## Contents

- NIC Resources on Restrictive Housing ................................................................. 2
- Prevalence of Restrictive Housing ........................................................................ 3
- Practices & Policies that Govern Restrictive Housing ......................................... 4
  - State Systems .................................................................................................. 4
  - Other Systems ................................................................................................. 4
- Length of Time in Restrictive Housing ................................................................. 9
- Conditions of Confinement ................................................................................ 10
  - Conditions of Confinement: Juveniles ............................................................ 12
  - Conditions of Confinement: Women ............................................................... 13
- Research/Effects: Effects of Prolonged Time in Restrictive Housing .................. 14
- Legislation and Litigation Impacting Restrictive Housing ................................. 17
- Programming and Reentry-focused Services in Restrictive Housing ............... 19
- Medical & Mental Health Services in Restrictive Housing .............................. 21
- Safe Alternatives to Restrictive Housing ............................................................ 23
- Step-Down Programs ....................................................................................... 25
- In The News ..................................................................................................... 26
NIC Resources on Restrictive Housing

- NIC Project Page: *Restrictive Housing in Prison*.

- NIC Training: *Managing Restrictive Housing in Prisons*. [September 12-26, 2016; NCA-Aurora, CO]. This 40-hour training program focuses on the management of inmates in Restrictive Housing within the control and jurisdiction of departments of corrections throughout the country.


- NICIC Helpdesk Knowledgebase Solution/Hot Topic: *What are the Effects of Long-Term Isolation / Segregation?*

- NICIC Helpdesk Knowledgebase Solution/Hot Topic: *Do you have examples of operational procedures for segregation units?*


Prevalence of Restrictive Housing

Stated in *Use of Restrictive Housing in U.S. Prisons and Jails 2011-12*, on an average day in 2011–12, up to 4.4% of state and federal inmates and 2.7% of jail inmates were held in administrative segregation or solitary confinement. Nearly 20% of prison inmates and 18% of jail inmates had spent time in restrictive housing, including disciplinary or administrative segregation or solitary confinement, in the past 12 months or since coming to their current facility, if shorter. Approximately 10% of all prison inmates and 5% of jail inmates had spent 30 days or longer in restrictive housing. This report is based on data from the National Inmate Survey (NIS), 2011–12, conducted in 233 state and federal prisons and 357 local jails, with a sample of 91,177 adult inmates nationwide.


Since the 1980s, departments of corrections have sharply increased the use of segregation as a discipline and management tool. In effect, segregation is a secondary sentence imposed by the correctional facility—one that follows long after and usually is unrelated to the conviction for which the person is incarcerated. The consequences of holding an individual in these conditions over time may include new or exacerbated mental health disturbances, assaultive and other antisocial behaviors, and chronic and acute health disorders. In fact, studies show that prisoners who are released from segregation directly to the community reoffend at higher rates than general-population prisoners. Policy changes that will reduce the use and long-term impact of segregation will benefit not only the staff and prisoners in these units but also ultimately the well-being of facilities, systems, and the community.


This paper gives an overview of the use of administrative segregation in the United States, and examines its utility and effects, issues related to its use, and relevant court decisions and consent decrees.


Video recording of the Hearing before the Subcommittee on Constitution Civil Rights and Human Rights of the Committee on the Judiciary United State Senate One Hundred Twelfth Congress Second Session.


An introduction is presented in which the author discusses the symposium "Inhumane and Ineffective: Solitary Confinement in Michigan and Beyond" held at the University of Michigan Law School as well as two reports within the issue on topics including civil rights and racial disparities.
Practices & Policies that Govern Restrictive Housing

Restrictive Status Housing Policy Guidelines, here. 
Segregation Survey, here.

State Systems

- Delaware DOC, Restrictive Housing Assessment, 2016.
- Idaho DOC, Restrictive Housing, 2011.
- Indiana DOC, The Use and Operation of Adult Offender Administrative Restrictive Status Housing, 2015.
- Minnesota DOC, Segregation Unit Management, 2015
- Ohio Department of Rehabilitation & Correction, Inmate Security Classification Levels 1-4, 2015.
- Oklahoma DOC, Segregation Measures, 2013.
- Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Administrative Segregation Plan, 2013.
- Virginia DOC, Restrictive Housing Units, 2016
- Wyoming DOC, Administrative Segregation, 2015

Other Systems

- Administrative Segregation in Federal Corrections 10 Year Trends (Canada), 2015
- Review of the Use of Segregation for ICE Detainees, 2013
- Solitary Confinement: The View from Europe, 2015
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s New Directive on Segregation: Why We Need Further Protections, 2014

By facilitating cross-jurisdictional comparisons of the rules and practices that surround administrative segregation, this Report both reflects and supports ongoing efforts to understand its impact, reevaluate its use, and limit or end extended isolation.


