
Survey Report



Analysis of 2022 MQPL Survey Comments

**Top issues reported by
respondents at Sheridan
Correctional Center**

Sheridan Correctional Center

Sheridan Correctional Center is a medium-security male prison within the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) that housed 1,049 people on June 13, 2022. The John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA) conducted a modified short [Measuring the Quality of Prison Life](#) (MQPL) survey by providing enough survey packets (consisting of the [MQPL survey](#), an informed consent notice/instruction sheet, and a privileged mail prepaid business reply envelope addressed to JHA) so that every person incarcerated at Sheridan had an opportunity to participate in the voluntary and anonymous survey if they chose to do so. JHA received 228 responses to the MQPL survey from people at Sheridan through the end of 2022, representing approximately 22% of the static population.

This report highlights some of the most common issues raised in response to our MQPL survey question **"What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"** We selected this question to analyze because it is where most survey respondents chose to report the issues that they were experiencing while incarcerated. All survey comments for Sheridan can be found in our [2022 MQPL Survey Comments](#) report. Quantitative survey results can be found in our [Sheridan 2022 MQPL Survey Results](#) report.

Methodology

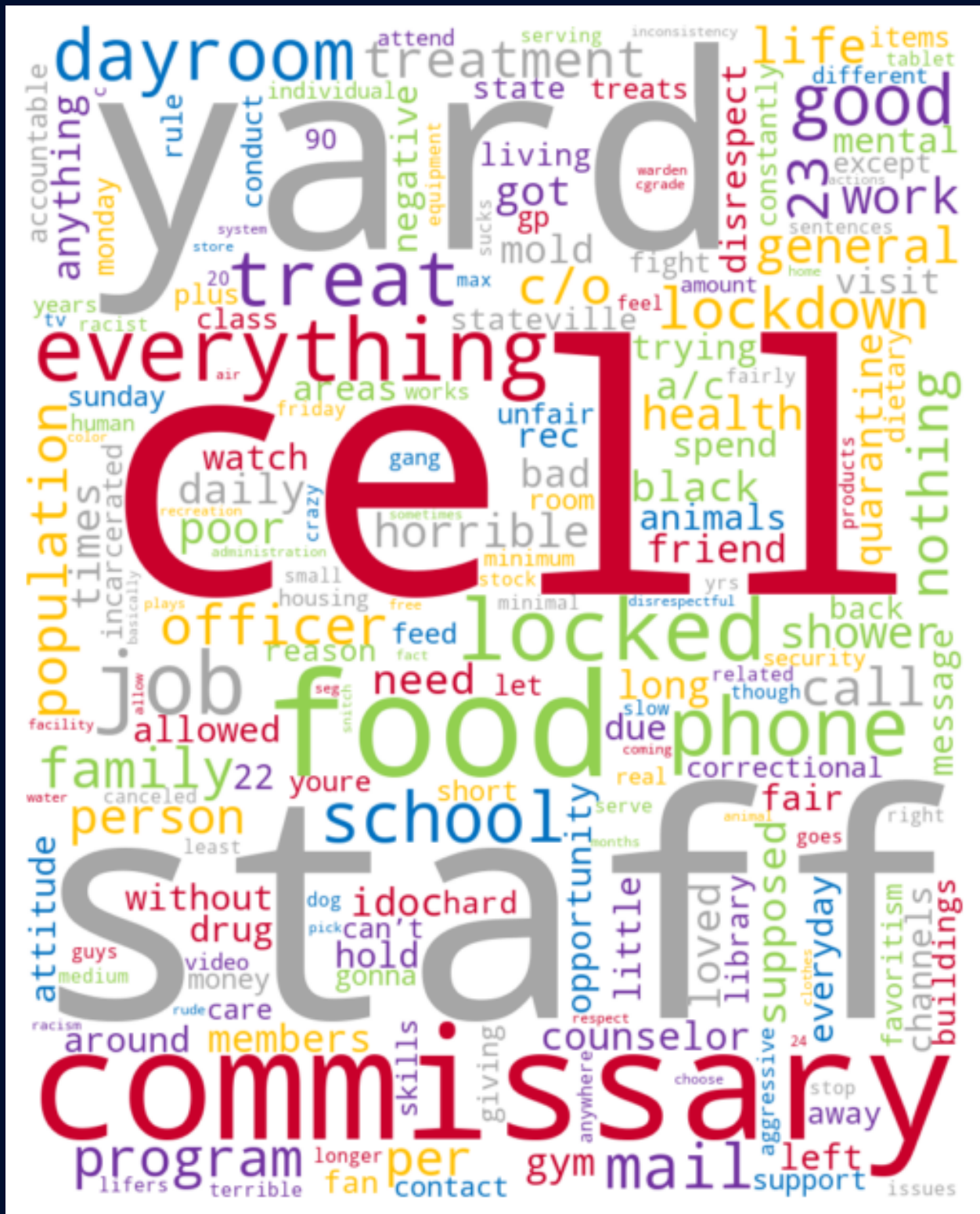
To identify the most common issues, we identified the most common words people used in response to the question "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?" For the Top Ten Words, all instances of each word and its plural form were counted (e.g., "program" and "programs.") Hyphenated words were counted as one word. Words like "the" and "not" were filtered from the analysis. Then, indicator words were counted under seven issue categories to determine top issues in each facility's survey responses. When an indicator word appeared within a longer word, the longer word was included. For example: the indicator word, "medic," picked up both "medical" and "medication." Prior to the issue analysis, the language in each report was standardized so that indicator words consistently appeared in a form that would be picked up by our software (e.g. "CO" was changed to "C/O," "good time" was changed to "good-time"). The indicator words by issue can be found [here](#).

