks, and two showers for 60+ women. Women described improvising shower heads somehow out of plastic bags and toothpaste tubes. Women at Logan reported that people did not want to live in the housing unit with the "honor dorm" because conditions were so bad, for example only having two working toilets and two sinks. At another location we were told there was only one working sink. One woman in the dog program at Logan reported only having a few functional sinks was a problem not only because of the need for cleanliness during COVID but also because women picking up dog poop did not have adequate access to handwashing, in addition to there being no soap in the dispensers. Some reported the plumbing *"needs an overhaul."*

Getting parts to fix antiquated systems is difficult during normal times and more so during the pandemic, and administrators noted that maintenance staff hoards parts to try to be prepared and has to be creative, imaginative, and man-make pieces. We were told plumbing repairs may require three to four adaptations to connect the original pipes to modern replacement parts, and sometimes the adaptations are handmade by the engineering team. Administrators showed us a piece of original copper pipe with multiple add-ons required to retrofit the old part to the new. JHA notes that we have seen some prison manufacturing programs, for example at Sheridan, that appear to have the capacity to make custom parts, and there may be some use for greater training

on this or use of 3-D printing. While we have no sense of the cost of such possible internal collaborate efforts, **greater creativity in meeting the needs of the prison should be explored and expeditiously addressed.**

Women pointed out (and JHA observed in some areas) flooding from showers, sinks and toilets, or standing water and dampness in bathroom areas, and the women reported the floors are regularly slippery and dangerous. Women reported they had been mopping up water steadily prior to JHA's visit and it had been worse. One woman described that on her housing unit recently the bathroom flooded "*in waves.*" She said COs did not call anyone to take care of it until the people on the unit started pushing the water into the dayroom with their shower shoes. Women stated that there is a lot of bathroom flooding so they would put their blankets and sheets down and go into the shower in their gym shoes. One woman described concern about "*women's bodily fluids puddling*" due to clogged drains and fixture leaks and flooding. There were many reports of lack of ventilation, mold, flooding, clogged drains, and non-functioning or constantly running fixtures (showerheads, sinks, toilets). JHA observed examples of these on various housing units.

Women indicated that they had to use their personal towels and bedding to mop up water from the bathroom floor and were not given extras.

At both prisons there needs to be improved ventilation in bathrooms as shower curtains and other bathroom areas have mildew and mold. One woman at Logan suggested building concrete shower walls to eliminate need for shower curtains. JHA observed bathrooms at Logan, where there was mold on the ceiling and shower curtains and there were a lot of broken tiles in the shower. Women reported mold is painted over. At Logan, woman believed that whole housing units had been closed to paint over mold.

One woman at Logan who had worked in maintenance said that there is only hot water in the showers in the summertime and that maintenance will not clean or replace the showerheads. She also said that staff say the women break them, but that is not true. Other women in various housing, including a mental health housing unit, reported there they only got hot or cold water, but not both and that sometimes there is no running water in their cells. Women in the X-house reported no hot water in cells at the time of the visit. Women in general population meanwhile reported "*We have gone weeks in here with no hot water in our showers, during winter. We have suffered scalding water is during summer months.*" Some women believed a lot of the damage to ceilings and walls was caused by heat and humidity (not just roof leaks) because there is no way for hot damp air to escape. They said many people take showers with hot water, so the humidity is constant.

Windows, Roofing and Ceilings

At Logan, administrators acknowledged at JHA's July 2021 in-briefing meeting that part of a housing unit roof had collapsed late in the evening shortly prior the visit and stated that women in the three affected cells had been immediately moved for safety and barricades were put up. Administrators readily agreed that this housing area should be part of our tour. The collapse was not in any of the cells but was in a hallway area that made it hard to get in and out of the cells.

One woman described that the area affected by the collapse “*became nine months pregnant within an hour*” and then gave out. Another described it as “*a bubble that grew and popped, and it rained.*” Some said that the area was leaking, and an officer poked a hole in it which resulted in the collapse. Women reported they felt it was preventable. Women told JHA that people on the unit put up the barriers under the collapse themselves using plastic chairs from the dayroom and that staff did not come and put up caution tape until we arrived, which we observed occurring shortly after we arrived on the unit.

Some women at Logan said that their housing unit building had been missing roof shingles for a year, or pointed out such areas of roof damage, and said they were unsurprised by recent collapses affecting housing. JHA observed various areas with ceiling damage, and many women mentioned that there are leaks when it rains. Some women described rain falling in their dayroom areas and other leaks and pointed out where ceilings had been patched. In one housing unit we were told that the common room leaks when it rains, and the front desk was so wet that staff could not sit there. Women in a mental health housing area, which in general have been more recently refurbished, also reported ceilings leak when it rains. Some women reported plaster falls down through the holes in the ceiling in the housing units and that they had raccoons living in the ceiling above their cell, but that those were gone now. Others reported that when it rains, water leaks into the walls of their cell and causes the paint to bubble and showed JHA water damage in their cell and that there were holes near where the ceiling met the wall. JHA was also shown window frames in cells with rot and holes, and women stated that they knew the prison was working on replacing the windows. Administrators stated that they found with replacing the old windows, all surrounding window housing also had to be replaced, in addition to the issue on one housing unit where, when installing new windows, there was a concern discovered that the center beam might collapse.