Restrictive housing, sometimes called administrative segregation, is used by correctional administrators to manage offenders who may be disruptive within their facilities. Restrictive housing entails physically removing inmates from the general population of a prison, separating them from other inmates, and includes imposing restrictions on their movement, behavior, and privileges. Within the prison setting, the placement of inmates in restrictive housing or administrative segregation generates greater judicial scrutiny due to the level of restriction, reasonableness of the placement and the indeterminate length of the segregation. Constitutional challenges to restrictive housing that courts have heard have been based on the following amendments:

- First Amendment
- Fourth Amendment
- Sixth Amendment
- Eighth Amendment
- Fourteenth Amendment


This topical working group meeting brought together stakeholders from a variety of research, practice and policy settings to allow the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to assess the current state of knowledge in the use of administrative segregation in corrections institutions and to guide the development of a strategic and comprehensive research agenda on this policy.


The purpose of this White Paper is to provide information and recommendations to the Subcommittee from a BOP policy perspective on what the agency refers to as “Restrictive Housing.”


The use of solitary confinement in the United States has come under increased scrutiny and calls for reduction or abolition of its use. However, there has been little empirical
examination of the use of solitary confinement in settings other than supermax-style confinement. In this article the author reviews types of solitary confinement and methodological challenges when researching solitary confinement.


This article addresses the problematic lack of available data on jail isolation. It discusses the potential significance of the practice of isolating jail inmates and the basis for believing that punitive isolation in jails is at least as widespread as in prisons. It also summarizes some of the information that recently has become available about the use of isolation at one notorious jail complex—Rikers Island—where the practice has been reported on and debated perhaps more than any other, and uses Rikers as both an instructive case study and cautionary tale. Finally, the article briefly reviews what is known about the significant risk of serious harm that isolated confinement is known to represent and acknowledges the need for reliable data gathering, meaningful outside monitoring, and effective oversight. Abstract.


This report provides an independent, comprehensive review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ operation of restrictive housing and identifies potential operational and policy improvements. Specifically, it provides a comprehensive, detailed evaluation of the Bureau’s use of restrictive housing, including the following key areas: national trends and best practices in the management of restrictive housing units; profile of the Bureau’s segregation population; Bureau policies and procedures governing the management of restrictive housing; unit operations and conditions of confinement; mental health assessment and treatment within restrictive housing units; application of inmate due-process rights; reentry programming; and the impact of the use of restrictive housing on system safety and security. The report also evaluates the impact of the restrictive housing program on the federal prison system and places the Bureau’s use of segregation in context with professional standards and best practices found in other correctional systems. The findings and recommendations contained in this report are based on the information and data collected while conducting site visits to the Bureau’s restrictive housing units and facilities from November 2013 through May 2014. Any operational changes or new written policies implemented by the Bureau after completion of the site visits regarding their use of restrictive housing are not reflected in this report. Some such changes were in process or were scheduled for implementation after the completion of the site visits.


This report is useful in comparing the segregation practices of various jurisdictions. “This report provides an overview of state and federal policies related to long-term isolation
of inmates, a practice common in the United States and one that has drawn attention in recent years from many sectors. All jurisdictions in the United States provide for some form of separation of inmates from the general population. Prison administrators see the ability to separate inmates as central to protecting the safety of both inmates and staff. Yet many correctional systems are reviewing their use of segregated confinement; as controversy surrounds this form of control, its duration, and its effects” (p. 1). Sections following an overview of findings include: criteria for placement in administrative segregation; the procedures and processes for initial (non-emergency) placement; periodic review—initial post-assignment review, periodic review thereafter, and procedures for periodic review; conditions, structured (step-down) programs, visitation, and degrees of isolation; and additional research plans.


Directions for the swift implementation of the DOJ Report's recommendations for addressing the overuse of solitary confinement in correctional and detention systems in the United States are organized into three sections: Sec. 1--Implementation of the DOJ Report; Sec. 2-- General Provisions; and Sec. 3--Publication.


