



Demystifying Isolation

Failures of current Connecticut D.O.C. practices
and proposed solutions



STOPSOLITARYCT.ORG

UNLOCK HUMANITY

How many people are subjected to isolated confinement in Connecticut?

It's a simple question, but the Connecticut Department of Correction's lack of transparency around isolation means the answer is hidden from the public.

By separately tracking multiple restrictive statuses, providing insufficient data, and failing to document time-in-cell for people in general population, the Department of Correction obscures the reality of isolated confinement in Connecticut. Accurate and accessible data on isolation is long overdue.

The PROTECT Act offers important interventions that would implement external oversight, solicit input from directly impacted people, and revise the Connecticut General Statutes to mandate effective data collection focused on isolation, not restrictive status.

Current Failures

DOC data on isolated confinement is not easily and publicly accessible. In order to access the data, a member of the public has to submit a Freedom of Information (FOI) request. In our experience, this lack of accessibility meant that we had to wait months to receive a pre-prepared report.

DOC data fails to show how many people are placed in restrictive housing each year. By providing largely disaggregated data and using point-in-time counts, the DOC's tracking methods prevent the public from understanding the total number of people isolated in a given year, and for how long individuals are isolated.

Using seven separate restrictive statuses creates artificial distinctions and allows the DOC to misrepresent the truth. The DOC's administrative directives identify seven different restrictive statuses, which are used for different purposes and intended to last different amounts of time; all of them isolate incarcerated people. The multiple categories invite misleading statements such as former Commissioner Rollin Cook's assertion in 2020 that only 29 individuals were on restrictive housing status—when, in fact, he later clarified, he was referring to the number of people on just one of the DOC's seven restrictive statuses, administrative segregation.

Tracking restrictive status, rather than time-in-cell, makes isolation in general population invisible. The only information that DOC data provides is whether a person is on a restrictive status—nothing about the conditions of confinement. We consistently hear reports from currently and formerly incarcerated individuals that they have spent well over 20 hours a day locked in their cell, even in general population. In high-security facilities the use of isolation is devastatingly normal, exemplified by reports of routine lockdowns on weekends, holidays, and training days. By failing to track time-in-cell, DOC data excludes these individuals and prevents the public from understanding the full extent of prolonged isolation.

So how many people are
isolated in the DOC?

On any given day, **hundreds** of
people in the Connecticut
Department of Correction of
Custody are on a formal restrictive
status...

But **thousands** may well be
subjected to prolonged isolation.

So, how can we actually demystify isolated confinement in Connecticut?

Our model legislation, the PROTECT Act, would ensure effective data collection and increase organizational transparency so that the public can understand how much time people are spending in cell.

The PROTECT Act would:

A. Implement External Oversight. The first, and perhaps most obvious, solution to ineffective data collection is to require independent and external monitoring.

B. Solicit Input from Incarcerated People. It's clear from our review of existing data that none of the available information stems from the perspectives of incarcerated people. As a result, existing data—focused only on formal restrictive status—provides insufficient insight on routine isolation.

C. Revise Connecticut General Statutes to Mandate Effective Data Collection. The revisions would ensure that the DOC collects data on isolation, not just formal restrictive status. The revisions would also facilitate better access to data and ensure that data is robust enough to effectively track isolation in the D.O.C.



Right now, the Connecticut Department of Correction's lack of transparency means there is no way to know how many people are subject to conditions of isolated confinement.

The PROTECT Act would give the public access to the truth.