Electrical Issues

On the new Logan Warden’s third day on the job, there was a power outage and they had difficulty with the repair and the attempt to figure out which lines went where, which ended up blowing the power out for the whole prison. Women reported distress relating to the recent power outages and had concerns regarding the lack of backup generators. The prison had to power fans on housing units that house women with mental health and medical needs. Administrators reported they received good local support and that the fire department brought in generators and spotlights. They stated that administrators and staff stayed to help and circulated to make sure women understood what was going on and that they were working to fix it.

This is hardly the first major electrical issue at Logan. For example, in response to JHA’s 2020 COVID survey, people reported there had been no power in healthcare. In response to concerns, administrators at that time stated “*Due to severe weather, the HCU was without power over night. At risk offenders were transferred immediately. The HCU is currently running on generator with all lifesaving equipment operational.*” JHA spoke to a woman during our July 2021 visit who was moved to Decatur when Logan lost power in the summer of 2020. She reported that at Decatur, they took all her pills and she did not get them back, and they also took some other property that she had to replace. JHA stated in COVID feedback that Logan needs functional backup generators and administrators replied, “*A plan has been submitted to CDB [the Capital Development Board] addressing this issue.*” Yet over a year later it had still not been fixed.

Several people in the X-house reported additional issues during a prior power outage. For example, someone in the Logan X-house reported their toilets were flushed only once a day and water was provided just twice a day, and other women reported that power outage issues lasted two weeks and that they were traumatized by the lack of lights and running water, etc., that staff were not all professional, and that water provided was not enough to use for drinking and hygiene. There were some concerns about non-functional cameras when power was down. One woman wrote that the Logan X-house *“should not be housing inmates with the plumbing issues along with the lights not working. We are forced to sit in the dark once the sun goes down.”* Administrators responded, *“Lights and lanterns were placed throughout the housing unit during the outage.”* At the time of responding to the survey, someone reported still being in a cell without lights despite being moved several times. Women in the X-house also reported that during the outage, heat was on and they could not open their windows, and chuckholes were not always opened for ventilation when they were supposed to be. Logan administrators responded *“All physical plant issues have been reported/documented. Our maintenance department is working to mitigate the issues daily, as quickly as possible. Water was available to all offenders during this episode caused by severe weather. The outages were temporary. ... Housing Unit Command Staff ensured appropriate ventilation was supplied during this outage. For example, the food hatches on every cell were left open during this time to help assist with air flow.”*

During the July 2021 JHA Logan visit, some women continued to report the electricity is out *“all the time.”* One woman described the recent power outage, *“All the lights went out” and it was “HOT!”* Someone reported that when it was hot and there was no power, a woman had an asthma attack, and she could not get breathing treatments because of the lack of power. Women in one of the mental health housing areas said that because the unit is supposed to be air conditioned, the windows do not open, but if the power goes out, conditions are horrific. Other women said the electricity is no good, as they are still running on generators. One woman stated there had been an 11-hour power outage because a generator caught on fire.

JHA was pleased to speak with an incarcerated woman at Logan who was helping out with electrical work, which seemed to be a needed skill, but it seemed the resources to really correct and not just patch issues remained unavailable.

Pests

Some women reported insect infestations, including ants, bugs in showers, wasps, roaches, and *“biting”* or brown recluse spiders. One woman housed in Logan’s X-house reported she was bitten by something that she could not see but she had bite marks on her arms and a rash from scratching. She said she had written grievances and they had sprayed but the problem remained. Raccoons living in ceilings at Logan have been reported for years by incarcerated women and staff. One woman wrote in July 2021, *“Our ceilings are falling in on us. I have had a bat get into my room flying over me and my roommates as we slept – had to have a male C/O come in and kill it. Raccoons reaching into our rooms through our ceilings.”* Bats pose rabies concerns. During JHA’s 2021 Logan visit, administrators reported that skunks getting in window wells had been an issue and apologized for the odor. Rodents were reported at both prisons. Staff at Logan acknowledged that having to prop open exterior doors for better airflow in dietary could allow mice to get in. JHA visitors observed some birds and flies in the area due to doors being left open for ventilation. Some women reported that birds fly around in chow hall and that they wrote grievances about it that got no response. During the winter 2020 Decatur visit, rodent droppings were reported, and in 2021 during a summer visit, many people reported mice, particularly in

dietary. Some women said they see dead mice in sticky traps that dietary workers or staff have to then remove. Administrators stated that pest control visits dietary monthly and that they are trapping mice. A woman reported her roommate worked dietary and would free mice from the sticky traps because she felt bad for them. Other women reported there are mice inside the walls and in other locations throughout the prison, particularly around food, including in commissary.

Provisions

Commissary

*“Commissary is not grieved for fear of losing commissary.
Shopping is all we have at times”*
– Decatur COVID Survey Response

“Commissary threatening to “shut us down from shopping” if we were overcharged or missing something – like it was our fault. They considered that complaining if we let them know and told us we would be the one to get it “shut down” for everybody. They tell us we can’t grieve commissary because it is a privilege, not a right.”
– Logan COVID Survey Response

Administrators responded, “Commissary issues can be grieved and are often. Issues brought to the attention of staff are followed-up on daily.”