From the beginning, SD (South Dakota) DOC and CJI set out, through performance measurement, to examine who is in restrictive housing and how this set of individuals differs from general population, demonstrate how the new restrictive housing policy and program is being implemented, track inmate progression through the program, and monitor how these offenders do upon release to a less restrictive correctional setting.


The report seeks to accomplish three tasks. First, to unveil hidden truths of Ohio’s prisons—namely, that solitary confinement is overused and abused, and especially detrimental in its treatment of mental health. Second, the report challenges these practices with evidence, asserting that solitary confinement runs contrary to proper rehabilitation, increasing violence, exacerbating existing mental illnesses and provoking illness in those who did not previously suffer. Third, the report suggests specific reforms for the use of solitary confinement in Ohio’s prisons.


The report begins with an overview of restrictive housing, then focuses on the use of restrictive housing within the Federal Bureau of Prisons. It then examines other correctional systems at the federal, state, and local level; looks at a number of state and
local jurisdictions that have implemented innovative reforms; and considers how the Justice Department can spur widespread adoption of these practices
Length of Time in Restrictive Housing


This assessment was conducted using a collaborative, on-the-ground approach combining: intensive site visits to eight key DOC facilities; in-depth workgroup sessions with system and facility administrators and staff at each facility on their use of segregation, services, and challenges; policy and case file reviews; internal briefings for administrators, committee members and staff on project findings; and comprehensive quantitative analyses of administrative data to provide DOC officials with data- and field-informed recommendations.


Topics discussed include: how inmates get placed in segregated housing; litigation resulting in legislative changes; special administrative measures (SAMs); length of stay; release back into the general population; gang influence; and the future.


This report addresses, among other things: (1) the trends in BOP’s segregated housing population, (2) the extent to which BOP centrally monitors how prisons apply segregated housing policies, and (3) the extent to which BOP assessed the impact of segregated housing on institutional safety and inmates. GAO analyzed BOP’s policies for compliance and analyzed population trends from fiscal year 2008 through February 2013. GAO visited six federal prisons selected for different segregated housing units and security levels, and reviewed 61 inmate case files and 45 monitoring reports. The results are not generalizable, but provide information on segregated housing units.


This letter first discusses the general constitutional laws governing placement in segregation. The next two sections describe the CDCR rules about when a prisoner can be placed in segregation and what procedures should be followed, including special rules for prisoners who have disabilities or are mentally ill. The fourth and fifth sections discuss living conditions in segregation and laws setting minimum requirements. The letter ends with a brief summary of what steps a prisoner can take to challenge an unfair segregation placement or inhumane segregation conditions.

Conditions of Confinement


The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) confines 4.4 percent of its prison population in solitary confinement. Texas locks more people in solitary-confinement cells than twelve states house in their entire prison system. On average, prisoners remain in solitary confinement for almost four years; over one hundred Texas prisoners have spent more than twenty years in solitary confinement. The conditions in which these people live impose such severe deprivations that they leave prison mentally damaged; as a group, people released from solitary are more likely to commit more new crimes than people released from the rest of the prison system. Yet in 2013, TDCJ released 1,243 people directly from solitary-confinement cells into Texas communities. These prisoners return to society after living for years or decades in a tiny cell for twenty-two hours a day, with no contact with other human beings or access to educational or rehabilitative programs.


The Department of Correction establishes the conditions of confinement governing facilities housing offenders in Administrative Segregation, Protective Control, Disciplinary Segregation, High Security Maximum Control, Maximum Control, Intensive Control, Death Row and as Safekeepers. Facilities must operate in accordance with these standards unless receiving an exception in writing.


If you are looking for a balanced approach to the use of solitary confinement by prisons then this program is for you. The strength of this film is that it presents an excellent look at the extremely difficult working conditions correctional officers face in managing inmates in segregation while it also shows why inmates end up in solitary and how inmates react to this segregation.


This Amnesty International report discusses "concerns about conditions of severe isolation at the United States Penitentiary, Administrative Maximum facility in Colorado. It also examines conditions in Special Management Units and Security Housing Units operated at other federal prison facilities."


Restrictive housing, sometimes known as administrative segregation, is the practice of housing some inmates separately from the general population of a correctional institution and imposing restrictions on their movement, behavior, and privileges. This
document provides an overview of restrictive housing, how it is used within the correctional setting, who is placed in this environment, and other basic information.


Some separated inmates feel the experience has so dehumanized them they don’t want to leave.


Prison wardens and jail administrators face challenges in attracting the right staff to work in the complex setting of restrictive housing and address the behaviors that occur. How can we attract staff that have the skills, attitude, demeanor, professionalism, motivation and experience to work with this challenging set of offenders?


