

The Correctional Association of New York

FOUNDED 1844

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Disciplinary Confinement in New York State Prisons

NY leads the nation in use of disciplinary segregation

- Compared to other prison systems in the country, NY has both the largest number of inmates and the greatest percentage of inmates in disciplinary segregation. NY has the third largest number of inmates in all forms of segregated housing (administrative, disciplinary and protective custody) nationwide.
- National average of the percentage of state prisoners in disciplinary segregation: 2.6%
- Percentage of NY State prisoners in disciplinary segregation: 6.7%

-The 2002 Corrections Yearbook

Prisoners with mental illness are disproportionately represented in disciplinary segregation

- 11% of NY's state prisoners are on the mental health caseload (approx. 7,500 individuals).
- 23% of state prisoners in disciplinary segregation are on the mental health caseload (approx. 1,000).

-Department of Correctional Services

Profile of inmates with mental illness in disciplinary segregation

- Nearly 1/3 of prisoners with mental illness in NYS' SHUs had prior psychiatric hospitalizations.
- Over ½ suffer from depression; 28% are diagnosed with either schizophrenia or bipolar disorder.

-Correctional Association survey of 162 prisoners with mental illness in SHU

Length of disciplinary confinement for NYS prisoners

- While the average (disciplinary confinement) sentence length is 5 months, many inmates are actually confined much longer, as this figure does not include the consecutive sentences correction officials mete out to inmates if they violate rules in lockdown.
- There is no limit to the length of time a prisoner can be sentenced to the SHU. Some inmates finish their sentences in disciplinary confinement and return straight to society.
- Inmates with mental illness reported an average (disciplinary confinement) sentence length of 38 months—seven times that of SHU prisoners generally.

-Correctional Association survey of 162 prisoners with mental illness in SHU

High rate of self-injury

- Between 1998 and 2001, over 50% of the system's 48 suicides occurred in 23-hour lockdown, although less than 7% of the prisoner population is housed in these units.
- 53% of inmates with mental illness in SHUs reported previous suicide attempts while in prison.
- 40% of inmates with mental illness in SHUs reported committing acts of self-mutilation while in prison.
- DOCS punishes prisoners who attempt suicide or who harm themselves by issuing disciplinary tickets.

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Insufficient care for prisoners with mental illness

- The prison system's sole psychiatric hospital, Central New York Psychiatric Center (CNYPC), has space for only 200 inmate-patients. It has not increased its capacity since it opened in 1980, although the prisoner population has tripled over that time.
- There are 534 ICP beds system-wide, enough to accommodate only one-third of inmates with serious mental illness in New York State prisons.
- Approximately 20% of all mental health positions are vacant including 35% of psychiatrists, 25% of psychologists and 11% of nurses.

-Department of Correctional Services

- Governor Pataki's proposed addition of 264 treatment beds is insufficient for the 1,000 inmates with mental illness in disciplinary segregation.

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