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit and in COVID survey responses, JHA received numerous commissary concerns. Many people reported that the commissary was limited in spending and frequency but was also reported that it was out of needed items, e.g., “*Commissary often runs out of soap, shampoo, tampons, etc., and they will not provide a care package if you have no money in your account. If I can’t buy it, and you won’t provide it, how do I practice good health and hygiene?*” Likewise in Logan COVID-19 survey responses, women reported that they could not buy certain items, such as clothing or art supplies, as well as issues with commissary frequency and spending limits. Women reported that having a lower spending limit and less frequent shopping reportedly resulted in not having enough hygiene products and other things like write-outs (stamped envelopes), phone minutes, and food. Also, some reported that when they did get to shop, the commissary was out of needed items. **JHA strongly recommended IDOC articulate standards for commissary expectations as practices varied and were adversely affecting morale and people's access to essentials.** IDOC has since improved commissary practices during the pandemic. During the 2021 visits, JHA received fewer commissary concerns, perhaps also due to the COVID restrictions, physical plant issues, and lack of productive activity concerns dominating the visits. During the Logan visit, a woman in C grade shared a concern that because people on that disciplinary grade restriction can only spend \$30 every 30 days on personal items, it takes months to get things. Other women at Logan reported that they did not have any access to hair relaxer or other “*Black hair products*” through commissary. Other women wanted to be able to buy dental floss and a better-quality soap.

Unfortunately, since the July 2021 JHA visit, changes to the statewide commissary contract and supply chain issues are reportedly further negatively affecting supply. IDOC has shared a October 13, 2021 [memo](#) to the population and FAQs on their [COVID webpage](#) regarding

commissary issues.

Prisons maintain an “Inmate Benefit Fund” (IBF) that is funded by commissary profits. In response to JHA’s query regarding what this fund had been recently used for in 2020, Decatur administrators stated, “*Our Inmate Benefit Fund is utilized for offender holiday meals, Christmas items, Offender cable, monthly washer/dryer lease, Netflix Account, movie license, new DVD players, magazine subscriptions, fitness equipment, new TVs for the housing units, etc.*” In 2021, Decatur administrators provided information showing IBF requests for funding for laundry equipment leasing (\$10,000+); entertainment: magazines, cable, and movies (\$17,000+); holiday food and gifts for the population (\$3,000+); and some office supplies (\$100+). However, it was not entirely clear from the information provided what had been funded.

Clothing & Bedding

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, clothing was reportedly not being replaced and staff also commented on the poor quality of clothing. A woman who worked in industry commented she never saw clothing ordered. People reported request slips for clothing exchanges were ignored and reported being issued clothing with holes, that was ill-fitting, or that had been repaired so many times it was uncomfortable to wear. At that time, Decatur administrators responded, “*It is expected that our offenders upon intake receive new clothing if needed. Our offenders are coming from Logan and may not need clothing if they were issued and or purchased clothing at Logan. No one should receive clothing with holes, nor should they receive improperly fitting clothing. Offenders’ clothing can [be] reissued and or repaired upon request. Our clothing is ordered through ICI. Although it is produced at Correctional Industries at the Decatur facility, it is not ordered or shipped from our Decatur Industries.*”

In Logan COVID-19 survey responses, women reported that they wanted to be able to buy clothing, underwear in particular, but could not. They wrote, e.g., “*This is a problem because clothes often get stolen when sent to laundry and we only wash clothes once a week. So I often wash my own clothes in the shower,*” and “*Have been using same undergarments for whole week. Only own 2 pairs. Can’t purchase more.*” Women in Logan’s X-house reported laundry was once a week and they could not buy clothes, but this was even more of an issue because they had very little clothing. Some described having been issued very poor fitting items. For example, one woman wrote, “*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).*” Administrators responded that laundry services were available, women were at that time allowed to buy clothing from commissary, and that “*the lack of clothing was brought to the attention of Logan Administration. All yellow jumpsuits were exchanged and clothing was distributed.*”

In responses to JHA’s COVID survey at Logan, a lot of broken laundry equipment and other barriers to access to clean clothing and bedding were noted, such as people not getting clothes cleaned because they did not have detergent. Some women reported that they had trouble getting clean clothing when they returned to the prison after they had been on a writ. Administrators

responded “*Detergent is provided through the offender commissary. In addition, an institutional laundry schedule is in place for those offenders unable to purchase laundry detergent and for those housing units that currently do not have access to facilities in their assigned housing unit.*” They also noted “*A new washer/dryer policy statewide is in the process of purchasing new machines for every housing unit.*” Like commissary, clothing and laundry issues were not raised as frequently during JHA’s 2021 visits.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, JHA visitors were shown a lot of mattresses and pillows in poor condition, e.g., with cracked plastic covers, or that seemed hard, flat, or uncomfortable. We were told that the pillows we observed to be in okay condition were bought by women with their own funds on commissary. Women observed that some mattresses would be impossible to search because they had cracked covers or were strangely lumpy. Women also reported that IDOC had stopped selling mattress pads. Decatur administrators stated, “*Mattress pads were pulled from the Offender Commissary List due to annual fire inspection by the Illinois State Fire Marshall stating they were a fire hazard. We are attempting to locate a non-fire hazardous mattress pad from other vendors.*” Woman at Logan during the July 2021 visit, in various areas including the X-house and the pregnancy unit, reported issues with the conditions of mattresses, e.g., that they are old and dirty.