This report, the first of its kind, aims to examine the use of segregation and solitary confinement in the immigration detention system, share individual experiences, and provide concrete recommendations to eradicate the use of solitary confinement, a practice that has proven unnecessary, costly, and harmful to detainees’ physical and mental health.
Conditions of Confinement: Juveniles


This is an important video to see, especially following U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's remarks that the excessive use of solitary confinement for juveniles needs to stop. Various youth tell us their stories about how isolation has affected them. Spread throughout are observation from correctional personnel. This investigation "toggles between New York City and Santa Cruz, where young people tell their own stories of isolation and how the justice system can do better." The program begins with a look at Rikers Island, New York City's enormous jail complex. The program then concludes with a visit to the Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall, a national model that has "reduced the use of isolation so much that corrections officials around the country routinely traveled to California's Central Coast to see how they did it."


This Article is the first to provide a comprehensive comparative analysis of the solitary confinement of youth in the United States and across the globe.


CJCA presents this toolkit to help its members and the field reduce the use of isolation and ultimately better help youths in juvenile facilities become successful members of the community.


BOP is ending the practice of placing juveniles in restrictive housing—in line with the standards outlined in the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, now pending in the U.S. Senate.


What follows is the only nationwide survey known to us on the laws and policies governing the use of solitary confinement in juvenile detention facilities.


This report focuses on the first of these challenges, the widespread and persistent maltreatment of youth confined in America’s juvenile corrections facilities.
Conditions of Confinement: Women


Across the United States, jails and prisons hold more than 200,000 women. These prisoners are routinely subjected to solitary confinement. Yet the use of solitary on women is often overlooked.
Research/Effects: Effects of Prolonged Time in Restrictive Housing

Casella, Jean and James Ridgeway. 2013. The Solitary Connection: Was Clements Suspect Affected by Years in Prison Isolation? SolitaryWatch.com

Solitary confinement may be at the heart of a tragic irony in the death of Tom Clements. The reform-minded Colorado prisons chief had expressed concern about the dangerous damage caused by prolonged prison isolation, and the risks of releasing prisoners directly from solitary onto the streets. Now, emerging evidence suggests that the main suspect in Clements’ murder, who was released from solitary confinement just two months earlier, may have suffered from precisely that kind of damage.


This briefing paper provides an overview of the excessive use of solitary confinement in the U.S. and strategies for safely restricting its use.


The double punishment experienced by death-sentenced prisoners is documented. This publication should be read by any stakeholder connected with the capital punishment process—policy leaders, lawyers, judges, and the public. Sections contained in this report are: introduction; trapped in a broken system; punishment on top of punishment; survey reveals majority of death rows hold prisoners in solitary confinement—cramped and bare cells are the norm, most on death row experience extreme isolation and inactivity, and too many on death row are denied religious services; the devastating effects of prolonged solitary confinement are well known; “death row phenomenon” and staggering delays exacerbate damage; and conclusion.


This article argues for policy reforms to counteract the harmful impact of solitary confinement on public safety and recidivism, informed by the constitutional standards for its use in prisons.


This report takes an in-depth look at whether long-term solitary confinement constitutes torture, and whether separating the “worst of the worst” from other prisoners is beneficial. Sections of this publication include: the issues; background—repentance in isolation, supreme displeasure, institutionalizing solitary, and constitutional issues; chronology; current situation—fight over supermax, and new litigation; at issue—two opposing views of solitary’s use; and outlook—solitary losing favor.

“The NYCLU uses the term “extreme isolation” throughout this report to capture New York’s particular practice of subjecting one or two prisoners in a cell to the conditions most commonly understood as “solitary confinement” ... The NYCLU set out to investigate New York’s use of extreme isolation. We explored the history that led to the emergence and expansion of the practice in New York. We asked who New York subjects to extreme isolation, for what reasons, and for how long. We sought to understand and articulate its effects on prisoners and their families, as well as an often-overlooked population – the corrections staff assigned to watch them. We compared New York’s use of extreme isolation with practices in other states and asked if the widespread use of the practice violates legal standards. Finally, we considered how reforming the use of extreme isolation would affect the safety of New York’s prisons and communities” (p. 1-2). Six sections follow an executive summary: the Box; building the Box; Box hits—how violations of prisons rule lead to solitary, determining the severity of an alleged rule infraction, determining whether a prisoner is guilty of a rule infraction, determining whether conviction warrants a punishment of extreme isolation, and who is in the Box; life in the Box; thinking outside the Box—three findings, alternatives, extreme isolation is legally indefensible, and recommendations; and epilogue.


