

**CORRECTION OFFICERS' BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION, INC.**  
"PATROLLING THE TOUGHEST PRECINCTS IN NEW YORK"

November 27, 2019

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**VIA EMAIL**

New York City Board of Correction  
One Centre Street  
New York, NY 10007

**Re: COBA's 2nd submission in Response to  
BOC's Draft Restrictive Housing Rulemaking**

To Interim Chair Sherman, Ms. Ovesey and Members of the Board:

I am the Director of Legal Affairs for the Correction Officers' Benevolent Association, Inc. ("COBA"). I write on behalf of President Elias Husamudeen. Neither I nor the President of COBA have received any reply to our November 20, 2019 letter requesting that the Board be more deliberate in the rule-making process and put off the dates announced for public comment and hearings.

This submission is the second of several concerning the proposed rulemaking first announced on October 29, 2019 with public comment extended until January 3, 2020 and a public hearing inexplicably scheduled prior to the end of the written comment period on December 2, 2019. The analysis and critique of the actual rules shall come once other voices have been heard. However, the union still maintains this process is rushed and therefore flawed.

**INTRODUCTION: SEGREGATION**

Segregating inmates for infractions should only be used as a last resort where it will adjust aberrant behavior or keep others safe. It was a practice often overused by the New York City Department of Correction ("DOC") for a wider degree of infractions than necessary, and the backlash in rulemaking at the New York City Board of Correction ("BOC") during the past several years has been just as exaggerated as its prior overuse.

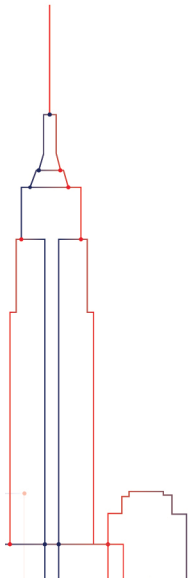
Except for a short time in mid-summer 2017, the rate of violent incidents at the DOC has increased in each period documented by the Judicially appointee *Nunez* monitor and his team. Then again, we have all recently learned that the DOC's figures themselves have been questioned *within* the DOC as bogus.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Rikers Con Job", NY Daily News, September 10, 2018, Annexed as Ex. "A."

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According to the DOC, the rate of violence is calculated using a facility's average daily population. That rate now stands at twice what it was when the consent decree went into effect in 2015.

This is not correlated to increased violence at the hands of staff towards inmates at all. So, what are the other variables that have changed besides the decreased number of inmates? One factor is that the remanded detainee population face more egregious charges and often gang affiliated. Another aspect is that young detainees – mostly men - have been moved into an environment for their improvement and benefit. However the violence statistics for youth have spiked as well.

Of course, segregation has been abolished, reduced, and expunged in many cases. COBA has long warned that this removal of consequences could give free rein for inmates to hurt one other and staff. Could there be a correlation, let alone some causation mixed in? To ignore this possibility continues a factually false and flawed revisionist narrative. This, in the face of reformers insisting upon evidenced-based solutions. The evidence is in and should end for the moment any discussion of revising any housing changes for violent inmates unless it is to restore more restrictive housing alternatives. As discussed below, the very falsified figures propelling further change needs a deep dive before any security-impacting changes are made.

## THE LAW

The principled approach informing the zeitgeist against incarceration is not misplaced. However, not everyone has gotten the message and people continue to be arrested for some very serious matters. Judges often remand them into the custody of the DOC without bail for a variety of issues – largely based on keeping the public safe. Insofar as safety in jails, the DOC is legally bound to take reasonable measures to protect ALL inmates from violence. Historically, and throughout this country and similarly situated countries, violent individuals have been controlled by separation, restricted movement and limited access to vulnerable inmates and staff.