Indigent Packs

IDOC will provide some hygiene supplies for people who have minimal funds. JHA has repeatedly requested more public information and transparency about practices for this at intake and during incarceration at various prisons and has not received much clarification. During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, women reported that indigent supplies were limited. Decatur administrators at that time responded to JHA’s request for more specificity about what was supplied to indigent people stating, “*Typically our care packages for indigent offenders are provided by our Chaplain, LTS, or Clinical Departments. [...] We will provide care packages to offenders when offenders request. It is unknown how many offenders are considered to be indigent as it varies.*” In COVID survey responses, someone at Logan with extensive healthcare issues on state pay, which is \$10 a month for incarcerated people without assignments, reported that she could not afford to buy both needed hygiene items and the over-the-counter things (pain medicine, vitamins, etc.) recommended by healthcare staff. Logan administrators responded, “*Healthcare provides over the counter meds to offenders free of charge during sick call appointments if nursing staff feels they are necessary. Hygiene items are distributed to indigent offenders on a regular schedule.*” In COVID survey responses about 17% of respondents from Decatur and 32% of Logan respondents reported they did not have enough soap to regularly wash their hands in the week prior.

Donations

There is a common and longstanding impression that items donated at the women’s prisons are taken by staff and not given to incarcerated women. In 2020 Decatur visit follow-up **JHA recommended IDOC track and report on use of donations to increase trust and demonstrate successful community partnerships. Also, we recommended if there were not enough items to distribute to everyone in the facility, that IDOC consider using items as earned incentives, making the plan for awards fair and transparent.** We noted that setting expectations would help alleviate conspiracy theories and resentment over such perceived issues. During the February 2020 Decatur visit, several women expressed disappointment that

they did not get donated Christmas gifts, as in the past. Decatur administrators responded to concerns regarding donations in JHA's 2020 visit follow-up stating, *"Our donations are tracked and submitted to our Business Office. [...] The majority of our donations are received during Christmas time, when we receive toys for offenders to give to their children for Christmas. We also receive donations through our Leisure Time Activity Specialist. The donations received through LTS is typically used as prizes for various games, tournaments, etc. We often times utilize our donations to give to offenders as care packages if they are in need. Anytime we receive donations it should be logged by the staff receiving the donations and tracked through our business office. Willow Creek Church did donate this year for Christmas, and every offender was offered a donated bag from Willow Creek. Also, a Christmas gift bag had been purchased from the Inmate Benefit Fund – Illinois Department of Corrections that was given to each Offender. We also receive clothing donations that are sorted and placed in our boutique for women to have upon their release. Our Mom's and Babies Program receives donations that are specific to their program."*

During JHA's 2021 Decatur visit, some women noted that LTS gave out goodie bags. However, others continued to raise concerns that donations tended to disappear and reported that they had seen staff taking food or Christmas gifts that had been donated for them. In response to concerns regarding donations, administrators stated that donations are often also donated to staff, so that if individuals in custody see staff also eating donated cookies this might be what was intended. Administrators stated that they do not accept donations unless they can provide them for every incarcerated person in the facility and that they sometimes they give leftovers to staff. At Logan during the 2021 visit, some women in the pregnancy unit reported that the prison was no longer getting donations that benefited the women housed there, such as special pregnancy-related supplies and food.

Cleaning and Hygiene

In JHA's COVID-19 survey results, more than half of the women at Decatur responding reported they did not receive sufficient cleaning supplies to clean their sleeping area, and 84% of Logan survey respondents said they did not get any cleaning supplies for their sleeping area. Earlier in the pandemic women reported that staff were not cleaning or were not properly supervising workers. Some staff reported that no one had specifically been designated to do certain tasks in the absence of use of porters. Logan administrators responded, *"Clear direction regarding the cleaning of all areas/surfaces has been disseminated to all staff via email, PSA and zone Lt. Binders."* Many women commented about not getting cleaning supplies or when they did, not getting sufficient amounts or that the chemicals were too diluted. One woman at Decatur wrote, *"Only time anyone might get a tiny bit of bleach, that doesn't clean a whole cell, is if we race other inmates to the desk at our officer's discretion."* Women reported cleaning with their personal shampoo. Some people also reported that porters were not cleaning or when they attempted to, they did not have enough cleaning supplies. There were some reports of porters selling cleaning supplies, as well as laundry services, to other women. Some porters wrote about only being allowed to clean the shower area and that they were not allowed to distribute cleaning materials to rooms, and that they were not supplied with sufficient cleaning materials or PPE. Additional concerns about difficulty obtaining cleaning supplies were expressed by women housed in Logan's X-house, which houses women during intake, as well as for women in disciplinary restrictive housing. Logan administrators responded that they had doubled the amount of cleaning supplies available on housing units and that women could request supplies from staff, and that *"A cleaning schedule has been developed with instruction to provide porters with masks/gloves when*

cleaning common areas (Showers). In addition, all bathrooms are included in the facility wide deep cleaning schedule.” Women reported that soap dispensers were often empty, and they were running out of personal soap. In survey comments someone at Logan pointed out: *“Our handwashing bulletin says to use paper towels to turn off the sink. We are not ever given paper towels.”* Administrators responded that the soap dispensers were checked twice every shift, and this was documented at the end of each shift on the report submitted by the shift supervisor, and that paper towels are issued upon request from security staff.

