

prison health news

-better health care while you are in and when you get out-

Issue 10, Spring 2011

Who We Are...

We are on the outside, but many of us were inside before... and survived it. We are formerly incarcerated people and allies talking about health issues and trying to bring about a positive change for all people who are in prison now or ever have been in the past. This newsletter is about all of us.

We will be talking about health issues. For example, what is good nutrition? Where can you get services and information on the outside? We want to take your health questions seriously and break down complicated health information so that it is understandable.

We're also here to help you learn how to get better health care within your facility and how to get answers to your health questions. Don't get frustrated. Be persistent. In prison, it's often hard to get what you want, but with health information, it doesn't have to be impossible. Join us in our fight for our right to health care and health information.

Read on...

From,
Ben, Carla, Che,
Cliff, Hannah, Kelly,
Laura, LuQman, Suzy,
Teresa, and Waheedah



Quetzal, by Fernando Marti

justseeds - http://www.justseeds.org/artists/fernando_marti/

In this Issue:

Who We Are..... 1

Write an Article!..... 2

Recovery from Injustice: An
Interview with Ronnie Stephens.. 2-3

Nutrition Behind the Walls:
If You are Stressed, Get Sick
or Have Diabetes..... 4-5

NO JUSTICE!: When Sex Work
Brands You as a "Sex Offender",
in New Orleans..... 6-7

Surviving Solitary Confinement.... 8-9

How HIV Meds Work, Part 1..... 10

Information Resources
for People in Prison..... 11

Advocacy and Support
Resources for People in Prison..... 12

Subscribe!..... 12

write an article!

We have gotten lots of requests for articles already, and we know that everyone who reads this newsletter will have questions or their own story to tell.

Every issue, we have five different feature sections:

- 1. Body, Mind & Soul** – on the concrete health information people in prison need access to in order to advocate for standard of care treatment
- 2. Words to Live By** – on the strategies for getting health care behind the walls
- 3. Breaking the Chains** – on the inspirational work of people who are currently/ formerly in prison fighting for the lives they want to lead
- 4. Try This Out** – on incredible organizations and projects across the country who are doing the hard work of rebuilding our communities in a time of mass imprisonment
- 5. The Big Picture** – on the political issues that drive the prison (and prison health!) crisis in our country

If you want to write an article on something you think is important for prison health, send it and we will consider publishing it in *Prison Health News*. You can also write us first to discuss ideas for articles.

If you want your name kept confidential, you can sign your article with your first name or “anonymous.”

Recovery from

by Suzy Subways

Ronnie Stephens is an HIV outreach advocate and consultant in Austin, Texas. He has been HIV positive for 10 years and a worker in AIDS services for 14 years. His life's work is with people who are at risk for HIV because of homophobia, racism, and imprisonment. “I try to target the population that I was locked up with,” he explains. Stephens has been in drug recovery for ten years and gives it much of the credit for his survival. But to him, recovery from drugs is only part of the picture. Like preventing HIV and staying out of jail, it goes beyond the individual. Communities have to do this work together.

Q: What do you mean by “recovery from injustice”?

A: A lot of people who do AIDS strategy don't really get the idea of social injustice. When they talk about substance abuse and prison, I say, well, half of these kids got beat up down there. They beat you up, and [the prison guards] say, “Well that's because of what you are.” So what do you have to offer our clients coming out? These kids have been abused. Some of them have been raped, some of them have no family to go to. What do you do for those individuals who are coming back into society and don't have any family to turn to? That's kind of traumatizing. That hurts.

They don't deal with [the trauma]. And they don't have housing. So what do they do? They go back to their substance abuse. And some of them are angry. When I got clean, I saw how twisted the world is, and I

Injustice: An Interview with Ronnie Stephens

understood why I got high. I didn't want that pain anymore. The pain got crazy when I got clean. It came from all different angles. This population down here, once you get in the prison system and you go through the racism and everything else, when it's time for you to come home, you've got to recover, first of all, from that system. That's where recovery starts.

