

PROVIDING COVID-19 EDUCATION AND SUPPORT IN CITY JAILS

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My Role: My team is an intermediary between Department of Correction (DOC) and Correctional Health Services (CHS) staff, working to provide a safe environment for the provision of health care. We work to ensure patients are able to go to clinic for services, and work with DOC on proper documentation for the transportation of patients, whether on-site clinic visits or off-site hospital visits. We also work to ensure adequate staffing for medical, nursing, and mental health staff, and actively coordinate with DOC on the prioritization of sanitation of the clinics, especially in light of this pandemic.

Impact of COVID-19: As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, I've taken on an additional leadership role at the George R. Vierno Center (GRVC), another jail on Rikers Island. My team worked to

open up new clinic spaces for patients exhibiting COVID-like illness, and implemented a screening phone line for patients to call to report their health concerns from asymptomatic but exposed housing areas. We led the effort to educate patients and staff about COVID-19, treatment procedures, and safety and social distancing policies. Given my experiences covering the pandemic response coordination of GRVC and RNDC, I help provide guidance and support to many of my HSA colleagues in other facilities when needed.

During this trying time, it's important to emphasize the necessity of teamwork between correctional health staff and DOC, to provide our patients with critical resources, such as organizing new spaces for clinics, coordinating IT, staffing, and sanitation. I want to foster relationships among my coworkers so people know we will support them as they provide care to ensure all of our facilities remain safe.

Why I'm on the Frontlines: Our goals at CHS are to provide our patients with optimal care, while DOC's goals are ensuring safety. The pandemic has heightened the importance of cooperation across disciplines - we are all working to care for patients and it has fostered a sense of unity amongst the staff.

We are working through a crisis where we receive new information every day and procedure is quickly changing. It has taught me the importance of being creative at times when there may be limited resources, and has made emotional contact with patients ever more critical. We continue to reassure people, assuage panic, and provide real and accurate information from a safe distance. I am proud to be doing my part and work long shifts, often ten to twelve-hour days, to ensure that our patients and all New Yorkers are safe during this pandemic.