



"No More Victims"  
Fall 2020

**Please Join Us For A**



*Virtual*  
17th Annual Coalition Event  
in conjunction with Coalition Legal LLC.

**Theme: At Last..... I Can. Breathe.**

**Friday, October 9, 2020**

**Purchase tickets for Virtual  
event online at  
[www.waukegantownship.com](http://www.waukegantownship.com)**

**Other forms of payment  
accepted please call**

**call 847-244-4900 or email  
[coalition2rr@waukegantownship.com](mailto:coalition2rr@waukegantownship.com)**

**Virtual Tickets: Individual - \$60**

**Two People - \$100 (Couple sharing computer)**

**1/2 of the proceeds from ticket sales  
will be designated towards:**

1. Coalition to Reduce Recidivism
2. Coalition Legal, LLC

**Network &  
Entertainment:  
11:30 AM**

**Program  
Begins:  
12:00 PM**

Supervisor Patricia Jones, M.Ed. - Founder, Board Chairman  
President: Attorney Jennifer Witherspoon  
Co - Chair: Clerk Erin Cartwright-Weinstein, Co - Chair:  
Attorney Kathryn Vanden Berk

**Lake County**

**AMNESTY WEEK**  
Monday, September 28th - Friday, October 2nd

The Lake County Circuit Clerk's Office, in coordination with the Lake County State's Attorney's Office, is pleased to announce that this year's Lake County Amnesty Week will begin Monday, September 28, 2020 and run through Friday, October 2, 2020. During the week-long period, all collection fees and accrued interest will be waived on any past due fines owed on criminal and traffic matters in Lake County.

**"A conviction does not  
have to be a life sentence"**

# Inside/Out

**a Coalition to Reduce Recidivism Publication**



**COALITION TO  
REDUCE RECIDIVISM**



**COALITION LEGAL LLC**

Community Expungement  
Virtual Workshop  
Saturday, September 26, 2020  
10:00am to 2:00pm

There is an enormous untapped pool of people who are entitled to have their records sealed or expunged, but do not have the funds for it, are afraid to ask for it, or do not know they are entitled to it.

Please join us on Saturday, September 26, 2020 for a virtual Expungement workshop on Zoom. The registration process begins September 21st - 25th with the actual Workshop being held on September 26th. Online attorneys will assist with expunging and sealing misdemeanors on criminal records. Helpful information from speakers on behalf of the secretary of state will be provided.

## Workshops will include:

- Conceal and Carry (Illinois State Police)
- Child Support Hold (Drivers License Revoked/Suspended)
- Health Care Waiver (Employment opportunities)
- Executive Clemency (Pardon)
- What to do in case of Identity Theft?
- Expungement / Sealing



Individuals who have been assisted through Coalition Legal LLC will give testimonials. Please visit [www.waukegantownship.com](http://www.waukegantownship.com) for more information or call 847-244-4900.

## Coalition Legal LLC Online Application Feature

Coalition Legal LLC, the legal aid clinic affiliated with the Coalition to Reduce Recidivism, continues to build its capacity during the COVID crisis and is now accepting applications online. No longer is it necessary to come to the Township office to begin the process of getting your old criminal records sealed or expunged. The new, easy-to-complete form allows anyone in Lake County, no matter where they are located, to get valuable assistance from the attorneys and professional staff at Coalition Legal. **The service is totally free and you can apply online at [www.coalitionlegal.org](http://www.coalitionlegal.org).** The application is available in both English and Spanish.

Getting an old criminal record sealed or expunged can open the door to a better life of housing opportunities, job prospects and self-esteem. Coalition Legal attorneys help you through the application and court process, filing the correct papers, and accompanying you to court in a "virtual" hearing to present your case for expunging/sealing your record directly to the judge and state's attorney. Now that the entire process is "virtual" it is much easier to process applications and present your case directly to the judge from the safety of your own home. This new process has allowed many people who had reservations about going to court with the coronavirus crisis to move ahead with their applications without worrying about getting too close to other people such as court staff and the general public. If you want to begin the process of having your old criminal records sealed or expunged, please visit Coalition Legal LLC on the web at [www.coalitionlegal.org](http://www.coalitionlegal.org).