Q: How do racism and homophobia put people at risk for HIV and imprisonment?

A: When I was an addict and I kept going back and forth to prison, I noticed that if an African American or a Hispanic gets busted for possession of a controlled substance, they're aiming for 10 to 99 years, down here in Texas. But if a Caucasian gets busted, they might get probation, or it might get dropped. That is my experience. I'm an addict. I don't sell drugs. You wouldn't find any dope in my house – I would use it up. The person who was with me was selling drugs. When he got busted, they found out that he had killed somebody. They charged him with murder and gave me the drug charges. That's social injustice.

Inside, in Texas, there's no condoms at all. If you get caught with one, that's five more years. It won't be a case of a five-year sentence. But it might

take parole 5 more years to look at you for pre-release. When you think it's time for you to go up for parole, you won't get parole.

Q: How does the social injustice of prison follow you in the outside world?

A: Once, I got a ticket for doing [HIV prevention] outreach, because they said I wasn't supposed to be leaning up against a building. In public housing, I've got to be careful, because we deal with clients that drink. Some of them use substances, some of them smoke marijuana. I feel like if you're doing just a little bit, and it's keeping you healthy, okay. Let them have that. But they've got zero tolerance. If they catch a beer can, too much company, or smell any marijuana, you've got to go.

Q: What needs to be done to fight social injustice?

A: If a bunch of us that went through the system and was able to make it could get together to advocate. I need some people in my county with me to address the social injustice that's in the system. Somebody needs to understand the policies, inside and outside the system, put it together, do the research, and let them know, “We're aware of what y'all have done. Let's stop it.”



Nutrition Behind the Walls: *If You Have*

by Teresa Sullivan, Laura McTighe & Kimberly Rogers

Prison Health News is excited to be publishing an updated version of our January 2004 advice on nutrition behind the walls, with special information on diabetes.

We have all heard about the food pyramid, but most of us just eat what we want. Being nutritious has not always been number one on our list of things to do, but it needs to be.

The Basics

Being in prison can be very hard on your body. Your body is under a lot of stress, which means your body is using up a lot of energy. It is very important for you to continue to fill your body with food, but eating a lot of food will not help you if you're eating the wrong foods.

*You need to eat protein to build and maintain your muscle. *Examples of protein are:* meats, fish, peanut butter, beans, nuts, seeds, chicken, milk, and cheese.

*You need to eat carbohydrates to give you energy. *Examples of carbohydrates are:* pasta, potatoes, bread, cereals, crackers, fruits, and vegetables.

*Try to consume more "good fats," which come from plant sources (margarine, olive oil, vegetable oil) and less "bad fats," which come from animal sources (meats, butter).

Good Nutrition on the Inside

In prison it can be hard to get a lot of the foods that are

really good for your body. Prison food is generally really starchy and really high in fat. You don't often get fresh fruit or whole grains. Here are some tips:

*Talk to a doctor at your facility. You might be able to get a prescription for multi-vitamins, a snack, or a high-protein diet.

*See if you can order peanut butter or fresh fruit from your commissary.

*See if you can get food sent in through care packages. Some facilities will even let you get care packages with fresh fruit and vegetables.

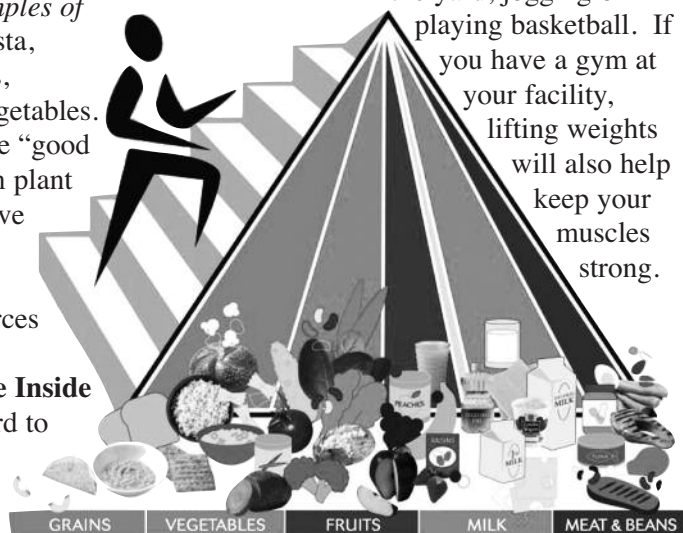
*If you can work, try to get a job in the kitchen.

