

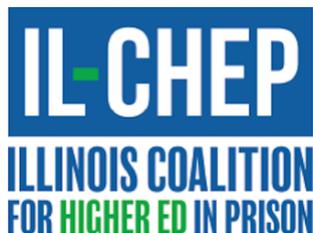
Illinois Coalition for Higher
Education in Prison

IL-CHEP Statement on Advocacy and Mutual Support for Returning Citizens During COVID-19 March 21, 2020

COVID-19 has thrown Illinois into uncharted territory. As we have all taken dramatic steps to protect public health during this crisis, IL-CHEP has maintained concern for the populations our students live in: prisons and jails across the state. Out of concern for the most vulnerable individuals, as well as a rapid escalation of the spread and need for medical care when the virus hits prisons, our members have been [advocating for the release of the people who are at the highest risk of death from COVID-19 who are incarcerated in Illinois](#). As educators, students, administrators and supporters, we want to offer what we can to help Illinois decarcerate for public health, especially the protection of our most vulnerable residents.

IL-CHEP welcomes all colleges and universities in the state of Illinois to join the commitment to open student housing to no more than twenty individuals who are currently incarcerated and whose lives are at risk because of it.

Find more information below.



For Institutions of Higher Education in Illinois during the Threat of COVID-19 A Guide for What to Expect in Opening Student Housing to Formerly Incarcerated People

Who would come to live on our campus?

The Governor is likely to release the individuals who are at highest risk of dying if they become infected by COVID-19. We expect that most people who will need housing during this emergency are elderly and/or people who have chronic illnesses.

How many people should we expect?

We are asking that each college campus limit themselves to accepting 20 individuals. During this time of crisis, we want to help the most vulnerable, but we also don't want to overwhelm any one campus.

When and for how long?

The Governor is already looking at releasing individuals at the highest risk of dying from COVID-19, and we don't know how long the threat of COVID-19 is going to dominate the social realities of Illinois. That said, the expectation is that people will be released from prison before the end of the shelter-in-place order, and expecting to house people for three months is a good place to work from.

What is our responsibility?

We ask that you allow up to 20 individuals to live in campus housing free of charge.

How will their needs be met?

Individuals released from prison at this time will have access to Medicaid and food stamps. Beyond the financial realities, we will assign one or two young and healthy volunteers to each campus who will 1) sanitize the housing units before the vulnerable person moves in, 2) make the grocery runs for the individuals during their time on campus, 3) maintain regular communication with the individuals through the duration of their time on campus and 4) sanitize the housing units after the vulnerable person moves out.

What happens in three months?

The groups and individuals who are passionately advocating for the release of these individuals now will use these three months to work with halfway houses and compassionate churches and households around the state to find new places for these individuals to move to on a permanent basis. Should any individual reach a point where they have not found an alternative living situation and the campus needs to make the housing available for students or others again, the person would be considered a "technical violator" and would be sent back to prison.

Why should we do this?

In this completely unprecedented time, it is more important than ever that every individual and institution share what they can spare to promote public health and maintain humane treatment for all people.

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