This dissertation adds to this gap in knowledge by providing a longitudinal evaluation of the effect of SC on institutional misconduct in a sample of 14,311 inmates in the state of Ohio. The results of this study indicate SC does not have any significant effect on the prevalence or incidence of subsequent violent, nonviolent, or drug misconduct.


This report represents the first effort to directly link conditions in Arizona’s supermax prisons with the state’s high recidivism rate.


The study was conducted to evaluate the psychological effects of long-term administrative segregation on offenders, particularly those with mental illness.


The use of administrative segregation for inmates with and without mental illness has generated considerable criticism. Segregated inmates are locked in single cells for 23
hours per day, are subjected to rigorous security procedures, and have restricted access to programs. In this study, we examined whether inmates in segregation would show greater deterioration over time on psychological symptoms than would comparison offenders. The subjects were male inmates, with and without mental illness, in administrative segregation, general population, or special-needs prison. Subjects completed the Brief Symptom Inventory at regular intervals for one year. Results showed differentiation between groups at the outset and statistically significant but small positive change over time across all groups. All groups showed the same change pattern such that there was not the hypothesized differential change of inmates within administrative segregation. This study advances the empirical research, but replication research is needed to make a better determination of whether and under what conditions harm may or may not occur to inmates in solitary confinement.


The results of this study were largely inconsistent with our hypotheses and the bulk of literature that indicates AS is extremely detrimental to inmates with and without mental illness. Similar to other research, our study found that segregated offenders were elevated on multiple psychological and cognitive measures when compared to normative adult samples. However, elevations were present among the comparison groups too, suggesting that high degrees of psychological disturbances are not unique to the AS environment. In examining change over time patterns, there was initial improvement in psychological well-being across all study groups, with the bulk of the improvements occurring between the first and second testing periods, followed by relative stability for the remainder of the study. Patterns indicated that the MI groups tended to be similar to one another but were significantly elevated compared to the NMI groups, regardless of their setting. Contrary to our hypothesis, offenders with mental illness did not deteriorate over time in AS at a rate more rapid and more extreme than for those without mental illness. Finally, although AS inmates in this study were found to possess traits believed to be associated with long-term segregation, these features cannot be attributed to AS confinement because they were present at the time of placement and also occurred in the comparison study groups. Implications for policy and future research are discussed.


While social workers are engaged in the conversation about the need to reform the use of segregation at the federal, state, and local level, this particular social justice brief is on the severe and often life-altering mental health consequences of prolonged segregation and isolation.
Legislation and Litigation Impacting Restrictive Housing

Congress and state legislatures have addressed the issue with a particular focus on vulnerable populations like children and persons with mental illness. Most significantly, a number of states have substantially reduced their use of solitary confinement, with many others considering similar action. In this paper, the reasons for these developments are examined and prospects for continued reform explored.


Historically, in cases challenging solitary confinement, the courts have tailored their remedies to address the specific injury that violates the plaintiffs’ constitutional rights. Rather than slowly chipping away at solitary confinement through endless litigation in the courts, structural reform should be pursued through the legislative and executive branches of government. By learning lessons from other states such as Maine, New York, and Colorado who have successfully reformed their solitary confinement practices, California can become a leader in the humane and fair treatment of its prison population.

Following the legal analysis of cases, this Comment will view the process of how prisoners end up in solitary confinement in federal prisons and then look to the psychological world, which has provided a number of studies on the effect solitary confinement has on prisoners.

Although solitary confinement is conventionally challenged under the “cruel and unusual” standard of the Eighth Amendment, this approach presents several intractable legal hurdles to successful claims. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 42 U.S.C. §§ 12101 et seq., and its precursor, the Rehabilitation Act, provide innovative and non-constitutional causes of action for inmates with mental illness to challenge their solitary confinement.

This Comment uses a recent prisoners’ rights class action that challenges solitary confinement to demonstrate the way in which class action mootness procedure disadvantages inmates.

Prison Law Office [Website]
Protecting the constitutional rights of people behind bars through advocacy, education and litigation.

A gateway to information on prisoners' rights, including federal, state, and international primary and secondary sources, in print and online, with a particular focus on special populations and topical issues.

