

**Locked Up and Locked Down:
National Report Tackles the Segregation of Inmates with Mental Illness**

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Between 80,000 and 100,000 inmates are currently segregated in prison cells nationwide for 22-24 hours per day, for days, months, years, and in some cases decades at a time. Segregation disproportionately affects inmates with mental illness and research shows that individuals may acquire symptoms of mental illness, or experience exacerbated symptoms of mental illness, as a result of the conditions in segregation. Today, the Amplifying Voices of Inmates with Disabilities (AVID) Prison Project (AVIDprisonproject.org), in partnership with the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) and the federally mandated protection and advocacy (P&A) agencies in Colorado and over 20 states across the country, released *Locked Up and Locked Down: Segregation of Inmates with Mental Illness*. The report outlines the advocacy efforts undertaken on behalf of inmates with mental illness in segregation by the P&A network, and calls for greater national prison reform measures.

“Segregation is harmful for all inmates, but it’s particularly harmful for inmates with mental illness who have unique therapeutic needs that are generally unavailable in prisons,” says Anna Guy, AVID attorney and author of the report. “In drafting this report, we found that inmates with mental illness from all over the country are routinely placed in the most restrictive forms of segregated housing where they receive even less mental health care and are treated even more harshly than other inmates in segregation for serious rules violations, resulting in increased punishment solely on the basis of their disability.”

The report contains examples of both litigation and non-litigation advocacy cases from 21 P&As, and illustrates the sensory deprivation, psychiatric decompensation, and behaviors relating to self-harm and suicide experienced by inmates with mental illness in segregation across the country. According to the report, segregation means that inmates with mental illness are repeatedly excluded from mental health treatment, programming, and services that support rehabilitation and re-entry. Report findings include limited access to mental health treatment, punishment for disability-related behaviors with increased segregation and restraint, the worsening of inmates’ psychiatric symptoms, and death related to the conditions in segregation.

Disability Law Colorado, the Colorado P&A and a partner in drafting the report, tells the story of its investigation of the mental health treatment and isolation of inmates in administrative segregation as well as the conditions in the residential treatment programs for inmates with mental illness within the Colorado prison system. The investigation found serious deficiencies in the treatment and conditions for inmates with mental illness in segregation. In response, the

prison system made policy changes to address these issues which are currently being monitored by the P&A to ensure compliance.

The report includes the following recommendations to address this crisis in our nation's prisons:

- 1) Increased federal funding to the P&A network for corrections-based monitoring and advocacy;
- 2) Creation of independent corrections ombuds offices at the state level in order to address inmate concerns before they rise to the level of litigation;
- 3) Increased data collection by the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics regarding the prevalence of people with mental illness in U.S. prisons and jails;
- 4) Increased monitoring and outreach in prisons by P&As across the country;
- 5) Fostering of collaborative relationships between state prison systems and P&As.

The report is available at AVIDprisonproject.org, where both the text of the report, and extensive original interviews with inmates with mental illness and corrections experts can be accessed.

About Disability Law Colorado

Disability Law Colorado (www.disabilitylawco.org) is the state's designated protection and advocacy system for individuals with disabilities. Founded in 1976, Disability Law Colorado protects and promotes the rights of people with disabilities and older people in Colorado through direct legal representation, advocacy, education and legislative analysis.

About the AVID Prison Project

The AVID Prison Project is an advocacy initiative focused on the needs of current and former inmates with disabilities. The project was developed by Disability Rights Washington and this report is a collaboration among NDRN, the P&As in Arizona, Colorado, New York, South Carolina, and Washington, with communication assistance from the P&As in Louisiana and Texas, and additional input from Connecticut, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Tennessee, and Vermont.

SOURCE Disability Law Colorado

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