## HB1615: REPRESENTATIVE JUSTIN SLAUGHTER

**HB 1615 would bring Illinois into alignment with the majority of states and that have a felony murder statute. The bill:**

- Ensures that **only defendants that the felony-murder rule was designed to hold accountable are actually charged** with and found guilty of murder;
- Ensures individuals **who do not personally inflict an injury during the course of an underlying felony** would not be charged with or found guilty of first-degree murder; and,
- Ensures someone is truly culpable for murder if they are to be given our state's harshest possible punishment.



## GOOD NEWS FROM SPRINGFIELD

This past legislative session saw passage of several bills the Coalition supported. And, in concert with the action of the legislature, Governor JB Pritzker signed these items into law. A sincere expression of thanks is extended to our Lake County legislators who supported these and other bills important to the mission of the Coalition. Among the highlights of the bills passed were measures that eliminated a co-pay for medical and dental treatment for prisoners, and legislation that requires consideration of the welfare of affected children at pre-trial or sentencing hearings for certain violations.

- Two bills that directly impact the Coalition's mission also received approval. HB2040 bans for-profit prisons. It is difficult to reconcile the goal of an individual's rehabilitation and successful return to society, a primary objective of incarceration, with a system that seeks to gain profit from that incarceration. Either money will be used to further the goal of rehabilitation, or rehabilitation programs will be minimized to increase monetary returns for the for-profit system. The legislature and Governor recognized this incompatibility in passing this legislation.
- The second bill, HB1438, legalized cannabis use in Illinois. An important provision of this bill provides for expungement or sealing of records for minor violations involving previous use or possession of cannabis. As the presence of a conviction affects employment opportunities, housing, and a host of other factors, this legislation will remove the impediment of a cannabis violation in many circumstances.

Despite these and other successes, significant legislative work remains to be done. In the coming year we hope to revive or re-introduce legislation that addresses the inequities of monetary bond, allows judges the discretion to impose less than mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent crimes, and eases the difficulty for returning citizens in finding suitable housing. HB1615 seeks to modify the provisions of the felony murder statute, a law that holds individuals involved in the commission of a crime responsible for deaths that occur during the commission of that crime, although they were not directly responsible for that death. The Coalition supports reasonable modifications to this statute to insure its fair and just application. Delegations from the Coalition will be meeting with our Lake County legislators asking their help in these efforts.

## Thank You Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim

A big thank you goes out to Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim for her **\$1000!** Donation to the Coalition To Reduce Recidivism!

Pictured are Lake County Treasurer Holly Kim, Waukegan Township Supervisor Patricia Jones, and Attorney Kathryn Vanden Berk.



*Thank you* 

## No Photo ID, No Services: Coronavirus Poses Steep Hurdles After Prison. (The Marshall Project)



Across the country, in states such as California, New Jersey, Louisiana, Illinois, and Oregon, people coming home from prison during the coronavirus crisis are running into this seemingly simple but overwhelming dilemma: How do you get an official ID when almost every

licensing office is closed? And without an ID, how do you do anything? Many said they are left in limbo, unable to get a job, find housing, open a bank account, or even access basic benefits without that essential document. It's yet another way the COVID-19 crisis has made the already difficult process of re-entry nearly impossible. <https://www.themarshallproject.org/2020/05/26/no-photo-id-no-services-coronavirus-poses-steep-hurdles-after-prison>

## Helping People with Convictions (Residency Restrictions Letter)

Recently, the Coalition to Reduce Recidivism and Coalition Legal, LLC readily endorse and support the letter pertaining to Helping People with Convictions (Residency Restrictions Letter). The letter asked Governor Pritzker and other State Elected Officials to consider two modest proposals to address the problems caused by Illinois residency restrictions, which force thousands of Illinoisans—very disproportionately Black men—into lifelong homelessness and re-incarceration.