The United States Supreme Court has ruled that if jail officials know of a substantial risk of harm to a person in custody, but knowingly disregard the risk by failing to take reasonable measures to abate it, the officials may be found liable. Indeed, federal courts in New York have squarely addressed this as concerns the DOC and Rikers.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See, Shuford v. City of New York, 09 Civ. 0945 (PKC)(SDNY) and Fisher v. Koehler, 83 Civ. 2128 (MEL)(SDNY).





As the record of settlements and suits against the City have borne out, the inability to take reasonable measures to protect inmates from violence in this “reform era” has cost law-abiding taxpayers more than ever before.

Constitutional protections for inmates aside, state law applies to protect DOC employees – Correction Officers – according to a recent decision by Hon. Ruben Franco in Correction Officers’ Benevolent Association v. City of New York:

[ The] DOC has failed to address what is a small population of predatory inmates who cause the largest number and gravest types of injuries to correction officers, as well as others within the system.

...

[The City] has not shown that DOC has implemented the controls mandated by the WVPP, or conducted risk assessments for incidents of violence, or diffused areas of concern by taking mitigating steps, such as considering the propensities of a part of the jail population . . .

These propensities for violence were the subject of that 2016 lawsuit. These issues were of particular concern since October 11, 2016. That is the date on which Mayor DeBlasio usurped his own Commissioner’s authority and unilaterally announced an end to punitive segregation for young adults aged 19-21.<sup>3</sup>

Lawsuits and settlements against the City and DOC workman’s compensation claims have spiked. And yet the Mayor has offered no effective replacement, and no replacement has since been found. Yet all indications suggest this shuttering of restrictive housing, as an option is at least one factor upon which the spike of violence has hinged.

While DeBlasio’s press release<sup>4</sup> touted it as a reform -- “*New York City becomes first in nation to reform practice for young adults*”-- it ought to have been titled “*New York City recklessly abolishes crucial tool relied upon to keep City workers safe.*”

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<sup>3</sup> See, Ex. “B” – annexed- Opinion by Joseph Ponte (Fmr. Commissioner NYC DOC) *Leading the Way on Ending Punitive Segregation*, Gotham Gazette, October 11, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> See Mayor’s Press Release of October 11, 2016, annexed as Ex. “C.”





The rushed reform enterprise was undermined by the data we know now proves how wrong the term “reform” was in this case. As one sorely missed New York politician put it, “everyone is *entitled* to his own *opinion*, but *not entitled* to his own *facts*.” Again, it bears pointing out that only by “fudging” the facts was the opinion even “entitled” to be uttered.

To date neither the Mayor nor any of those “assuming” supervisory and security roles over the DOC have had even a spark of an effective suggestion to replace segregating violent individuals. Indeed, the BOC itself in its rulemaking is inert. Throughout the lengthy rule-making package the Department is directed to “do something” in the most difficult of areas. They expect this in the face of the DOC’s inability to have reform options work during the 2015 – 2019 period. The Board then has the temerity to reserve the right to “veto” security measures. This, based on the thinking of those like Dr. Bobby Cohen – a professional amateur in the world of Jail oversight.

These issues will be further discussed when appropriate in a future submission by COBA. However others have yet to be heard in pointing out the deficiencies of these proposed changes to how inmates are housed. And, again, it would be useful to this ongoing public comment period to know what correction professionals have informed the Board’s principled rule-making in order to weigh those opinions properly.

The Mayor, so-called “reform” advocates and the BOC have a fuzzy goal in mind. They just don’t have a soupçon of a hint of how to achieve that goal besides turning New York City into Oslo<sup>5</sup>. And, while all of this uncertainty continues, the City of New York continues to rack up larger and larger pay-outs in inmate lawsuits because the DOC has little will and fewer tools to keep inmates safe as the law requires.

## THE FACTS

It comes as no surprise to DOC staff that since 2015 a tiny and violent population has ramped up assaults since “reform.” After spending \$27 million dollars on private consultants the City was left holding a bag of hot air and little else. Hired in 2015, and concluding their magic act in 2017, the McKinsey group produced figures showing a drop in violence that were unable to be verified. Expensive Smoke and Mirrors.