To avoid double-counting issues, issue categories were only counted once per response. This means that the response "the cells are cold and dirty" would count as raising only one issue related to conditions, even though two indicator words ("cold" and "dirty") are used in the response.

There are limitations with this method, such as sentiment analysis. For example we are unable to distinguish statements such as "The doctor is good" and "I haven't seen a doctor." However, it is reasonable to conclude that instances of "doctor" are in a negative context in response to the question. Additionally, some indicator words that were frequently applied to multiple issue categories were removed. For example, we did not include "job" under productive activity because we could not distinguish statements relevant to the issue area, like "I can't get a job," from statements relevant to other issue areas, like "Staff don't do their jobs." Nor did we include "cell" under movement, e.g. "I am in my cell 24/7," because we could not distinguish from "School is always cancelled" or "The cells are too small" under this method of counting.

This report includes quotes from survey responses that we found to be either representative of the diversity of issues raised for each category or particularly insightful. Some quotes have been abbreviated to highlight the relevant issue.

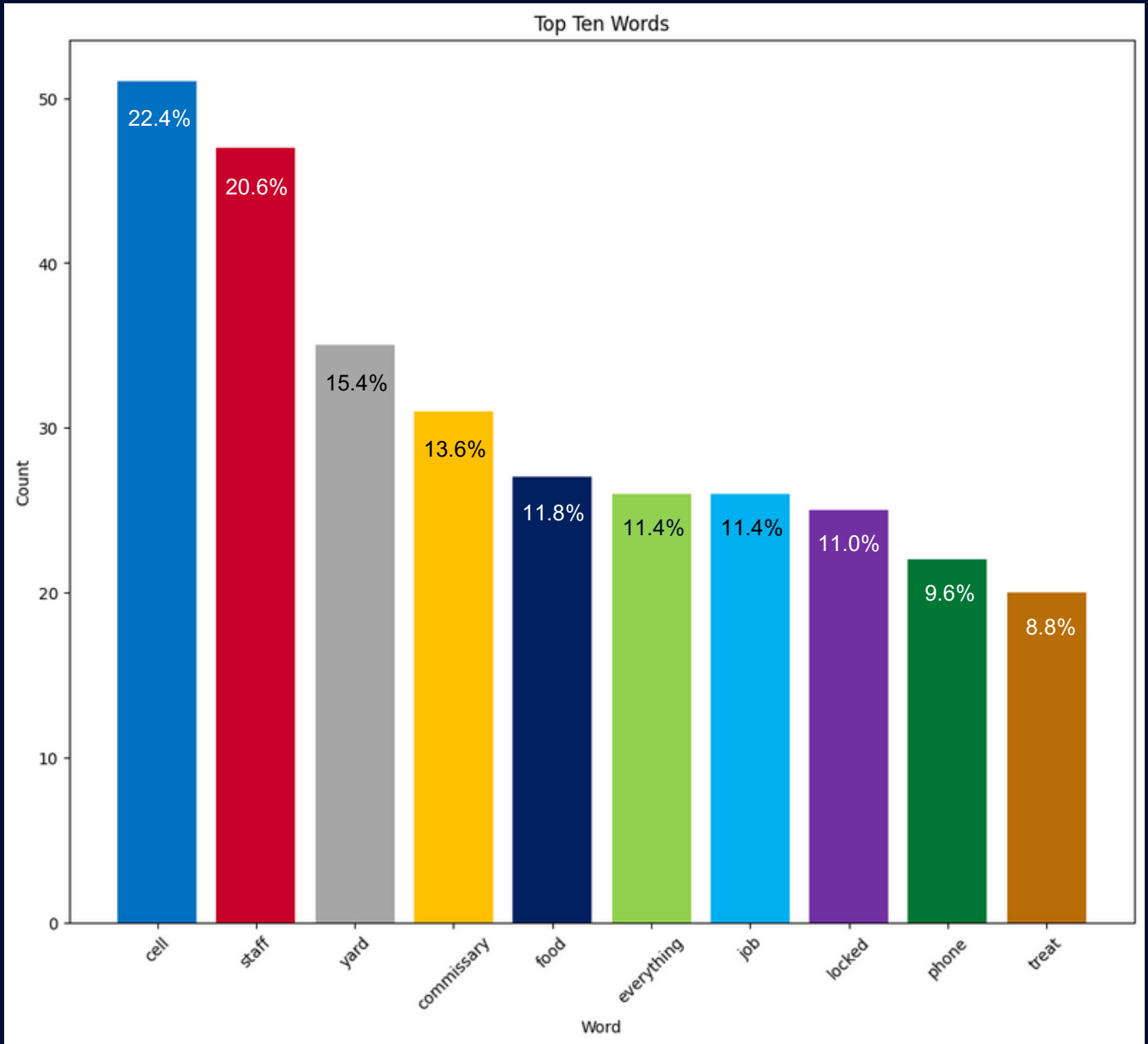
Word Cloud



Word cloud generated using the most common words used in Sheridan survey responses to the question "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"

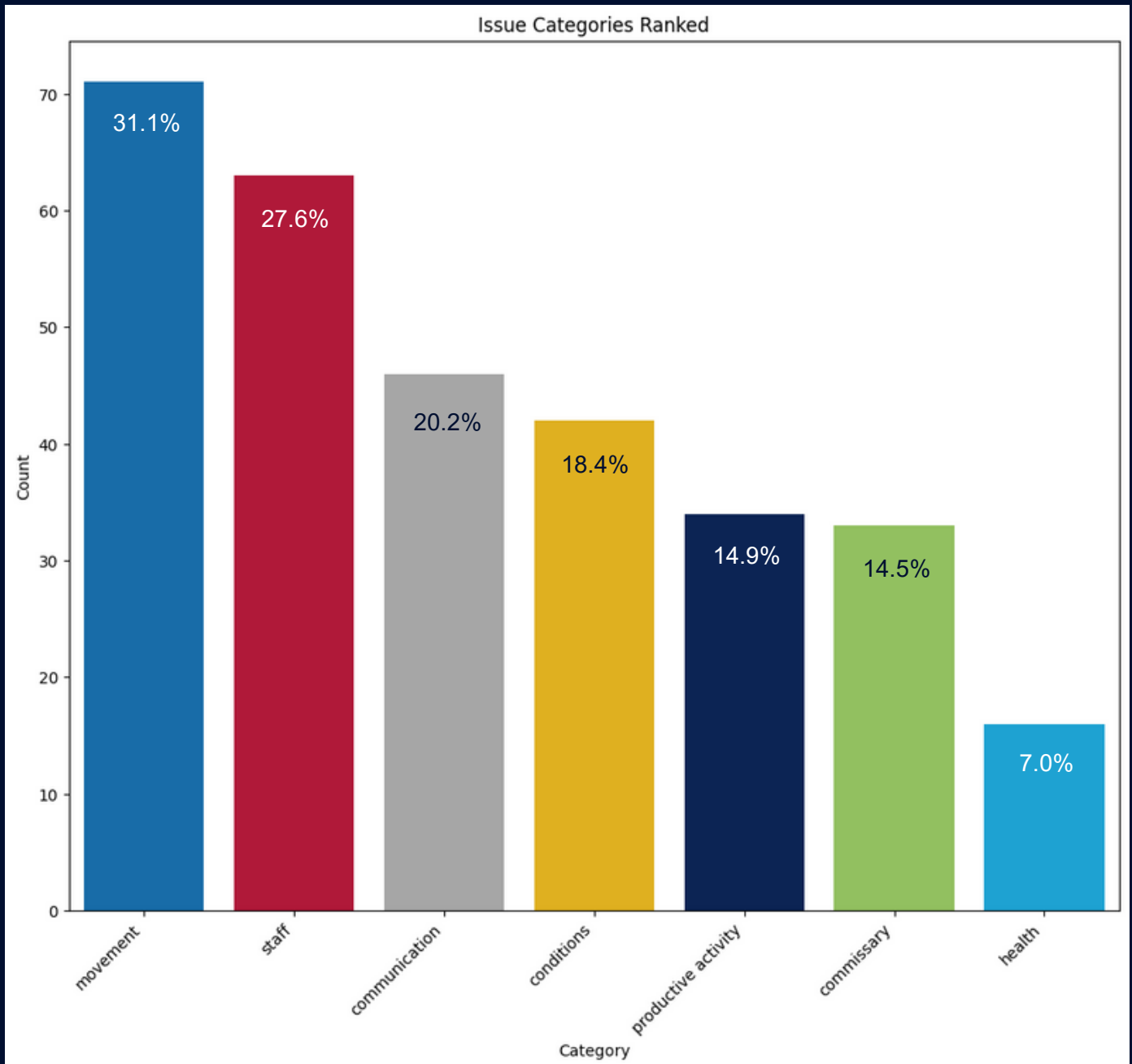
Top 10 Indicator Words

Used in responses to "What are the most negative things about life in this prison?"
Percentages are of the survey responses in which the word appeared.