In the midst of a global pandemic, that damage is multiplied. These restrictions, which have produced a permanent Black underclass, now also endanger community health, particularly in African-American neighborhoods already coping with the highest rates of homelessness, incarceration, prison returns, and COVID deaths.

## From The Desk of Circuit Court Clerk Erin Cartwright-Weinstein:



**Circuit Court Clerk  
Erin Cartwright-  
Weinstein**

Covid-19 has brought a whole new perspective to the court system. Things change every day, and we continually establish new procedures to keep the justice system working while keeping everyone safe.

Gradually, the court system is opening-up more and more. The Judges are beginning to hear cases using video and telephone conferencing. Certain judges are hearing cases by scheduling each case in a limited time slot throughout the day. The judge can manage the timing of each case by sending out the link to the attorneys and the parties when they are ready. It will be a long time until we see long court calls and jam-packed courtrooms again.

Many of the attorneys have stated that they miss being present in the courtroom to argue their cases. Not only the fact that the grandeur of presenting your case to the Judge in a courtroom is lost, but the

difficulty of having interpreters and your client on a telephone line or video for a court hearing is difficult.

That leads to the next question, whether this virtual world will continue after the pandemic is over. The Circuit Clerk's Office is working on implementing a new case management system which will allow litigants and attorneys easier accessibility to their records. This makes the remote world we are currently living in much easier. Unfortunately, the process of initiating the new case management system will take another year to complete; and the antiquated system we are using today is not user friendly or accessible outside of the clerk's office to most users.

Although we have a substantially reduced staff during Covid-19, we have established ways to help the public access their records while complying with the stay at home order. First, we will email you documents that you need. There is a portal on our website that will allow you to complete a document request form; you will include your email address and phone number for us to contact you. We also accept documents for criminal cases by email at [cccriminalfiling@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:cccriminalfiling@lakecountyil.gov); and for civil cases by email at [cccivilfiling@lakecountyil.gov](mailto:cccivilfiling@lakecountyil.gov). Civil cases can only be filed through this email address if you have received an eFiling exemption from a judge, and you were given permission to file cases at the Circuit Clerk's Office, in person. Otherwise, please continue to file your civil documents through the e-Filing system.

We are always available to assist anyone who needs help. Please feel free to call us at 847.377.3380. Any help we can give you over the phone is the best way to keep all of us safe. We are open to the public if you need to visit us, but please wear a mask or the security officers will not let you enter the building. To all, please stay safe, and we will see each other on the other side.

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## Advice From Repatriate Bobbie Washington:

### How did you change your life for the better?

I realized that I wanted to live and not just exist on this earth and that I'm here for a reason.

### What have you done or are you doing to help others?

I currently work for a company where I teach and care for people with special needs. I truly love my job.

### Any advice for individuals who may be going through what you did?

Always remember your past does not predict your future, you can heal and move on with your life.

### How has the Coalition helped you?

The Coalition To Reduce Recidivism gave me the opportunity be around others that could relate to my situation and discuss about it. Also the Coalition provided me with the resources when needed them the most. Therefor I am so grateful and thank for all the services and resources I was provided with by the Coalition to Reduce Recidivism.

*"Always remember  
your past does not  
predict your future"*



incarceration and protect the rights of everyone--learn more by attending the Pretrial Fairness Act Teach-In. CRS is offering monthly Fair Tax Presentations until the General Election. Vote YES for Fair Tax!

The Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, of which Community Renewal Society is a member, offers a Response to Ongoing Violence in Chicago. Our feature article calls for your support to pass the transformative, community-driven GAPA Ordinance.

Community Renewal Society, as a member of the Grassroots Alliance for Police Accountability coalition, continues to fight for the GAPA Ordinance developed by community members and coalition allies. The Ordinance is the strongest and most transformative reform effort to set up civilian oversight of the Chicago Police Department. CRS needs your support to pass this transformative, community-driven ordinance. Please contact Rev. Damon Smith or Sarah Yousuf to find out how you can help. Learn more about our work with police accountability by attending our virtual Policing Teach-in; watch Facebook and Twitter for information.