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<sup>5</sup> New York’s Jails Are Failing. Is the Answer 3,600 Miles Away?, New York Times November 12, 2019, last accessed November 19, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/12/nyregion/nyc-rikers-norway.html>





In the same period when an expensive private contractor was making facts up, the DOC lost almost its entire senior staff:

- \* DOC Commissioner Joseph Ponte;
- \* Chief of Staff Jeffrey Thamkittikasem;
- \* Chief of Department Martin Murphy;
- \* Chief of Security Turhan Gumusdere;
- \* Deputy Commissioner for Strategic Planning Shirvahana Gobin;
- \* Deputy Commissioner of the Investigative Division Gregory Kuczinski;
- \* Senior Deputy Commissioner Charles Daniels;
- \* Deputy Commissioner of Operations Errol Toulon;
- \* Assistant Commissioner Keith Taylor; and,
- \* Deputy Commissioner Nichole Adams-Flores.

It is more than fair to aver that the results of the “Restart” and other programs paraded by the above individuals during the 2015 – 2018 period were lies, failures and downplayed a rise in jail violence which put everyone in DOC’s facilities at serious risk. In fact, according to the Nunez Monitor’s April 2017 report, the five jails where the “Restart” program was a crowning jewel “account for the largest amount of missing documentation for incidents analyzed from August to October 2016 . . . (and) account for the largest number of incidents.” Indeed, Ponte and Thamittikasem testified to the City Council in March 2017 during budget hearings using these already questioned and debunked numbers. Those figures were never since used to support reform efforts.

The perverse fact is that the historic removal of a necessary tool – punitive segregation for the tiny (>100) minority of very violent young adults and adults – has since caused the increased need to use of punitive segregation. Under the Bloomberg administration the BOC tried to tie the use of punitive segregation to an increase in violence. Now, Bloomberg is going national and all that is clear from that period is that the drop in punitive segregation has been met with an increase in serious violence against staff. This is because – notwithstanding the valid argument that the mental health of a NORMAL young person may be impacted by segregation – the mentality of these young mostly gang-affiliated members is already well set.





To ignore out of hand the possibility that these offenders defy the studies relied on by principled critics is provable brinksmanship. And yet the only option offered is to head further down the rabbit hole.

So, notwithstanding reform efforts, the poor oversight and pretended management of the DOC by the BOC (and reliance upon input by anonymous inmate advocates) has resulted in **increased** violence. The irony is not missed on Correction Officers that the attempt to reform and “humanize” the jails has lead to increased infractions where inmates dehumanize themselves and others– especially where inmate-on-inmate violence is concerned. Four years into this social experiment, academic arguments about the wholesale ineffectiveness of segregation have now been tested and found wanting.

COBA finds that the DOC and BOC have failed to keep people safe. This current rule-making process is rushed. Such a security matter is being rushed. That rush is very dangerous. It is not rooted in best outcomes for those concerned and only can benefit some individuals and politicians who never interact with the jails or their population.

Respectfully Submitted,

/s/

Marc Alain Steier, Esq.  
Director of Legal Affairs, COBA

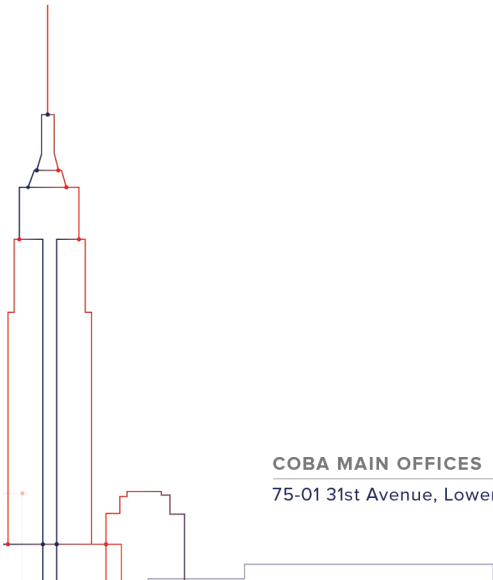
Encl.

