



TREATING INCREASED MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN CITY JAILS

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My Role: I work in the Communicable Disease Unit (CDU) and North Infirmary. The CDU is where the most severe cases of COVID-19 are housed, and in general, our sickest patients are housed at the North Infirmary Command. My role is to help patients cope and learn to heal from their traumas and help them manage the stresses of incarceration.

Impact of COVID-19:

The COVID-19 pandemic has tremendously affected my work. The virus has brought untold stress to patients who have tested positive. Many other patients are concerned about their risk, along with the risks posed to their friends and family in the community. The need for mental health support is now more crucial than ever and we work tirelessly to provide these invaluable resources. Staff members are caring for family members who have contracted the virus or have become sick themselves. Especially in this time, as a team, it is critical to address the most acute needs and ensure continuity of health services.



Why I'm on the front lines:

Mental health treatment is vital, particularly during this public health crisis. This pandemic has been and continues to be mentally trying – not only for our patients, but our staff and our community as a whole.

Mental health has many layers and being incarcerated is an added stressor. It's important that the patients receive support during this challenging time to help eliminate additional stressors that have the potential to severely impact their emotional and physical stability. Without mental health services and supports, the risk of patients

engaging in problematic behavior and/or self-harm as a means of coping increases. Mental health guidance and support is essential in ensuring safety for everyone involved, especially in the carceral setting.

Special Team Shoutout: I want to recognize all the staff on Rikers Island and in the New York City jail system who continue to serve our vulnerable patient population. The teamwork I've witnessed over these past few weeks has been incredible. Please stay safe, stay home if you're able to do so, and most importantly, stay healthy.