*Drink as much water as you can.

*Educate yourself about what food is good and bad for you.

Exercise!

Exercise will help you keep your body healthy. Try to do something active every day, like walking around the yard, jogging or playing basketball. If you have a gym at your facility, lifting weights will also help keep your muscles strong.



Diabetes, Get Sick or Are Stressed

If not, push-ups and sit-ups will do the job, too.

Water, Water, Water!

Drinking a lot of fluids is very important, too. Caffeinated drinks like coffee and soda make you dehydrated. You are actually losing water when you drink these things! So if you have the choice, reach for water or juice.

If You Have Diabetes...

It is important to keep your blood sugar controlled, because when too much sugar stays in your blood for a long time, it can damage your blood vessels and nerves.

Much of the food we eat is turned into sugar in the blood for our bodies to use for energy. A hormone produced in the pancreas called insulin helps sugar in our blood get into the cells of our bodies. If your body doesn't make enough insulin or if the insulin doesn't work in the way it should, blood sugar can't get into your cells and instead stays in your blood, raising your blood sugar level.

Your Ideal Blood Sugar Level

You and your doctor will decide what your target blood sugar levels should be. For people *with* type 2 diabetes, your fasting (not eating for a period of time) level should be no higher than 130mg/dL, and your blood sugar after meals should be no higher than 180mg/dL.

Keeping Your Blood Sugar in Check

*Develop a relationship with the doctor at your facility, so you can keep tabs on your blood sugar over time.

*Use your medicines *exactly* as your doctor prescribes.

*Ask your doctor to prescribe a special diabetic meal.

*Set up an appointment with your prison nutritionist.

*When possible, avoid commissary foods that are high in sugar or simple carbohydrates, like candy or oodles of noodles. We know that's asking a lot, but your body will thank you!

If You Get Sick...

Your body goes through a lot in prison, but it is important to remember that no matter how bad you feel you must eat.

Here are some tips for when you are not feeling well. If you have...

Diarrhea/Fever/Sweats

**Drink* lots of water

**Eat* white bread, crackers, white rice, oatmeal, bananas, and apple sauce.

**Limit* your intake of fatty foods, caffeine, dairy foods

Nausea/Vomiting

**Drink* lots of cold drinks (water & juice to replenish the nutrients lost)

**Eat* plain foods & dry foods (apple sauce, crackers)

Constipation

**Drink* lots of liquids (cold or hot)

**Eat* bran cereals, whole grain breads, pastas, brown rice, beans, fresh fruit with skins, and fresh vegetables.

If you have diarrhea, fever, sweats, nausea, vomiting or constipation that last for more than 24 hours, PUT IN A SICK CALL SLIP. You need to see a doctor to make sure nothing serious is going on.

NO JUSTICE!: When Sex Work Brands You as a “Sex Offender” in New Orleans

by Deon Haywood and Laura McTighe

Since our founding in 1991, Women With A Vision, Inc (WWAV) has been standing with the women of New Orleans, no questions asked. We have been trusted with stories that few others hear. But little could have prepared us for that day when ‘J’ pulled out her photo identification card, which read ‘SEX OFFENDER’ in block orange letters. As she explained how she had gotten picked up during a Mardi Gras round up and charged with a crime against nature, she was filled with anger and pain that marked this as the latest instance in a long history of exploitation. She is only 23 years old, one month clean from an 8½ year heroin addiction. The ‘sex offender’ label will remain on her ID until she turns 48.