The use of solitary confinement in U.S. prisons and jails has come under increasing scrutiny. Over the past few months, Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy all but invited constitutional challenges to the use of solitary confinement, while President Obama asked, “Do we really think it makes sense to lock so many people alone in tiny cells for 23 hours a day for months, sometime for years at a time?” Even some of the most notorious prisons and jails, including California’s Pelican Bay State Prison and New York’s Rikers Island, are reforming their use of solitary confinement because of successful litigation and public outcry. Rovner suggests that in light of these developments and “the Supreme Court’s increasing reliance on human dignity as a substantive value underlying and animating constitutional rights,” there is a strong case to make that long-term solitary confinement violates the constitutional right to freedom from cruel and unusual punishment.

This article surveys notable legal developments, new scholarship, and recent scientific research concerning the administration and effects of solitary confinement.

The main tools used to challenge solitary confinement are the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.
Programming and Reentry-focused Services in Restrictive Housing


The article outlines the transition project implemented at the jail in Larimer County in Fort Collins, Colorado aimed towards better inmate management. Several methods were developed to improve jail operation and a high-security behavior modification program with emphasis on various areas was designed. Three pods consisted the high-security area and lockdown time was reduced. The program describes the series of communication between staff and inmates to streamline administrative segregation.


Starting in 2013, the New York City (NYC) jail system developed a new treatment unit for persons with SMI who were judged to have violated jail rules (and previously would have been punished with solitary confinement) called the Clinical Alternative to Punitive Segregation (CAPS) unit. CAPS is designed to offer a full range of therapeutic activities and interventions for these patients, including individual and group therapy, art therapy, medication counseling and community meetings.


This restrictive housing program has helped improve offender behavior, decreased uses of force and expanded rehabilitation efforts with previously challenging inmates.


"This collection of materials, which was provided as a starting point for the discussion, describes current patterns of incarceration and explores interventions designed to reduce the degree to which correctional facilities maintain order through the isolation of prisoners, both through the locating of prison facilities and the placement of people within them." The text is divided into three chapters. ...Chapter 3, The Political Economies of Change--Setting Agendas: getting out of where we are—framing how and why we got here; reformatting prison practices—a snapshot of the current spending paradigm, the "reinvestment paradigm", and prisons as providers of social services and education's potential and political freight; and oversight outside prison.


Although there are occasions when restrictive housing may be the best tool we have to ensure the safety of inmates, staff, and the public, our experience shows that, with a systems approach, it is possible to reduce the numbers of people going into restrictive housing, create rehabilitative alternatives, ensure an accountable and consistent process for placement and release decisions, improve conditions for those who are
placed in restrictive housing and for those who work there, and facilitate successful exit from those placements.


When corrections officers at the South Dakota State Penitentiary (SDSP) began monitoring positive behavior amongst its restrictive housing offenders on each shift, it was a game changer. Officers and supervisors saw immediate results – not only were the offenders complying with basic rules, they were more respectful in their communication and engaged in their own progress.


This article reports the implementation of Dialectical Behavioral Therapy—Corrections Modified (DBT-CM) for difficult to manage, impulsive and/or aggressive correctional populations. Methods. Participants were English-speaking women (n=18) and men (n=45) of diverse cultural backgrounds between the ages of 16 and 59 years old retained in state-run prisons in Connecticut. Following consent, and a psychological assessment battery, twice-weekly DBT-CM groups were held over 16 weeks followed by random assignment to DBT coaching or case management condition, with sessions taking place individually for eight weeks. Data analysis. A mixed effects regression model was used to test the hypotheses: participants will show decreased aggression, impulsivity, and psychopathology, as well as improved coping, after completing the DBT-CM groups; and will show greater reduction in targeted behaviors than those receiving case management at the six month and 12 month follow-up assessment periods. Results. Significant reduction in targeted behavior was found from baseline to following the 16 week DBT-CM skills treatment groups. Both case management and DBT coaching were significant at 12 month follow-up. A significant difference was found for adult men and women. Conclusions. The study supports the value of DBT-CM for management of aggressive behaviors in prison settings.
Medical & Mental Health Services in Restrictive Housing


Litigation regarding the prevalence and treatment of mentally ill inmates held in administrative segregation is on the upswing. It is essential more than ever, that correctional agencies have a legally defensible clinical program for mentally ill inmates placed in administrative segregation. This article describes ten things that your agency must be kept in mind as it develops or updates such a process. This article is divided into three sections: critical mental health issues in administrative segregation—definitions of mental illness, defining mental health needs, and the conditions and duration of confinement in segregation; key components of a legally defensible program; and concluding remarks.


