

# Sexual Violence Against Incarcerated Individuals

**mecasa**  
MAINE COALITION AGAINST  
SEXUAL ASSAULT

Sexual violence perpetrated against incarcerated people is an issue in Maine and across the United States. Victims/survivors who suffer sexual abuse while incarcerated face unique barriers to reporting the crimes committed against them: they may fear they won't be believed; they may fear retaliation from their fellow inmates or corrections staff; they may not know how to report sexual abuse in a correctional facility; and they may not think resources are available to them. These barriers - and the atmosphere in many correctional facilities - have led to correctional environments where sexual abuse may be tolerated, and where the culture of sexual violence is even more difficult to shift. Just like rape outside of correctional facilities, experts agree that sexual violence against incarcerated individuals is one of the most underreported crimes in the US.<sup>1</sup>

## Prevalence

Approximately 80,000 inmates experienced sexual abuse in prison between 2011 and 2012.<sup>2</sup> Sexual abuse can range from inmate-on-inmate or staff-on-inmate abuse (any sexual contact between staff and inmates is illegal in Maine), with high rates of victimization among LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) inmates and inmates who suffer from mental illness.<sup>3</sup> Youth, inmates with developmental disabilities, and sex offenders are also more vulnerable to sexual abuse while incarcerated. Approximately 9.5% of youth in state juvenile facilities reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization in the previous 12 months.<sup>4</sup> Most youth who were victims of staff sexual abuse reported more than one incident, with about 20% of those youth reporting 11 or more victimizations.<sup>5</sup>

## Impacts

Incarcerated survivors experience the same range of emotional and physical impacts to sexual violence as non-incarcerated survivors. However, these responses may be even more acute, because incarcerated survivors cannot control certain aspects of their environment, have substantially limited privacy, and may even have to share living space with the perpetrator. Additionally, because rates of HIV

and AIDS among prisoners are higher than non-incarcerated populations, the chance of contracting these or other STDs/STIs is also high.<sup>6</sup>

## A Public Health Issue

Rape and other forms of sexual violence in correctional facilities is a public health issue. It is important to realize that people who experience sexual violence while incarcerated do not deserve sexual violence; sexual violence is never part of a prison sentence. Approximately 95% of prisoners are released from incarceration.<sup>6</sup> Many victims/survivors of prison rape return to our communities with sexually transmitted diseases and infections, as well as the full range of mental and physical health issues associated with sexual violence. Victims/survivors and our communities deserve a solution to the issues linked to sexual violence in correctional facilities.

## Prison Rape Elimination Act

In 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was enacted. PREA requires the Bureau of Justice Statistics to conduct an annual analysis of the prevalence of rape and sexual abuse in correctional facilities, but more importantly,

it requires that correctional facilities that receive federal funding adhere to PREA standards. Included among the many standards are important provisions which support victims/survivors of sexual violence, such as requiring correctional facilities to make victim advocates and forensic medical exams available for prisoner victims/survivors, and requiring inmate screenings for risk of being sexually abused with the goal of keeping inmates at high risk away from those at high risk for committing sexual abuse.

For more information on PREA standards, visit the National PREA Resource Center.

## MECASA's Work

MECASA is committed to working with the Maine Department of Corrections to help ensure compliance with PREA standards. Sexual assault support centers across the state work with their local correctional facilities to provide support and advocacy for incarcerated survivors who request them. Some centers provide support and education groups, and others provide sexual harassment training for correctional facility staff. As Maine moves toward compliance with PREA standards, partnerships between Maine's sexual assault support centers and correctional facilities will continue to grow.

## Learn More

### [Maine PREA Hotline](#)

This toll free number is the Maine Department of Corrections PREA Reporting Hotline: 1.855.279.4763. If you would like to make a report of sexual misconduct, please leave a message including your name and phone number (if you wish to receive a call back). Calls will be returned during normal business hours.

### [Just Detention International](#)

Just Detention International is a health and human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. JDI works to hold government officials accountable for prisoner rape; promote public attitudes that value the dignity and safety of inmates; and ensure that survivors of this violence have access to the help they need.

### [National PREA Resource Center](#)

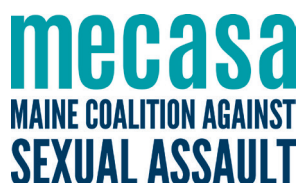
The PRC serves as a central repository for the best research in the field on trends, prevention, and response strategies, and best practices in corrections. Technical assistance and resources are available through the PRC's coordinated efforts with its federal partners.

### [PREA Resource Center Frequently Asked Questions](#)

A great resource to check frequently asked questions regarding PREA standards.

## Sources

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4. Beck, A. (2013). *Sexual victimization in juvenile facilities reported by youth, 2012*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/svjfry12.pdf>
5. Just Detention International. (2009). *Sexual abuse in detention is a public health issue*. Retrieved from: [www.justdetention.org/en/factsheets/Public\\_Health\\_vPrint.pdf](http://www.justdetention.org/en/factsheets/Public_Health_vPrint.pdf)
6. Hughes, T. & James Wilson, D. (2003). *Reentry trends in the United States*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved from: <http://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/reentry.pdf>



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Statewide Sexual Assault Crisis & Support Line: 1-800-871-7741/TTY 1-888-458-5599