Issue Categories Ranked by Prevalence

Issue rankings are determined by indicator word frequency. Common words used in survey responses have been sorted into seven issue categories. When a survey response uses one of a category's indicator words, it is tallied as raising an issue in that category. For example, a survey with the words "medical," "nurse," or "infection" is tallied as raising an issue related to health. Survey responses may include more than one issue. Percentages are of the survey responses in which an issue was raised.



Selected direct quotes from Sheridan survey responses

1

MOVEMENT

Includes concerns about time spent out of the cell or sleeping area and yard/dayroom availability.

Trapped in my cell all day. Only get 2 or 3 20 minute phone calls a week. And only 1 hour of dayroom Monday through Friday. Plus 1 yard a week because I have to attend school.

Only 1 hour out our cell every day

How we are constantly locked down event when there is no threat

Have around 30 people who come out for day room at once who all got to try to get a phone call and a shower within an hour its impossible

1 hour of dayroom per day is not enough —when you have 24 men trying to shower and use the phone— but Sheridan's administration does not care

2

STAFF

Encompasses issues related to prison staff, such as lack of staff or staff conduct.

There is no accountability of staff.

Staff are rude, looking for reasons to escalate all things, aggressive and disrespectful. If you ask for anything it's considered annoyance/ insolent. Nothing works. No one responds.

how the staff treat you as a person

Staff treats you less then a person. They make your life miserable until you do what they want.

The IDOC counselors don't work with us on any situations we have and they don't answer my request slips

3

COMMUNICATION

Includes issues related to phone availability, visitation, mail, and other means of communication.

Trying to use the phone is always a struggle because workers sell the phone lines or give it to their friends.

Mail room violating federal mail laws—outside mail on 1 day a week. Tablet messages sent and received only 1 day a week.

I hear day room my family doesn't get my mail, I can't call, can't message thru tablet cuz it will take 2 weeks to get there.

Emails take too long to get approved and mail.

Everything the mail, the tv channels, the video visits in the hcu and wifi. The phone that's why there so many fights over them they should be on the tablets?

4

CONDITIONS

Encompasses issues related to living conditions, such as food, water, temperature, and sanitation.

The food in the chow hall is horrible

Seeing most bldg. door sections falling apart, shingles on roofs deteriorating, the wood siding lack scraping and refinished, too much concrete deteriorating, and many areas that flood out around walk areas.

THEY SERVE MOLDY FOOD & FRUIT. BLACK MOLD IN THE CELLS & SHOWERS. THIS PRISON SHOULD BE SHUT DOWN

The fact that its 90-100 degrees in the cells in Sheridan Correctional Center with no A/C and I don't have money for a fan

Black mold in showers, asbestos and the air circulation system never works. Mold in cells, windows do not open. Buildings should be condemned by health dept.

5

PRODUCTIVE ACTIVITY

Includes issues related to productive activities, such as work assignments, education, or programming.

They don't generate more job and school opportunities and they don't rotate the jobs enough for everyone to get a chance

Everything besides the WestCare program

General population gets no anger management, drug, stress management, or any actual classes set forth to prepare them to go home

GP gets more privileges than drug treatment

Can't get job, no life skills for being released.

6

COMMISSARY

Encompasses issues such as frequency of shopping opportunity and item availability.

They run commissary when they want.

In June 2022, GP inmate ever shopped only once. No commissary supervisors were removed from their duty.

Commissary never has enough items in "Stock", Little effort has been made to replenish clothing and health care products either, no longer sell a decent size fan to cool down a oversized person or even a small person, only offer a 6" fan, 2 speeds slow and very SLOW SPEED Rating, this will lead to H/C related issue soon enough.

Commissary once per month for only \$150.00

The commissary is unhealthy. All sweets and pork and chips. No clothes, hygiene.

Horrible healthcare—need real doctor

Mental health treats you like you're an animal not understanding at all with you

Lazy staff members, horrible health care, no heat, no AC, commissary always out of items

Don't get shower/phone calls daily on quarantine

The mental health counselors do little to help those in need. How hard it is to get glasses for a person in need.



This report was written by JHA staff. Media inquiries should be directed to JHA's Executive Director Jennifer Vollen-Katz at jvollen@thejha.org or 312-291-9183.

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 read every letter and track 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 leaving us a voicemail at (312) 291-9183.

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 everyone who graciously shared their experiences and insights with us.



Defying Injustice. Defending Humanity.