The purpose of this analysis was to better understand the complex risk factors associated with self-harm and consider whether patients might be better served with innovative approaches to their behavioral issues.


The author considers the debate over the use of solitary confinement, particularly with mentally ill prisoners. Topics discussed include the creation of the Stop Solitary movement in the U.S. and the key role played by psychiatrists and psychologists in the movement, the connection between solitary confinement and other harmful conditions for mentally ill prisoners, and the legal challenges against the solitary confinement of mentally ill prisoners.


Kupers prepares list of eight guiding principles for providing step-down mental health programming to prisoners who are precluded from being warehoused in segregation units and three thorny issues that may arise as a result.


Litigation in Mississippi required the Department of Corrections to ameliorate substandard conditions at the super-maximum Unit 32 of Mississippi State Penitentiary at Parchman, remove prisoners with serious mental illness from administrative
segregation and provide them with adequate treatment, and reexamine the entire classification system. Pursuant to two federal consent decrees, the Department of Corrections greatly reduced the population in administrative segregation and established a step-down mental health treatment unit for the prisoners excluded from administrative segregation. This article describes and discusses not only the process of enacting the changes but also the outcomes, including the large reductions in rates of misconduct, violence, and use of force.


In recent years, prison officials have increasingly turned to solitary confinement as a way to manage difficult or dangerous prisoners. Many of the prisoners subjected to isolation, which can extend for years, have serious mental illness, and the conditions of solitary confinement can exacerbate their symptoms or provoke recurrence. Prison rules for isolated prisoners, however, greatly restrict the nature and quantity of mental health services that they can receive. In this article, we describe the use of isolation (called segregation by prison officials) to confine prisoners with serious mental illness, the psychological consequences of such confinement, and the response of U.S. courts and human rights experts. We then address the challenges and human rights responsibilities of physicians confronting this prison practice. We conclude by urging professional organizations to adopt formal positions against the prolonged isolation of prisoners with serious mental illness.


This report examines past and continued use of solitary confinement by the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) to manage mentally ill prisoners; considers the moral, fiscal, safety and legal implications of CDOC’s continued warehousing of mentally ill prisoners in solitary confinement; and makes recommendations to bring Colorado’s prisons in line with modern psychiatric, correctional and legal standards.
Safe Alternatives to Restrictive Housing


"The purpose of this guide is to provide prison and jail administrators and staff with strategies for safely housing inmates at risk of sexual abuse without isolating them. Inmates at risk for sexual victimization—whether identified through screening or victimized in confinement—need protection from abusers, equal access to programming and health and mental health services, and congregate opportunities" (p. 3). Sections of this document include: introduction; a brief look at the use of segregated housing and protective custody in the U.S.; why the use of segregation matters—conditions, impacts, and fiscal costs of isolation; managing people who screen at risk for sexual abuse in general population—incorporating PREA screening requirements into internal classification systems, using case management systems to manage vulnerable inmates, open housing units in general population, mission-specific housing, and key considerations for managing people who screen at risk for sexual abuse in general population; managing particularly high-risk populations—women, youthful inmates, LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex) inmates (e.g., targeted intake and screening, housing and programming placement, monitoring and safety, and commitment and training); and conclusion.


The successful efforts of individuals to reduce the use of solitary confinement and to make the conditions found in solitary settings are described. Sections of this case study include: introduction; the origins of solitary confinement; the psychological effects of long-term isolation; before the reforms—solitary confinement in Maine; it does not have to be this way—the Maine reform example of what and how it happened; keys to success—honest assessment and organizing and cooperation; overcoming institutional inertia related to safety, alternatives, reform worth the effort, and whether advocated really understand the situation; the lessons of the Maine reform campaign—bring all the pieces together, the importance of leadership, and the judicious and timely application of pressure; and conclusion.


Changes to the Hampden County Sheriff’s Department’s Special Management Unit (aka the Disciplinary Unit or Segregation Unit) that result in fewer segregated inmates and ensure facility and staff safety are explained. Topics discussed include: the agency’s philosophy of corrections; concern for worsening mental health of inmates in
segregation; working group committee; establishment of a behavioral program with evaluation system; good behavior benefits for the inmate; basic programming in segregation; the use of the MP3 Headset System to combat mental deterioration; corrective action plan; and correction of pathology not stagnation. “The above changes have resulted in considerably less inmates being held in the segregation unit, with no concomitant rise in assaults in the general population” (p. 5)


This report, written by the executive director and deputy executive director of the Colorado DOC, outlines the state’s reforms in the use of segregation.


