



# Nevada Department of Corrections

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For Immediate Release:  
September 6, 2019

## Nevada Partners with Vera Institute on Segregation Reform

As part of the commitment to improve public safety in prisons and in communities by ensuring a safe and humane environment for incarcerated people and staff, the Nevada Department of Corrections' (NDOC) partnered with the Vera Institute of Justice from 2016-2017 to explore alternatives to segregation.

A report highlighting Vera's assessment and recommendations for alternatives, "***The Safe Alternatives to Segregation Initiative: Findings, Recommendations, and Reforms for the Nevada Department of Corrections***," was released today and is available on [Vera's website](#).

"Vera Institute has demonstrated in other states like Washington and Louisiana that it's possible to improve prison safety and public safety by significantly reducing the numbers of people in isolation," said Harold Wickham, NDOC's Acting Director. "The results of this study will provide Nevada's political and prison leadership alternatives to large-scale reliance on segregation and isolation."

Vera's recommendations were based on a review of NDOC facilities and practices from 2016-2017. Key findings include:

- During an average day, 12.3% of Nevada's 13,400 incarcerated people were in some form of restrictive housing conditions.



*Segregation inmates are those who are isolated from the general population and who receive services and activities apart from other inmates*

*The Nevada Department of Corrections is committed to building a safer community by striving to incorporate progressive best practices in all aspects of corrections. NDOC houses nearly 14,000 persons with felony convictions in 18 facilities statewide. For more information visit [www.doc.nv.gov](http://www.doc.nv.gov).*

- Of that total, 7.6% of the incarcerated people were in administrative segregation units for disciplinary reasons, and 4.8% were in other units with segregation-like conditions.
- Even after completing their time in segregation, incarcerated people sometimes spent additional days or weeks in segregation while waiting for a general population bed to open.
- 41% of segregated people had mental health needs that couldn't be fully met due to the restrictive nature of their segregated time.
- The number and percentage of females in segregation decreased, but their length of stay remained higher than their male counterparts.

Based on the assessment, Vera recommended multiple strategies to reduce the number of incarcerated people held in segregation such as only placing people in segregation as a last resort, when they must be separated from the general population in a more secure environment to protect the safety of staff and other incarcerated people. Vera also recommended the NDOC make additional revisions to the disciplinary process and expand the use of effective alternative responses.

NDOC will use the study's findings to re-evaluate segregation policies and procedures and determine practices that meet the department's goal of ensuring humane conditions for incarcerated people and a safe environment for everyone who lives and works in prison. This will lead to safer communities, as studies show that people who have experienced long periods in segregation are more likely to commit crimes and return to prison.

"For too long, restrictive housing has been a deeply hidden and misunderstood issue, negatively impacting both incarcerated people and staff," said Sara Sullivan, Project Director at the Vera Institute of Justice. "We commend Nevada for opening their doors to Vera and for welcoming assistance as they tackle its overuse. We look forward to seeing what the state does to implement the reforms recommended in this partnership and take steps toward significantly limiting the use of restrictive housing and minimizing isolation."

The Vera Institute of Justice is an independent, non-partisan, nonprofit justice reform change agent. Vera produces ideas, analysis, and research that inspire change in the systems people rely upon for safety and justice and works in close partnership with government and civic leaders to implement them. To learn more about the Vera Institute of Justice, please visit [www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org).

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