Why NO JUSTICE?

Stories like these are what drive WWAV’s holistic approach to harm reduction, social justice and self-care. Laws criminalizing sex work have gotten worse with increasing lack of access to services, violence, and lack of respect for health in New Orleans since Hurricane Katrina in 2005. This law completely disconnects our women from what remains of a social safety net, making it impossible for them to recognize and develop their goals, dreams and desires. That is why our women are calling it ‘NO JUSTICE.’ And it is their words that we take as our organizing call.

The Crime Against Nature Statute

Statute 14:89 defines crime against nature as “any unnatural carnal copulation,”

including for compensation. If convicted of a *Solicitation Crime Against Nature* (SCAN), people face a mandatory 15-year registration as sex offenders, longer if they have multiple charges. Along with having to send out cards to all the local schools and agencies wherever they move, anyone with a SCAN charge also faces a minimum \$2,000 fine, with threat of incarceration for failure to pay. Plus, after a third SCAN conviction, a person is considered an ‘aggravated’ offender, which mandates a lifetime of registration on the sex offender list.

Post-Katrina Enforcement

The SCAN statute has been on the books for over 206 years, but enforcement around sex work is a relatively recent phenomenon made possible through the resources that the city received post-Katrina to bring so-called violent offenders into custody. It was one of those classic turns of bias in New Orleans – where sex work is legal so long as you are in dance clubs and bringing in money, but illegal if you are on the streets and engaged in sex to survive. Women on the streets are disproportionately poor women of color. Most of these women are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction. With the support of the Department of Justice, they are now being rounded up en-mass by the New Orleans police.

Prosecution under this statute and enforcement of the sex offender registration requirement involves all arms of the criminal justice system – from police surveillance (and, at

times, entrapment), to the district attorney’s unwillingness to plead down charges, to the judge’s discretion in convicting and sentencing, to parole and probation’s role in enforcing the prescribed sentence.

In the Lives of Women

When we try to explain to people outside of New Orleans the weight of a SCAN charge, we ask people to think about how many times each day they have to show their ID. Now imagine if every time you were showing your ID, it did not just prove your name or your age, but also marked you as a ‘sex offender.’ When our women apply for jobs, they are facing a barrage of questions about whether or not they are rapists. Most carry stacks of court paperwork with them, in an attempt to prove to a potential employer or to someone selling them cigarettes, that they are not a threat to society.

Getting Justice in NOLA

NO JUSTICE aims to heal the deep fractures in our communities by ensuring that the women prosecuted under this statute are at the center of our organizing. Working together, we know that we can begin to provide immediate relief to those most at-risk in our communities, and fight for the wellness and justice our communities need.

On February 16, 2011, we filed a federal civil rights suit to challenge the continuing use of the SCAN statute to brand people who solicit oral and anal sex as sex offenders, while a conviction under Louisiana’s prostitution statute triggers no such requirement. Daily, we are finding new ways to engage agencies across the city in providing a safety net for women who have a SCAN charge, be they service providers, parole officers or judges. And at every step, we are providing safe spaces for our women to grieve and, again, find their voices.

To overturn the SCAN statute, public opinion is critical. And that means that all of you reading this article are needed in organizing towards a time when none of our women feel like they are getting ‘NO JUSTICE.’ There is a long fight ahead of us, to be sure. But if we can, in concert, find some lasting transformation to the structures that allow the lives of our women to be criminalized, then, perhaps, we can say that justice will be done.