In addition, on November 3, 2020 as we all go to the polls to cast our vote, we are asking that you vote yes for the Fair Tax Act to fix the state's unfair, inadequate tax system. A Fair Tax will put Illinois on a path towards greater equity, fiscal responsibility and responsible investments in our communities. We look forward to the continued work of CRS and others when the state reopens.

## Community Renewal Society

We welcome The Rev. Molly Carlson to her new position as the Illinois Conference Minister for the United Church of Christ and invite you to hear her welcome message.

Join us for several educational opportunities this month. Transformation in Perspective will be a conversation focused on the intersection of police and prison abolition; gender, race and economic justice; and the responses from grass-root organizers committed to justice and human flourishing. The Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice is working to end wealth-based pretrial

**NIRCO**  
Northern Illinois  
Recovery Community  
Organization  
*Promoting Principles of Recovery*

**SOMETHING DIFFERENT**  
**ALL RECOVERY MEETING**  
**EVERY TUESDAY @ 6PM**

**All Are Welcome!**  
**Individual and Families Impacted By**  
**Substance Use Disorders and Mental Health**  
**Virtual Recovery Meeting via ZOOM**  
Join URL: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/807367112>  
Meeting ID: 730-223-943  
Passcode: 038490  
Prefer to Call In? Dial: 312-626-6799



# *Virtual* 17th Annual Coalition Event in conjunction with Coalition Legal LLC.



Coalition Legal, LLC.  
Success

## Tara's Story

Tara has found her calling as a mental health counselor. A teen mother and high school dropout, Tara turned to crime and went to prison three times. Frustrated by the lack of services for ex-convicts, she became depressed and gave up looking for work. But when her prior criminal records were sealed, the world changed for Tara. She has gone from serious legal jeopardy to a successful career as a mental health counselor with the Lake County Health Department.

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President: Attorney Jennifer Witherspoon  
Co - Chair: Clerk Erin Cartwright-Weinstein. Co - Chair:  
Attorney Kathryn Vanden Berk

## Prairie State Teams Up With The Coalition



Free  
Legal  
Aid



Prairie State Legal Services (PSLS) provides free legal representation to low-income clients. One program, the **Ready to Work Program (R2W)** helps clients with legal issues that are affecting their employment.

Criminal records can stop people from being hired for a job, keeping a job, or getting a better job. The attorneys in R2W educate clients about their rights and eligibility for sealing and/or expunging their records. In many cases, the Program will file petitions and provide representation in court to get criminal records sealed or expunged. The Program also helps with other legal issues related to getting or keeping a job, including: driver's license issues, transportation issues, unpaid or underpaid wages, professional licensing denials, inaccurate credit reporting and identity theft.

Prairie State Legal Services may also be able to help clients with other types of legal problems including: housing, public benefits, family law, and domestic violence issues, among others.

For more information about PSLS services, special projects, and applying for legal help, see the Prairie State website, [www.pslegal.org](http://www.pslegal.org).

## Coalition Jobs Report

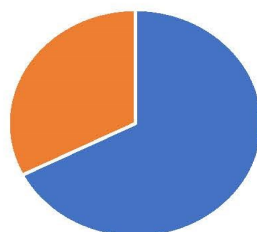
**Oct 2019 - Feb 2020 Statistics**

1,956 Repatriates have obtained employment since August, 2005

### Employment Stats:

Employed Full Time = 54

Temp - Staffing = 26



### Repatriate Employment

■ Employed Full Time ■ Temp - Staffing



Johnnie Jenkins  
Employment Specialist

**"A conviction does not have to be a life sentence"**



Inside/Out is a publication of the Coalition to Reduce Recidivism, which is based in Lake County, IL. The newsletter intends to raise awareness and discuss issues that affect the lives of men, women and children who are incarcerated and who have been released from incarceration.

The views and opinions included herein do not necessarily state or reflect those of the Coalition's executive board or its individual members. If you have news or updates for our newsletter, you can send them to: [kwoods@waukegantownship.com](mailto:kwoods@waukegantownship.com).