Throughout IDOC and within the women’s prisons, people within IDOC during the pandemic reported that it was a hardship to have to choose between taking showers and using phones in the limited time when access to dayroom areas was permitted. People in intake, restrictive housing, and crisis watch reported issues with being able to shower, sometimes for periods of weeks.

Concerns regarding cleaning and hygiene continued during JHA’s 2021 visits. During the July 2021 Logan visit, JHA continued to receive reports that the bleach given to women for cleaning was insufficient, that women could not get cleaning supplies, and that some soap dispensers were empty. During JHA’s 2021 Decatur visit, a woman described that, without open dayroom access, having to wait to shower was uncomfortable, particularly for women on their periods. When patios are open and male staff are working the units, the showers are closed because there are sight lines into the showers and staff are required to walk by them to conduct rounds on the patios. While this may alleviate PREA concerns of cross gender viewing, a better solution to enable more shower access would be to install dividers or assign female staff to areas and shifts where women may be in a state of undress.

Sanitary Supplies

In 2020, Decatur administrators responded to JHA’s query regarding what sanitary supplies are state issued and at what frequency stating that, *“Every offender receives a package (24) of state issued sanitary napkins once a month. Offenders may receive more if medically indicated. We also have a supply of sanitary napkins that have [been] donated that we can distribute as well.”* In response to JHA’s COVID survey, some women at Logan reported having insufficient toilet paper and sanitary supplies during lockdown.

Logan administrators stated *“As a facility, our available toilet paper has not been restricted during the COVID-19 crisis. ... Toilet paper is distributed to every offender every Friday and pads on Saturday. Additional toilet paper/pads are supplied upon request. Both toilet paper and pads are available for purchase on our commissary.”* As noted

“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 COVID Survey Response

above, during the pandemic women reported difficulty with commissary access and product availability.

During the July 2021 Logan visit, women working in the X-house shared that there were issues getting supplies on the unit and that “*everything was an argument*” with getting things from the warehouse. Examples included shampoo, paper napkins, toilet paper, and sanitary supplies. As an example of a demeaning denial of basic goods, a woman in Logan’s X-house said that women housed there only recently got cups and were previously drinking out of their used milk cartons.

Women also reported that in June 2021 at Logan there were no garbage bags, so there were bloody sanitary supplies that could not be thrown out. One woman said that when she complained, an administrator told her to “*just push it down.*” Especially given concerns about people flushing things down toilets and plumbing issues, staff should be mindful that people are given appropriate ways to dispose of things.

Dietary

“As women having to menstruate and go through pre-menopause and menopause – we lose bone density quicker than men and muscle tone. Sleeping on steel slated beds on top of lack of nutrients is crippling us over long term.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

During JHA’s 2020 and 2021 Decatur visits, dietary workers expressed appreciation for their supervisors. At the time of the 2020 visit, women stated that they would like to be able to earn good time for their assignments and JHA noted that we support use of sentencing credit to motivate all good behavior, particularly given the great demand for programming and extremely limited supply. As of July 2021, due to a change in law many more workers can now earn good time.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, women reported that in dietary items run out and the statewide master menu was deviated from, which is a common complaint in IDOC prisons. **JHA continues to recommend that IDOC make the master menu regularly publicly available.** Other common reports were of overcooked vegetables. Some women reported not getting the Black History Month special meal. People reported that allergies and special diets were not accommodated, and substitutes were not offered. As is common within IDOC, there was a perception that staff gets better food than individuals in custody.

Some women reported that a lot of food was thrown out, and one woman recommended it instead be donated to a food pantry. Several women reported meat served had bone, gristle, plastic, or other hard objects in it. This was a particular concern of women who were feeding their children at the facility. JHA visitors were told that the day of our 2020 visit, a woman had choked in the dining hall and that staff had given her the Heimlich maneuver to save her. While we commend this staff life-saving response, we also noted that some women expressed concerns regarding being rushed to eat or not being provided dentures or a slow eat pass and reported that some staff did not believe it when women were choking.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visits, women housed in the Moms & Babies Family Reunification unit requested education on nutrition and food preparation for children and a greater variety for off-

site grocery purchases for the babies, as some of the purchase limits made providing a balanced diet for babies new to solid foods, who can be very picky eaters, difficult. JHA noted that meeting this need could be a fun and educational activity, and that Decatur could perhaps find an outside volunteer with a nutritionist background to assist.