Surviving Solitary Confinement

by Bro Tee (Terrance E. White)

Part One: Learn the Rules

Prisons that operate solitary confinement administrative segregation units are all governed by state statutes, prison operational procedures, and mandatory rules. Prisoners must obtain copies of these laws for the treatment of prisoners. Most prison administrators have a code amongst themselves that if you fail to document your complaint or allegation of abuse, it's like it never happened. So to not keep your records or file your complaints, it's like defeating yourself before even starting. Prisoners must learn all they can about existing violations inside the units they are isolated on; then expose it to the local public.

These units are built to contain and oppress prisoners' resistance in the general population across the country in Amerikan prisons. Torture and dehumanization are tools of the trade in control units to destroy dangerous people. Prisoners are being suffocated, strangled, hanged, and hit with electric stun guns.

Do your homework. Being confined to the cell for 23 to 24 hours a day gives one a lot of time to study and internalize all the rules, policies, procedures, state laws or codes, and use them to confront those responsible for our placement in these units. Arm yourselves, so you will bring forth an effective challenge.

Part Two: Turn Your Cell into a Laboratory

Sensory deprivation is used by prison authorities

who run control units across the country. We have no other choice than to come up with creative ways to use the isolation to our own advantage. We have to study, write, exercise and create right in these cells.

It is crucial to use your moments of isolation to develop self-control. When we control our inner self, we have won our first battle for freedom. Without internal freedom, you'll never know real freedom at all. We must develop a good study and spiritual program to help us release the negative feelings that being in such an environment can cause. We all have a purpose. Some of us, through trial and error, have grown to know what our purpose is, while most of us remain trapped in a whirlwind of misguided emotions and utter blind confusion. We must become more observant of our current situation, and become masters in whatever we know our gifts to be.

We should never leave our rehabilitation in the hands of prison authorities. We are our own liberators. We educate and teach ourselves. The credit goes to those of us who possess the self-determination to guide our survival in these oppressive control units.

Part Three: Building Solidarity Within Your Environment

Hostilities can be created by prison administrators solely for the purpose of keeping a perpetual wedge between Black and Hispanic prisoners. When we are trying to come together for the betterment of our conditions, none of this can be done without mutual

respect being established. This is not always an easy job, due to prisoners having different ideologies, religions, political beliefs; and these differences sometimes get in the way. But collective unity and understanding amongst targeted prisoners is growing day by day. We must move with this momentum when it exists, and build unshakable foundations of solidarity.

All prison organizers must come to terms with not being able to galvanize 100% support from prisoners. Even when it is those who don't participate in struggle who benefit most, sometimes they suffer the most. This is why we must have respectable communications with at least a majority of the prisoners in our environment.

Those prison administrators who despise being sued, exposed, or written about will approve staff to beat you up, set you up, or even kill you. You don't ever want to isolate yourself from your fellow prisoners. Because when you need to have someone contact your family to inform them of your abuse, no one will care to assist you. So it is crucial to be established as a principled person who would help them if they needed you. This way, even if prisoners hate you out of misguided jealousies, they still will feel compelled to honor/aid you.

Part Four: Participate in all Educational, Religious, and Correspondence Programs

Many prisoners in control units are being denied access to college classes. But they are granting us access to take

our G.E.D. and pay to enroll in courses through mail correspondence. We can obtain certificates of achievement by taking free courses from the Federal Emergency Management Institute. Also, a wide variety of religious schools of thought offer prisoners a chance to earn certificates. Each prison also offers substance abuse and anger management courses. In the courtroom, it's proven beneficial to produce certificates before the judge ruling on your appeal or modifications of sentence motions.

Prisoners have a right to write to governors, state representatives, legislators, and others to complain about non-existent educational programs. Play an active role in your own survival and emotional, social and political development. Take charge of your life by taking your life back.

In solidarity, I stand by you and in struggle I stand with you, and I salute you with a closed fist.

