



Arizona is MAXED Out

No More Solitary Beds in Arizona

What is solitary confinement?

Solitary or supermax confinement is the practice of placing a prisoner alone in a cell for 22 to 24 hours a day with little human contact or interaction; reduced or no natural light; restriction or denial of reading material, television, radios and other property; severe limits on visitation; and the inability to participate in group activities. Almost all human contact occurs while the prisoner is in restraints and behind some sort of barrier.¹

Who is in solitary confinement?

Most people believe that solitary confinement is reserved for the worst of the worst, the most violent and dangerous prisoners.² That's just not true. Like other states across the country, many of those held in Arizona's Special Housing Units are mentally ill or cognitively disabled.³ Low-risk "nuisance prisoners" are also housed in solitary because they have broken minor rules or filed grievances. Children held in adult prisons are also locked up in isolation "for their own safety."⁴

Solitary confinement is a waste of taxpayer money, jeopardizes public safety, and is fundamentally inhumane. That's why states across the country are re-thinking the use of solitary confinement.

- **Mississippi** reduced its supermax prison population by almost 90%, reassigning those prisoners to mental health units or the general prison population. As a result, violence rates dropped 70% and the state saves \$8 million annually.⁵
- **Colorado** passed a bill that will fund mental health programs in prisons, reduce sentences, and ensure prisoners are placed in solitary confinement based on conduct not associations.⁶
- On June 19, 2012, **Illinois** Governor Pat Quinn announced the closing of the Tamms Correctional Center, the state's 500-bed supermax facility. Closing Tamms will save taxpayers \$21.6 million in the next year, and \$26.6 million every year after.⁷
- Instead of sending more and more people to prison, judges in **Texas** are increasingly sentencing them to alternative treatment and rehabilitation programs—proven both more effective and less expensive.⁸
- **Maine's** corrections commissioner Joseph Ponte cut the supermax population in Maine State Prison by more than half.⁹

1. Eric Lanes, *The Association of Administrative Segregation Placement and Other Risk Factors with the Self-Injury-Free Time of Male Prisoners*, 48 *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* (2009).

2. Leena Kurki & Norval Morris, *The Purposes, Practices, and Problems of Supermax Prisons*, 28 *Crime and Justice* (2001).

3. James Ridgeway & Jean Casella, *Locking Down the Mentally Ill: Solitary Confinement Cells Have Become America's New Asylums*, *The Crime Report* February 2, 2010.

4. *A Reexamination of Youth Involvement in the Adult Criminal Justice System in Washington: Implications of New Findings About Juvenile Recidivism and Adolescent Brain Development* 8 Washington Coalition for the Treatment of Youth (2009).

5. Terry Kupers et al., *Beyond Supermax Administrative Segregation: Mississippi's Experience Rethinking Prison Classification and Creating Alternative Mental Health Programs*, 36 *Criminal Justice and Behavior* (2009).

6. Joseph Boven, *Solitary Confinement Bill Pared Down as DOC Says It Already Plans Big Changes*, *Colorado Independent* April 26, 2011

Arizona is the only state currently planning to build more supermax prison beds.

- Nearly 3000 prisoners are held in isolation in Arizona every year. And the state is planning to spend **\$50 million of taxpayer dollars** to build **500 more** supermax prison beds—beds we don't need and can't afford.¹⁰
- It costs Arizona taxpayers more than twice as much to hold someone in solitary confinement. The average annual cost per inmate is \$20,000, but it costs about **\$50,000 per year for every person locked up in supermax.**¹¹
- There is no evidence that using solitary confinement reduces violence in prisons. Opening the supermax facility in Arizona had no effect on prisoner on prisoner violence and actually **increased** prisoner on staff violence.¹²
- Close to 40% of people in solitary confinement units have mental health issues; some of those were designated as **seriously mentally ill.**¹³
- The average length of confinement in solitary in Arizona is **5 years.**¹⁴
- 35% of those held in supermax were convicted of **non-violent crimes** such as drug offenses and theft.¹⁵

TAKE ACTION: Stand with the ACLU of Arizona. Tell Governor Brewer the plan to build 500 new maximum-security prison cells is wrong for Arizona. Sign the online petition today.



Since the vast majority of prisoners in solitary confinement are eventually released back into the community, it is imperative that we invest our limited public dollars in proven alternatives that lead to greater rehabilitation and pave the way for successful reentry and reintegration.



For more information on the MAXED Out campaign and the ACLU of Arizona's lawsuit against the Arizona Department of Corrections visit acluaz.org/FairCareForAll

7. Edwin Yohnka, *Saving Dollars... With Good Policy*, Huffington Post March 28, 2012.
8. Mike Ward, *Texas Prison Population Shrinks as Rehabilitation Programs Take Root*, Statesman.com, August 11, 2012.
9. Lance Tapley, *Reform Comes to the Supermax*, The Portland Phoenix May 25, 2011.
10. Jennifer A. Johnson, *Arizona Legislature Approves \$50M Sweep of Mortgage Assistance Funds*, *Phoenix Business Journal* May 2, 2012.
11. Caroline Isaacs & Matthew Lowen, *Buried Alive: Solitary Confinement in Arizona's Prisons and Jails*, *American Friends Service Committee* (2007).
12. Chad S. Briggs, et al., *The Effect of Supermaximum Security Prisons on Aggregate Levels of Institutional Violence*, 41 *Criminology* (2006).
13. Amnesty International, *USA: Cruel Isolation*, *Amnesty International's Concerns about Conditions in Arizona Maximum-Security Prisons*, *Amnesty International Publications* (2012).
14. Matthew Lowen & Caroline Isaacs, *Lifetime Lockdown: How Isolation Conditions Impact Prisoner Reentry*, *American Friends Service Committee* (2012).
15. Amnesty International, *USA: Cruel Isolation*