In later responses to 2020 COVID surveys, there were a substantial number of concerns about lack of social distancing in dietary and number of people (50+) in the area. Some women reported not going to the chow hall because of fearing for safety. People had concerns about being served food by people not wearing gloves. Some women expressed concerns such as, "*they're not giving us normal portions of food, like they're running out. Portions get smaller and smaller every day, and we're hungry;*" and "*The officers are eating all of our food, giving us outdated desserts, expired juices and milk.*" Someone wrote, "*I'm a vegetarian due to my religious beliefs, and they refuse to do anything to make my state portions up to caloric par. So, with these limited shops, it's hard for me to live.*"

In COVID-19 survey responses from Logan, there were a lot of food complaints: spoiled milk was commonly raised, as were other old or stale items, cold meals, menu frequent repeats, and lesser portions. Administrators responded that "*All meals provided fall within daily allowance of calories. The menu is determined by statewide master menu. Dates on products are checked prior to service.*" There were also some reports of being rushed to eat due to how people were being spaced out in dining areas. Administrators responded that "*Meal service times are documented to ensure adequate time is provided to offenders.*" JHA noted that food is one of the most important areas for morale, and given the limited commissary, people frequently reported not having enough time to eat and being hungry.

During JHA's June 2021 Decatur visit, we visited dietary and saw a wall mounted thermometer, which could be a good precaution and screening point. Many people during the pandemic have expressed concern about worker screening for COVID. A JHA visitor observed that in dietary the sinks were about as clean as you would expect to see in a fast-food restaurant kitchen, e.g., there was food in the drain, but it did not appear to be old, and that there appeared to be a leaky pipe that was causing some standing water near the dishwashing sink. At the time of the February 2020 Decatur visit, there was a report that the dish room machine was broken, and new ovens were a reported need. In June 2021, these equipment concerns were not reiterated, but we were told that some freezers were not working.

Some dietary staff shared that they thought there were no longer enough incarcerated women who could be workers. One staff person felt that there was no motivation for women to come to work if they could not be ticketed or punished for not showing up. JHA asked if it was not motivating for women to get benefits of coming to work by being able to earn sentencing credits, and the staff member replied that he would like to be able to earn days off too.

As discussed in the pests section above, many people stated that there were mice and droppings in dietary at Decatur. Some women reported that the drinking water in the Decatur kitchen is "*gross,*" that portions are small, and a lot of food gets thrown away.

At Logan during the July 2021 JHA visit, in dietary staff reported the lack of ventilation, AC, and direct windows for ventilation led to issues with humidity and problematic frost build up in the refrigerators and freezers. Also, the kitchen can be very hot, and it can be uncomfortable to wear masks. Logan's dietary had several reported equipment issues, for example, the kitchen was supposed to have four fryers and two rotating ovens, and three grills, but less than half that

equipment was functional. While Logan had a new dishwasher, the temperature was not hot enough (180 degrees) to sanitize, so workers were having to hand dip things in bleach water to sanitize them. One staff person stated that having worked in both Logan and Decatur's dietary, Decatur was "*paradise*" comparatively. Staff were proud of the ability of dietary to feed women and lack of food borne illness while serving 1.5 million meals a year.

JHA observed that dietary workers corrected their use of hairnets and donned gloves when they saw they had visitors. At the time of the visit, Logan's dietary only had 10-12 incarcerated workers instead of a pre-pandemic normal worker count of 45. An incarcerated woman working in dietary reported that with 10 people working, they have 15-hour shifts. She also felt that their hard work is not acknowledged or appreciated. JHA has continually expressed concern regarding worker conditions during COVID. Some women who worked in dietary expressed that they thought they were supposed to get "*COVID relief days*," and that kitchen workers were supposed to get 90-100 COVID relief days because they were worked so hard during COVID, they believed that these were given to the men but were denied at Logan. JHA had not heard of this as an IDOC policy. In draft review, IDOC officials thought this might be a confusion about EDSC and stated that men and women were reviewed with the same protocols. Again, JHA urges more transparency regarding use of discretionary sentencing credits.

Some women at Logan expressed concerns about dietary, for example concerns about pests, e.g., birds, mice, and roaches, that the food is "*nasty*" or "*lousy*," that they do not get good food on holidays, or that they get no daily fresh fruits and vegetables. One woman stated an apple or banana is available once a week and some days they are not served vegetables. Some women reported health issues related to bad diets or being undernourished. JHA was particularly concerned with such reports from women housed on the pregnancy unit, discussed below.

Grievances

"I am being falsely accused of having difficulties with staff members and other inmates even though I've been the one being bullied by staff and inmates and told to write grievance that don't get answered for months at a time.... I'm enclosing this letter with a copy of the last grievance I entered in 2020. Their response was I missed the timeline, but I was not able to return papers because of the time it took the facility to return my grievance. ... I have written several grievances and none of them returned in my favor, even when I turned in grievances on officers I would not get a response from anyone back and I'd ask the counselor and his reply was that he never received them. I continued to write to administration, the Warden, the person over Mental Health without avail."