Comrade in arms,
Terrance E. White
the people's servant

Terrance E. White
#200632909
Robert Presley Detention Center
P.O. Box 710
Riverside, Ca. 92502

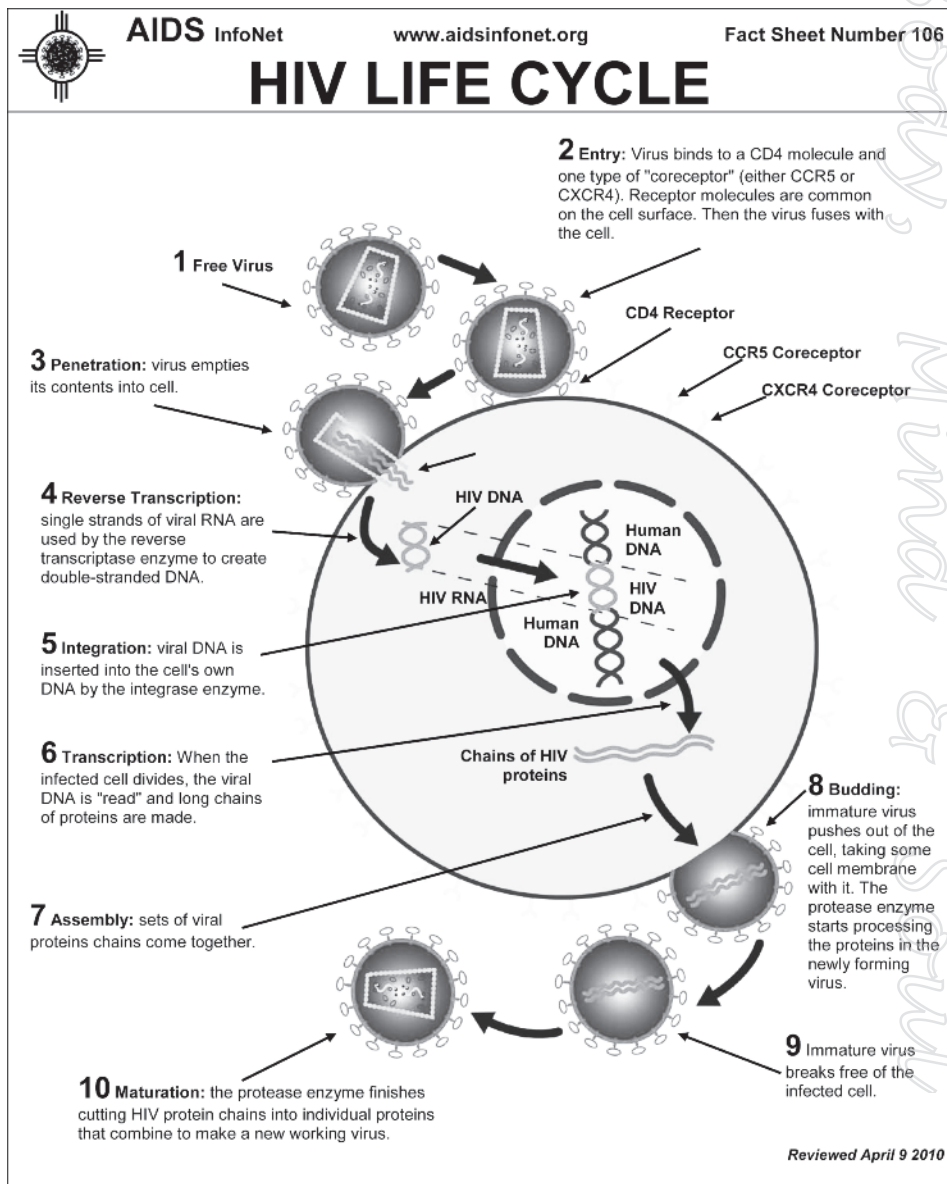
[NOTE: This is a shortened version of Bro. Tee's article. For the full article, contact Bro. Tee at the address above.]

