



AFSCME Texas
Correctional Employees
Local 3807



February 25, 2014

Greetings,

As the president of the largest correctional professional organization in Texas, I am calling on the US Congress to make changes to implement national policy on the usage of administrative segregation that would positively impact both the correctional staff and offenders.

Research shows that depriving inmates of human contact for long periods of time may exacerbate mental crisis, assaultive behavior, antisocial behaviors, and acute health disorders. Psychological effects due to lack of sensory stimulation can include anxiety, depression, anger, cognitive disturbances, perceptual distortions, obsessive thoughts, paranoia, and psychosis.

The intended use of administrative segregation was to reduce violence on staff and inmates. Unfortunately a reduction in violence on staff has not been the case in Texas since the state greatly increased their use of administrative segregation in the 1990's. Serious assaults on Texas correctional staff has gradually risen over 104% during the last 7 years. In 2013 over 79% of the 499 reported intentional exposures to bodily fluids occurred in segregated housing areas of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. None of the exposure assaults involved regular general population offenders.

The over reliance on solitary confinement in Texas may be a direct result of lack of trained and experience staff. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice officer turnover rate is 24 percent annually. A better trained and experienced workforce could better manage an increasing mental health population, reducing the over usage of solitary confinement.

Technologies such as use of computer tablets linked to a secure network could offset some inmate's lack of sensory stimulation, delivering rehabilitation and education programs via the secure network.



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Even more alarming is we are releasing inmates into our communities every day, who have spent years in solitary conditions with little or no treatment to correct the behavior which lead to their incarceration in solitary conditions.

Correctional departments should be in the business to correct negative behavior, but unfortunately many times we lack the resources or policies, which result in costly recidivism for our taxpayers.

Respectfully,

Lance L Lowry
President AFSCME Local 3807
Texas Correctional Employees