How to Reach Us: By Phone: (847) 244-4900, Fax: (874) 244-5185, or email: [coalition2rr@waukegantownship.com](mailto:coalition2rr@waukegantownship.com). Our website is [www.reduce-recidivism.org](http://www.reduce-recidivism.org). The mailing address is Coalition to Reduce Recidivism, 149 S. Genesee St. Waukegan, IL 60085.



## Upcoming Coalition Meetings

The Coalition to Reduce Recidivism Executive Board will meet the 1st Friday of each month via Zoom conference from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., at 149 S. Genesee Street., Waukegan, IL.

Due to Covid-19 the public meeting will be postpone until further notice.

Please consider joining the growing movement in support of the formerly incarcerated. Annual membership dues goes directly to supportive services on their behalf. Membership dues are as follows:

## 2020 Coalition Members:

The Coalition to Reduce Recidivism is a collective unit of social service agencies, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, medical institutions, criminal justice institutions, entrepreneurs, community advocates, governmental entities and repatriates; all geared to work with returning prisoners and help them become productive members of society.

- Corporate Membership \$500
- Faith Base Membership \$500 (Level 3) 301+
- Faith Base Membership \$250 (Level 2) 101 - 300
- Faith Base Membership \$150 (Level 1) 1 – 100
- Agency Membership \$150
- Board of Directors \$100
- Individual Membership \$50
- Seniors (65+)

### Chairperson

- ◆ Patricia Jones, M. Ed.

### Honorary Chairmen:

- ◆ Ill. State Representative Rita Mayfield

### Coalition Officers:

- ◆ Jennifer Witherspoon, President, Esquire
- ◆ Mary Roberson, Ed. D., Immediate Past President, Consultant
- ◆ Stella Jones, Vice President, Community Renewal Society
- ◆ Dr. Gary Oltmans, Secretary, Rosalind Franklin University (retired)
- ◆ Arlene Day, Treasurer, Teacher (Retired)

### Executive Board Members:

- ◆ Gwen Beckwith, Board Member, Principal (Retired)
- ◆ Sylvia M. Johnson Jones Ed. D., College of Lake County
- ◆ Marc Jones, Board Member, Director, Eddie Washington Center
- ◆ Erin Cartwright Weinstein, Lake County Clerk of the Circuit Court
- ◆ Mary Turley, MBA., UMMA Center
- ◆ Demar A. Harris, Director, Lake

### County Workforce Development

- ◆ Jeff McBride, Waukegan Public Schools #60
- ◆ Attorney Kathryn Vanden Berk, Coalition Legal, LLC.
- ◆ Johnnie Jenkins, Staff Member

### Agencies Members:

- ◆ Catholic Charities
- ◆ College Of Lake County, Grayslake
- ◆ Employee Connections, Inc. MFP
- ◆ Harbor Lites Chapter, Links Inc.
- ◆ Lake County State's Attorney's Office
- ◆ Lake County Sheriff's Office
- ◆ NewDay Apartments
- ◆ Nicasa Behavioral Health Services
- ◆ National Assoc. of University Women
- ◆ Waukegan Housing Authority
- ◆ Schneider for Congress
- ◆ Lake County Workforce Development
- ◆ Lake County Veterans & Family Services
- ◆ Tenth Congressional District Democrats
- ◆ UMMA Center
- ◆ Community Partners for Affordable Housing

- ◆ Community Renewal Society
- ◆ Community Action Partnership of LC
- ◆ Southwire
- ◆ Faith in Place
- ◆ Building Families Together
- ◆ Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc.
- ◆ Warren Township Democrats
- ◆ Indivisible Western Lake County

### Municipal Members:

- ◆ Waukegan Township
- ◆ Zion Township
- ◆ City of North Chicago
- ◆ Shields Township
- ◆ Libertyville Township
- ◆ Benton Township
- ◆ Grant Township
- ◆ Vernon Township
- ◆ West Deerfield Township

### Faith Base Members:

- ◆ First Baptist Church of Lake Forest
- ◆ Mount Sinai Baptist Church

### Corporate Members:

- ◆ Harris & Harris

## Coalition Legal LLC Services:

- Coalition Legal helps people expunge or seal eligible criminal records as authorized by Illinois law. Also, Clemency Filings to the Governor.
- Collaboration with Waukegan Township for Workforce referrals and job placement.
- FBI Background checks and fingerprinting services.