How HIV Meds Work, Part 1

by AIDS InfoNet, www.aidsinfonet.org

If you're living with HIV, you've probably found that it's easier to take care of your health if you understand how the virus works. Below is the first part of a 2-part series. This fact

sheet explains the steps HIV goes through to make new copies. In the next issue, we'll explain how different HIV medications block these steps. Write to us if you have any questions!



information resources for people in prison

If you need information while you are locked up, contact:

Fortune News

The Fortune Society
ATTN: Fortune News Subscriptions
29-76 Northern Boulevard
Long Island City, NY 11101
newsletter on criminal justice issues;
to subscribe, send your first name, last name, ID number, correctional facility, address, city, state, zipcode
*free to people in prison.

Project Inform

1375 Mission Street
San Francisco, CA 94103-2621
Hotline: 800-822-7422
information & newsletters on HIV
(materials also available in Spanish);
responses to treatment questions from people in prison
*free to people in prison

Protecting Your Health & Safety: Prisoners' Rights

325-pg bound manual explains the legal rights to health and safety in prison, and how to enforce those rights when they are violated.
publication of the Southern Poverty Law Center, distributed by:
Prison Legal News
P.O. Box 2420
West Brattleboro, VT 05303
*\$16 for people in prison

Just Detention International

3325 Wilshire Blvd, Ste 340
Los Angeles, CA 90010
support, resources and advocacy to address sexual violence behind bars; survivors should address Legal Mail to Cynthia Totten, Esq.
*free to people in prison

Partnership for Safety and Justice

825 NE 20th Avenue, #250
Portland, OR 97232
support directory with health and legal organizations, prison book programs, resources for LGBT people, and more!
*free to people in prison

Prison Legal News

P.O. Box 2420
West Brattleboro, VT 05303
newsletter on the legal rights of people in prison & recent court rulings
*sample issue \$3.50, unused stamps OK; \$24 for 1-year subscription



Greeting Card by Vincent Abner
Books Through Bars Contexts Collection

advocacy and support resources for people in prison

If you need help while you are locked up, or when you get out, contact:

In Austin, TX:

AIDS Services of Austin
P.O. Box 4874
Austin, TX 78765
Phone: (512) 458-2437
Web: www.asaustin.org

In Boston, MA:

SPAN Inc.
105 Chauncy Street, 6th Floor
Boston, MA 02111
Phone: (617) 423-0750
Web: www.spaninc.org

In Chicago, IL:

Men and Women in Prison Ministries
10 W. 35th Street # 9C5-2
Chicago, IL 60616
Phone: (312) 328-9610
Web: www.mwipm.com

In Los Angeles, CA:

Center for Health Justice
900 Avila Street #301
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Phone: (213) 229-0985
Prison Hotline: (213) 229-0979
Web: www.healthjustice.net

In New Orleans, LA:

Women With A Vision
215 N Jeff Davis Pkwy
New Orleans, LA 70119
Phone: (504) 301-0428
Web: www.wwav-no.org

In New York, NY:

New York Harm Reduction Educators
953 Southern Boulevard, Suite 302
Bronx, NY 10459
Phone: (718) 842-6050
Web: www.nyhre.org

In Philadelphia, PA:

Philadelphia FIGHT
1233 Locust Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19107
Phone: (215) 985-4448
Web: www.fight.org

If you need resources in a city not listed here, **write to us!** We will help you track down answers to your specific questions.

Write to us if you know about a great organization that is not yet listed here as a PHN partner.

prison health news

Edited By:

Ben Remsen
Carla F.
Che Gossett
Cliff Wms
Hannah Zellman
Kelly Goldsby
Laura McTighe
LuQman Abdullah
Suzy Subways
Teresa Sullivan
Waheedah Shabazz-El

PHN is a project of *Reaching Out: A Support Group with Action* and the *Institute for Community Justice* at Philadelphia FIGHT.

For subscriptions, resources and all other inquiries write to us at:

Prison Health News
c/o Philadelphia FIGHT
1233 Locust Street, 5th Floor
Philadelphia PA 19107

All subscriptions are free, and are mailed First Class.