– 2021 Logan Letter

During JHA's 2020 Decatur visit, people reported writing multiple grievances without response and commented that they believed the grievance process is "*a joke*." In 2020 surveys, only 9% of the Decatur respondents agreed that the grievance process was effective, while just 19% reported they would feel comfortable filing a grievance. Such concerns continued during 2021 visits. Women reported not writing grievances because of fear of retaliation or based on a belief that nothing would be done, as discussed above in the staff conduct section. Someone at Logan wrote, "*When I asked for grievances the officer told me he had none but he did have tickets and laughed at himself*." Several women also expressed fear of retaliation for speaking to JHA visitors. One

woman said that if staff think you told on them, then “*you’re in trouble*,” and several other women expressed similar concerns. At Decatur, people said that staff would find out if you filed a grievance against them and retaliate. While it can be expected that staff would be interviewed, it is unacceptable for people to retaliate against others for expressing a concern through the official channel. As is common, individuals in custody believed that staff relationships make internal mechanisms for investigation of issues ineffective. Sometimes woman reported they had to file grievances to the people the grievance is about (under the [rule](#) “no person who is directly involved in the subject matter of the grievance.... May serve as the Grievance Officer reviewing that particular case”) or one of their relatives, which is not directly prohibited but creates a clear impression of bias. Some women reported various issues with their grievance paperwork, such as responses not being signed, or not getting paperwork back. Some women said that staff respond to grievances, but it does not help. Other women reported that if they grieve issues about staff, all they are told is that it has been dealt with. Several women reported retaliation for grievances or unresponsiveness to grievances or appeals. IDOC has hired a Chief Inspector charged with revamping the grievance system; as of September 2021 JHA was informed this work is still in fact-gathering initial phases.

Hunger Strikes

There was some [press coverage](#) of recent hunger strikes regarding living conditions at Logan. However, unfortunately, hunger strikes and poor living conditions remain fairly common within IDOC. Some information regarding hunger strikes is reported publicly in [operations and management reports](#) (OMRs). For example, in July 2021, there were reportedly **117 hunger strikes** in IDOC, eight of which were at Logan. The public information does not describe duration of these protests.

During JHA’s 2020 Decatur visit, one woman reported that nothing was done in response to calling a hunger strike. IDOC is required to respond to people declaring hunger strikes and record them. During JHA’s July 2021 Logan visit, JHA spoke to at least one of the women who had been on a hunger strike in general population regarding living conditions. She was eager to show us some of her concerns, which were similar to those expressed by other women throughout Logan. We also told that there was another person in the X-house on hunger strike the day before we visited, but she had since eaten. Her hunger strike was also concerning living conditions. Administrators reported that most hunger strikes were over people wanting to be moved to a different housing unit where their “*emotional support person*” was. **JHA recommends that IDOC better track and report on reasons for hunger strikes, as well as duration.**

Many women JHA spoke with felt that people did not listen to their concerns, reported grievances were not responded to, and felt problems were not addressed. Women also reported that their attempts to organize or bring issues up are seen as riots, or dangerous punishable behavior. In COVID survey responses from Logan earlier in the pandemic, some people believed that a woman was punished for contacting a news station, to which administrators replied that this person received a disciplinary ticket not for the communication with the outside world, which is allowed, but for participating in a three-way phone call, which is prohibited.

Pregnancy in Prison

JHA inquired regarding whether there had been an increase in eligibility considerations in 2020 for the Moms & Babies unit. Decatur administrators replied in 2020 that *“Offenders must meet Minimum Security placement criteria: All candidates will be reviewed and cleared by the Department of Children and Family Services. All DCFS cases past and present will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Any substantiated case of violence, abuse or criminal neglect will be considered ineligible for the program. Offenders with domestic violence charges may be asked to provide a police report based on time past since the arrest or other mitigating factors. These offenders will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Ideally be within 12-24 months of their projected outdate after due date. (Exceptions to this may include candidates who would qualify for the Women’s Treatment Center where the child could remain with the offender until age 5.) Mental and physical fitness for acceptance in the program will be determined by Health Care & Mental Health professionals at Logan R&C. Offenders must be willing to participate in programming recommendations consistent with Contract Goal Statement that includes, but is not limited to, participation in educational programming offered within the facility. Offenders will be excluded from participation in the program if they have a documented history of sex offenses or crimes against children or have a court order prohibiting contact with their children, or DCFS is filing for termination of parental rights. We review each applicant on a case by case, and often times make exceptions to the rule for an offender to participate.”* During the pandemic, from March 2020 through at least the end of October 2021 when JHA and IDOC conducted draft review, the program had not accepted new participants. During JHA’s June 2021 Decatur visit there were no people in the program.

In Logan 2020 COVID survey responses, a woman reported that she was 30 weeks pregnant and not housed with the other pregnant women. Logan administrators responded *“All pregnant women are housed together once they are through the R&C process. They are able to voluntarily move from the pregnancy wing to the residential substance abuse treatment house. ... Reasons someone would not be on the pregnancy wing: medical needs that require infirmary (Dr. admit), MH needs such as RTU or Watch status, Residential Substance Abuse treatment.”* Someone housed on the pregnancy wing at the time of the 2020 COVID surveys reported she had previously had cancer and problems with bleeding and contractions, and she could not get proper medical care. Administrators responded *“All pregnant women are seen regularly by the OB/GYN.”*

During JHA’s July 2021 Logan visit, we were told the OB/GYN doctor is onsite twice a week. There were reportedly seven women housed on the pregnancy wing. While the environment of the wing was still more pleasant than a typical housing unit, with shelves with books, exercise equipment, indoor plants, posters, body pillows, and bulletin boards to display photos in rooms, there were many serious concerns. Women reported they had made numerous complaints about conditions and written to the administrators but had received no response. JHA was concerned by the issues reported and lack of response.

