

## CARING FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS ON RIKERS ISLAND

### JANET RUNCIE

PHYSICIAN ASSISTANT,  
ERIC M. TAYLOR CENTER (EMTC),  
NYC HEALTH + HOSPITALS/  
CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

**My Role:** The Eric M. Taylor Center (EMTC) is a jail on Rikers Island that was reopened to care for patients who are confirmed to have COVID-19 or who are symptomatic but whose COVID tests are pending. I'm responsible for conducting daily clinical rounds on these patients. I check their health status to address issues that may have developed and arrange for appropriate care.

I try to address not only the medical concerns but also the anxieties many patients have about the virus and what it may mean for them. COVID-19 can be scary for patients and for staff. That is why it is even more important that I show up everyday.

**Impact of COVID-19:** Jail can be a chaotic environment. When something like COVID-19 hits, the ability to take care of oneself is really challenged. Patients know that the way to stay safe is to keep physical distance, but this is almost impossible in the jails where everyone sleeps, eats and showers together. I pride myself in keeping my patients safe to the best of my abilities and try to give them the information they need to protect themselves. I also take my own



precautions so that I don't end up introducing the virus to my patients or my family.

### Why I'm On the Frontlines:

Some of the most sick and vulnerable New Yorkers are detained in the jail system. I wake up every morning and come home every night knowing that I made a real difference to people who can be invisible to or misunderstood by the rest of the city.

I am dedicated to my patients and will go above and beyond because I believe that the people we serve deserve top quality care. Health care is a human right, and I am proud to help make sure our patients have access to care especially during this public health crisis.