Cc: Elias Husamudeen, President of COBA  
COBA Executive Board  
NYC Board of Correction Members  
DOC Correction Captain’s Association  
DOC Warden and Deputy Warden’s Association  
New York City Police Benevolent Association  
DOC Commissioner Cynthia Brann  
Steve Martin, Esq., Nunez Monitor





# EXHIBIT “A”



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## Staff concerns about sketchy data ignored in McKinsey's mysterious \$27 million mission to rein in violence on Rikers Island

By [Chelsia Rose Marcus](#) and [Stephen Rex Brown](#)  
New York Daily News |  
Sep 09, 2019 | 10:00 PM

Department of Corrections Commissioner Joseph Ponte (right) and his chief of staff, Jeff Thamkittikasem (left) at a hearing on Corrections issues in 2017. (Jefferson Siegel/New York Daily News)



Department of Correction brass publicly touted data showing a sharp decline in jail violence produced by the controversial consulting firm McKinsey &

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Company — and ignored internal concerns that the numbers were bogus, emails obtained by the Daily News reveal.

Then-Commissioner Joseph Ponte hired consultant McKinsey in 2015 to help implement “an anti-violence reform agenda” as the troubled agency adjusted to oversight by a federal monitor. The first contract with the consulting firm was for \$5.9 million. By the time McKinsey’s work was complete in April 2017, its contract had ballooned to \$27 million.

But internal DOC emails and court documents obtained by The News show staffers repeatedly questioned the McKinsey figures showing a drop in violence in some Rikers jails — including one stat touted by Ponte and Chief of Staff Jeff Thamkittikasem that reported a miraculous 70% decline in violence through what was called the “Restart” initiative at two Rikers facilities.

Senior DOC staff, including current Commissioner Cynthia Brann, appear to have given up referring to the 70% figure. The Restart program hasn’t been referenced publicly by the agency since mid-2017.



In this file photo, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, second from left, listens as Department of Corrections Commissioner Joseph Ponte speaks during a news conference as on Rikers Island in New York, Thursday, March 12, 2015. The mayor unveiled a comprehensive plan to curb jail violence after a visit to the problem-plagued Rikers Island jail complex. (Seth Wenig/AP)

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“We found there were significant errors in the McKinsey formulas,” a former senior DOC official said.

“We realized these numbers were not accurate.”

The “Restart” project involved emptying and renovating portions of troubled jail facilities. In theory, McKinsey’s sophisticated metrics helped determine the ideal inmate population that would return to a gleaming new facility overseen by retrained staff offering new programs and services.

Behind the scenes, emails show Thamkittikasem and Ponte were included in discussions in early 2017 about McKinsey’s “erroneous metrics” that could not be reproduced by DOC staff.

“We are waiting on the documentation related to the nature of the queries and the methodology used to manipulate the data,” then-Deputy Commissioner Shirvahana Gobin wrote in an email to McKinsey senior partner Benjamin Cheatham, in April 2017. She copied the note to Ponte and Thamkittikasem.

“As you can imagine, frustrations are brewing and time is running out.”

Two months later, DOC project specialist Kyle McDonnell wrote colleagues that serious disparities between McKinsey and Correction Department data sets “still persist.”

“Validity of currently reported data is questionable, and is not liable to stand up to audit,” he wrote.

Correction officials alerted McKinsey to the “erroneous metrics as early as March 2017,” he noted.

Gobin was among at least five DOC staffers who argued an invoice from McKinsey should not be paid because problems with its data were not resolved, emails show.

Despite the concerns, Thamkittikasem signed off on a \$973,941 payment to McKinsey on June 5, 2017.