Women we spoke to in the pregnancy unit reported many issues including concerns relating to physical plant issues that were common throughout the prison. For example, women in the pregnancy unit reported mold, dirty shower curtains, ceiling leaks and dirty mattresses. JHA observed showers with mold or mildew and cracked tiles. The women reported that someone’s family had offered to donate clean shower curtains, but the offer was denied. Pregnant women and staff reported that the women had to get water for drinking and handwashing from the sink in the mop closet due to plumbing shut offs in their rooms and the sink in the communal bathroom

being broken. Women reported that they had been using the utility sink for at least two months. Toilets and sinks in the cells purposely do not function, although JHA is unclear why they are shut off. Many of the toilets were covered in blankets or pillows and were apparently being used as chairs. JHA visitors found the unit, which was supposed to have AC, warm with fans blowing. Some women reported that after the July power outage, there were no working fans. Women also reported the TV in the common area was not working.

“As the air condition on 14 [housing the pregnancy wing and mental health housing] keeps breaking down causing condensation on our floor on the east wing all over making a hazard to us pregnant women as 2 of us have already fell/slipped. The bathroom has mold all over the showers and sinks. The sink is covered with a garbage bag so we wash our hands in the shower. We have to get our drinking water from a faucet in a mop closet and brush our teeth in there as well. As there are toilets and sinks in our room/cell they don't work the water is shut off to them and they have sheets inside them so people don't try to use them. The central dining hall don't have any air either and mold in there as well. Bleach only masks mold it don't clean and kill it. The mats we sleep on have mold in the cotton in them.... I also feel there should be more help for pregnant offenders. As the Mommy and Me/baby program is shut down due to Covid. So are the other programs for us. The prison can only do temporary guardianship papers as there should be more help for placement through voluntary foster care or have faster help to get released on house arrest/electronic detention.”

– 2021 Logan Letter

The women reported that during COVID, the unit was not getting donations and that they were not getting enough calories, prenatal vitamins, were not getting low-sodium or other special need diets and were sometimes not being woken by staff for breakfast. A few women shared they could not eat some things because of the condition of their teeth or needing dentures. Some women said the only additional food they were given was a cheese sandwich and milk because the prison no longer had donated additional food items for them.

These women reported not having an assigned counselor, not being able to get information about electronic detention or DCFS, not having group, not having assigned staff, and not having programming or work opportunities to be able to earn sentence credits. Women said that their counselor is a temporarily assigned (TA'd) CO, and they could not get needed information. One woman said she was told that she had to get to the hospital to connect with DCFS, i.e., be in labor and having her baby. Women were upset about being housed on the wing without dedicated assistance or seeming benefits, while other people in general population could work or have assignments where they could earn sentencing credits. It was not entirely clear whether that they were voluntarily on the unit, and in contrast to JHA's 2019 visit, it was not clear that it was seen as a benefit. One woman JHA met at Logan on the pregnancy unit had since been moved to Decatur, but JHA does not know if that was with her baby or post-partum. In July 2021, there were reportedly seven pregnant women in IDOC and one birth, all at Logan. From March 2020 through July 2021, there were reportedly 73 pregnancies and 14 births in IDOC, with no pregnancies or births at Decatur in publicly reported information.

In draft review in late October 2021, IDOC administrators indicated that at Decatur the Moms & Babies and Family Reunification unit had not returned to having its pre-pandemic purpose and programming. However, they stated they had a related family services staff position posted. IDOC administrators stated that they are trying to do more for pregnant women at the front end when they enter IDOC custody at intake at Logan, including use of electronic monitoring where

appropriate. Logan administrators stated that now pregnant women can live on the pregnancy unit at that prison and still participate in programming, like the dual diagnosis mental health substance use disorder program, which occurs on another housing unit. Additionally, Logan administrators stated that plumbing and other physical plant issues on the pregnancy unit had been addressed, a counselor is now assigned, donations are being accepted, and overall things had improved for women on that unit since JHA's July 2021 visit.



This report was written by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz
jvollen@thejha.org

Incarcerated individuals can send privileged mail to report concerns and issues to the John Howard Association, P.O. Box 10042, Chicago, IL 60610-0042. JHA staff are reading every letter and tracking this information to monitor what is occurring behind prison walls and to advocate for humane policies and practices. Family and friends can contact JHA via our website www.thejha.org or by calling our office.

Since 1901, JHA has provided public oversight of Illinois' juvenile and adult correctional facilities. Every year, JHA staff and trained volunteers inspect prisons, jails, and detention centers throughout the state. Based on these inspections, JHA regularly issues reports that are instrumental in improving prison conditions. JHA humbly thanks all the persons who agreed to be interviewed for this report and who graciously shared their experiences and insights with us.



The John Howard Association was the proud recipient of the 2015 MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions