

Solitary Confinement in Illinois: Factsheet

What is Solitary?

“**Solitary confinement**” is defined by the United Nations Committee Against Torture as **incarceration in a cell for 22-24 hours a day**.

Around **8,000 Illinois prisoners** are held in a form of solitary confinement. Around **100,000 prisoners** are held in solitary **nationwide**.

To disguise its use of solitary, the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) calls the practice by other names, such as **Disciplinary Segregation, Administrative Detention, and Room Restriction**. All of these are **forms of solitary**.

Solitary Cells in Illinois

Solitary confinement cells are small. In Pontiac Correctional Center, the cell interior is **65 square feet**. That’s equivalent to the amount of **cargo space in a Jeep SUV**.

Solitary cells are also dangerous. Prisoners are frequently **double-celled**: two people are placed in a cell designed for one. In 2014, a prisoner was murdered by his solitary cellmate at Menard Correctional Center.

What’s wrong with Solitary Confinement?

Solitary confinement is torture:

- it has been shown to cause **psychological trauma**, including **depression, self-mutilation, decreased brain function, hallucinations, and PTSD**.
- Psychologist Craig Haney has stated that **prisoners in solitary “begin to lose the ability to initiate behavior of any kind — to organize their own lives around activity and purpose.”**
- One survivor described his experience: **“You go backwards. Sometimes you degenerate, and sometimes you just dwell on thoughts of the past. . . You’re grabbing on anything. To feel pain, to feel something. Because there’s nothing to feel.”**



Act Out Against Solitary Confinement

Support **HB259** a bill in the Illinois House legislature that would significantly limit the amount of time someone could spend in solitary confinement. If passed the bill would:

- limit the amount of time someone can spend in solitary confinement to 10 days within any 150 day period. Currently, many people in Illinois spend years in solitary, some even more than a decade.
- apply to all state prisons, county jails, including immigrant detention facilities

Read the complete bill here - <http://tinyurl.com/2017billSolitaryIL>

TAKE ACTION!

1. Call your Illinois State Representative!

Phone script: *I'm calling today to urge Rep _____ to support **HB259** the Isolated Confinement Restriction Act. Subjecting prisoners to extreme isolation, more than 23 hours per day, is cruel and unusual punishment, in violation of the U.S. Constitution. If passed, this bill will require that prisoners in Illinois are allowed out of their cells for at least 4 hours per day. It will limit solitary to a maximum of 10 days in any 150 day period, and will ensure solitary is used only when absolutely necessary, and never on vulnerable populations. Will the Representative be support this bill?*

2. Email your Illinois State Representative!

3. Get More People to Contact their Representatives!

a) Ask 3 people who live in your district (family, friends, neighbors) to call and/or email your Representative in support of HB259. Make sure your rep knows that the people they represent support this bill!

b) Ask 3 people who live in a different congressional district than you to call and/or email their Representative in support of HB259. Make sure that representatives from around the state, including those from rural districts who may not have as many people impacted by this issue, know that their constituents support this bill!

Other ways to support the fight to end solitary

- If your legislator is opposing the bill or if they haven't made a decision yet set-up a meeting with them. If you would like someone from the Stop Solitary Confinement Coalition to come with you to provide testimony from their own experience or that of a loved one email us at stopsolitarycoalition@gmail.com
- Host your own Teach-in & Act Out Against Solitary for people in your community. Get an easy-to-use curriculum here: <http://www.StopSolitaryCoalition.com>
- Volunteer with the Stop Solitary Coalition of Illinois by signing-up at this Teach-In or email us
- Support policies that reduce the number of people in prison.
- Become a penpal to someone in solitary. To write an LGBTQ incarcerated person check out <http://www.blackandpink.org/pen-pals/>
- Learn more about solitary confinement at <http://solitarywatch.com/facts/>