**Fingerprinting services are now provided at the Supervisor's Office, 149 S. Genesee Street, Waukegan, IL. Individuals needing fingerprint records for the expungement or sealing process would need to first begin the initial sealing process and the attorney will arrange for them to come for fingerprints if needed. There is a fee of \$18 for these services.**

Attention: The Lake County Court will now offer Zoom conference court appearances. Please contact the Coalition Legal LLC at 847-244-4900 for more information regarding court dates and other services.



## Coalition Legal, LLC

Non-convictions (nolle pros, successful supervisions, acquittals) are expungable. Convictions (fines, probation, jail/prison) can be sealed but not expunged. Virtual interviews are available. For further information, please call 847-244-4900 or visit [www.coalitionlegal.org](http://www.coalitionlegal.org).

## Northern Illinois Recovery Community Organization

Northern Illinois Recovery Community Organization (NIRCO) is an independent 501 (c) 3 organization founded by Dr. Mary Roberson, Past President C2RR, with the purpose of providing recovery support services to individuals and families in or seeking recovery from substance use disorders and mental health.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic NIRCO has been providing virtual Something Different All Recovery Support meetings via zoom every Tuesday at 6p. These All Recovery Support meetings are for individuals and family members impacted by the opioid epidemic, other substance use disorders, mental health and COVID 19.

NIRCO is also providing individual recovery support services to those in need of recovery support, at no cost. Feel free to contact NIRCO at [nircoarco20@gmail.com](mailto:nircoarco20@gmail.com), 847 662 3205 or visit our website at [www.nircolakecounty.org](http://www.nircolakecounty.org).



## Changing Schedules



What's the secret? Blended learning – online and in person.

*"I believe CLC Flex Path will provide access to the classes our students need for degree completion and advancement in a manner that maximizes their learning while also fitting into the rest of their lives."*

– Sheldon Walcher,  
Communication, Humanities  
and Fine Arts dean

### FINALLY A CLASS SCHEDULE THAT WORKS FOR YOUR SCHEDULE!

Every semester you enroll at College of Lake County, it's important your class schedule is as flexible as you need it to be. We know it's a challenge to find classes you need in a time that works in your busy life. CLC Flex Path takes the guesswork out of creating a schedule that works by delivering our most popular general education classes at times designed to maximize your progress and success.

#### CLC FLEX PATH Go to

work + learn at school + still have time for your family at home = lifetime of success

CLC FLEX PATH utilizes smart scheduling, with each class rotating across different time blocks term by term. For example, if you're available Monday evenings, you'll get a different course option in that time frame each 8-week period. So instead of rearranging work, family or other obligations every semester to make room for when a class happens to be available, CLC Flex Path ensures there's always a course ready when you are!

CLC FLEX PATH courses are designed to combine highly engaging hands-on learning blended with outstanding online resources and materials. You will experience the sense of community and connection from interacting with your classmates and instructor

in-person, and the convenience and flexibility of completing assignments and projects online.

With smart scheduling, you can focus on what matters most: moving forward on your educational journey!

For inquiries, please contact:

Sarah Nyquist (Recruitment Specialist) at (847) 543-2765 or email [Recruitment.Flexpath@clcillinois.edu](mailto:Recruitment.Flexpath@clcillinois.edu)

**FOR FULL LIST OF CLASSES, VISIT [WWW.CLCILLINOIS.EDU/CLASSES](http://WWW.CLCILLINOIS.EDU/CLASSES)**

## COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON RISE IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES



Patricia Jones, M.ED  
Founder, Chairperson  
Waukegan Township Supervisor

People who are incarcerated are at great risk of sickness and death as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. As the virus continues to spread, some inmates are isolated, which may mean they lose access to tablets and phones that allow them to communicate with relatives. Others may be too sick to use them. Many times families are kept in the dark when inmates get Covid-19.