The first webinar examines the benefits of reducing the use of segregation in a corrections system, discusses what a system interested in reforming this practice needs to know to get started, and features reduction strategies implemented by two corrections departments.


Segregated housing, commonly known as solitary confinement, is a growing fiscal, safety, and human rights concern for all corrections departments. Vera's Safe Alternatives to Segregation Initiative is partnering with five state and local corrections systems to significantly reduce their reliance on segregated housing through the advancement of safe and effective alternatives.


Through the online Safe Alternatives to Segregation Resource Center, Vera provides the latest research, reports, policy briefs, and information on promising reforms already being implemented in jurisdictions nationwide. These resources aim to inform corrections officials, policymakers, advocates, the media, and the general public about the current use of segregation in the U.S., its impacts, and what can be done to address it.

On September 29, 2015, Vera hosted a convening in Washington, DC to leverage growing attention to the need to reduce our use of solitary confinement in jails and prisons into actionable strategies for reform.


Many corrections systems isolate certain prisoners from the general prison population—a practice known as solitary confinement or segregation. Vera's Segregation Reduction Project (SRP) works with states and local jurisdictions to decrease the number of people they hold in segregation, provides recommendations tailored to their specific circumstances and needs, and continues to assist them while they plan and implement change.


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<th>Step-Down Programs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>After California Prisons Release “Gang Affiliates” From Solitary Confinement, Costs and Violence Levels Drop</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Can Corrections Heal? Reducing Recidivism and Increasing Public Safety in Virginia</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Disciplinary Segregation Reform (Hampden County Sheriff’s Department, Massachusetts)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Goose Creek (Alaska) Administrative Segregation Step-Down Program Graduates Four</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>How to Get Out of Solitary—One Step at a Time: New programs are easing inmates out of years of solitary confinement with surprising outcomes for both prisoners and corrections officers.</strong></td>
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<td>▪ <strong>Incentives in Segregation Pilot Project (Michigan)</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>▪ <strong>Virginia DOC Administrative Segregation Step Down Program.</strong></td>
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</table>
In The News…

05/13/2016  Calls to Rethink Delaware’s Solitary Confinement
05/09/2016  Colorado Legislature Passes Bill to Protect Children from Solitary Confinement
04/29/2016  Solitary Confinement is Broken, and Prison Guards are Trying to Fix It
04/28/2016  Tennessee ACLU Joins Lawsuit Over Teen Solitary Confinement
04/20/2016  Commission’s Statement Spells End for State Prison’s Use of Solitary Confinement on Prisoners with Serious Mental Illness Says Disability Rights Montana
04/05/2016  To Seek a Newer World: Prisoners’ Rights at the Frontier
03/31/2016  Federal Judge Approves Solitary Confinement Overhaul in New York State
03/11/2016  After 33 Years in Solitary Confinement, Former Black Panther Russell Shoatz Will Have His Day in Court
01/30/2016  South Carolina Prisons a Step Ahead of President’s New Solitary-Confinement Policies
01/26/2016  What Obama’s Solitary Reforms Mean for Inmates
01/20/2016  Settlement to Force Overhaul of Illinois Solitary Confinement Practices
01/11/2016  End Solitary Confinement of Juvenile Inmates in Minnesota
12/02/2015  New Legislation Would Limit Use of Solitary Confinement at D.C. Jail
11/24/2015  Manhattan U.S. Attorney Announces Agreement with Westchester County Jail to Establish Corrective Measures and Appoint an Independent Monitor
09/01/2015  In Landmark Settlement, Solitary Confinement to be Dramatically Reduced in California Prisons
09/17/2015  Lawsuit Charges Delaware Prison System with Neglect and Solitary Confinement of Mentally Ill
08/04/2015  Ashker v. Governor of California is a federal class action lawsuit on behalf of prisoners held in the Security Housing Unit (SHU) at California’s Pelican Bay State Prison.
06/23/2015  Supreme Court Justice Kennedy Invites Constitutional Challenge of Solitary Confinement

2014  MD HB0787 Corrections—Isolated Confinement Study
2013  MA Senate Bill S.1133 An Act Relative to the Appropriate Use of Solitary Confinement
2013  TX SB1003 Relating to a Review of and Report Regarding the Use of Adult and Juvenile Administrative Segregation in Facilities in This State