The inability to quarantine or practice social distancing, together with overcrowding, imperils the lives of many people incarcerated in jails and prisons. The virus is spreading rapidly in prisons across the country, and the examples continue to mount.

The Covid-19 crisis has reduced the number of correctional staff, and in many places states are unable to provide adequate security; Jails are filled with people who have not been convicted of a crime, many of whom need medical care and social services. Cook County Jail in Chicago, one of the nation's

largest jails, reported a rate of coronavirus infection that was higher than almost anywhere else in the country .

So how should a person be quarantined in a correctional facility? Quarantine for COVID-19 should last for a period of 14 days. Ideally, each quarantined individual would be quarantined in a single cell with solid walls and a solid door that closes. If symptoms develop during the 14-day period, the individual should be placed under medical isolation and evaluated for COVID-19. There are other solutions. An article on the Prison Policy Initiative website offers five ways the criminal justice system could slow the pandemic. The list includes interventions that policymakers can use to slow the spread of the virus in the criminal justice system and broader society. Changes must be made quickly. Now that the number of COVID-19 cases is higher in the U.S. than any other country, we know that more people will continue to be directly impacted by illness, including policymakers and government leaders. Visit <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2020/03/27/slowpandemic/> for more information.

### Prison News: Responses to the COVID-19 pandemic

Prisons and jails are amplifiers of infectious diseases such as the coronavirus, because social distancing is impossible inside and movement in and out of facilities is common. But criminal justice officials have the power to prevent coronavirus deaths.

Visit this site, they are tracking which state and local governments are taking meaningful steps to protect people behind bars (and the general public). They have also published a detailed guide to what the criminal justice system should be doing, as well as several other resources about the coronavirus in prisons and jails.

<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/virus/virusresponse.html>



The world-wide Covid-19 pandemic has brought into stark relief the urgent need to rethink our treatment of those accused of a crime and awaiting disposition of their cases, i.e., those caught in "pre-trial justice" limbo. Our court system typically deals with the pretrial period by reviewing alleged charges and then, if judged appropriate, setting a monetary figure (bail/bond) which can buy release from jail during the subsequent judicial proceedings. This process is inherently flawed, as it enables those with financial resources to purchase their release from custody, while sentencing those without such resources to continued incarceration regardless of the nature of the offense. The unfairness of this is obvious, and the damage done to those who cannot "make bail" has been described extensively, including the collateral damage experienced by families and communities.

The Covid-19 pandemic has added an additional factor to the potential harm the money bond system inflicts due to continued incarceration of those unable to pay for their release. The housing conditions in jails and prisons form a perfect storm for catching and transmitting a highly contagious disease such as Covid-19. Indeed, national news reports have already confirmed the high rates of infections occurring in our prisons once the virus gains entrance.

## PRE-TRIAL JUSTICE AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

One way to mitigate the contagions effects is to reduce the jail/prison population. This removes those released from direct exposure to the virus, and additionally enables the confinement facility to implement appropriate defensive actions (e.g., physical distancing, quarantine of the infected, etc.) to combat the disease.

**The Coalition to Reduce Recidivism** has joined the **Illinois Network for Pretrial Justice** in their efforts to implement changes that would greatly modify or eliminate the monetary bond/bail system in Illinois. Legislation enacted in New Jersey in 2017 essentially ended money bond in that state, replacing it with a system that employed a multi-step process in determining the appropriate action to take in lieu of cash bail. Since implementation of this system, crime rates in New Jersey have gone down. Similar legislation is being introduced in Illinois and we strongly support its implementation. Not only will this begin to address the many long-standing unfair effects the money bond system inflicted, it will also reduce the incarcerated population and prepare our judicial system to better respond to the next pandemic that will inevitably occur.