“We stand by the 70% number and consider this matter closed. Any allegation that DOC falsified data is patently false,” a DOC spokesman told The News on Monday. The agency said it could not withhold payments to McKinsey because the firm had fulfilled the terms of its contract.





Gobin, who resigned and was recently [fined \\$20,000](#) for misuse of city resources in an unrelated matter, declined comment.

Thamkittikasem, now the director of the Mayor's Office of Operations, is part of a [task force](#) dedicated to one of Mayor de Blasio's most important initiatives: closing Rikers Island.

He played dumb in a Nov. 2018 deposition when asked if staff had ever questioned the data.

"Did anyone at DOC ever tell you that they did not believe the numbers or they thought the numbers were not accurate in any way?" attorney Rocco Avallone asked.

"No," Thamkittikasem replied.

Avallone, questioning Thamkittikasem in connection with a discrimination suit brought by [three high-ranking former DOC officials](#), continued to prod.

"Did anybody complain that the numbers were inaccurate?" Avallone asked. "Internally, I don't believe so," he answered.

"Whatever data we brought we believed was accurate," he added, referring to City Hall briefings on violence.

The emails and deposition were provided by former DOC sources who wished to remain anonymous. Thamkittikasem declined comment.

A top correction officer union official said it should have been a crime for Correction Department officials to play down the seriousness of Rikers violence with inaccurate data.

"If one of our Correction Officers did this, they would have been fired and immediately charged with a crime," said Elias Husamudeen, president of the Correction Officers Benevolent Association. "Downplaying the rise in jail violence puts the lives of everyone in our facilities at serious risk."

Sources working for DOC at the time said Thamkittikasem's advocacy for McKinsey perplexed colleagues who questioned the quality of the firm's work.





The company, which made \$10 billion in revenue in 2018, has recently faced scrutiny for helping polish the image of authoritarian governments around the world.

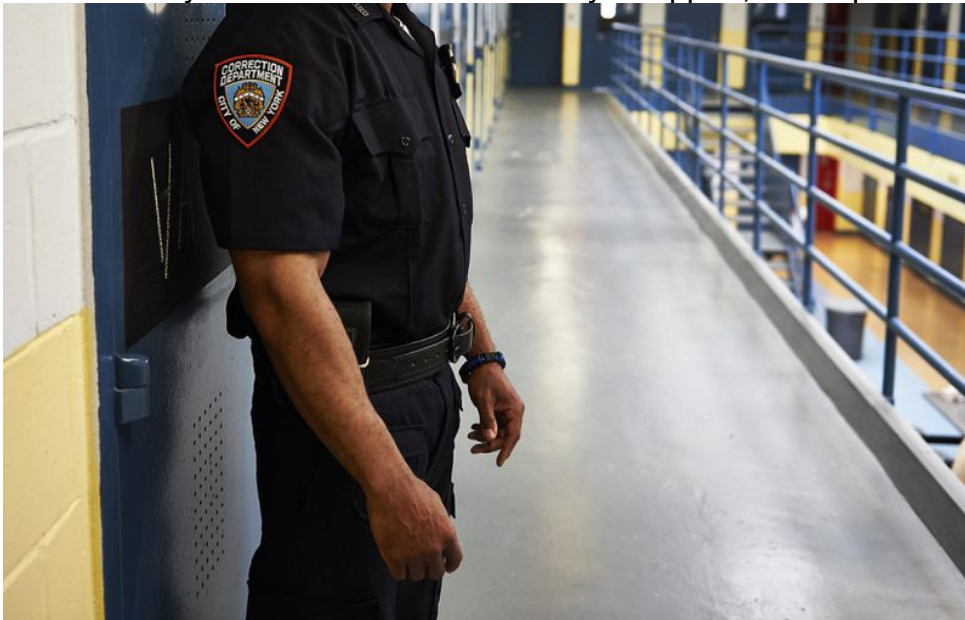
McKinsey did not respond to requests for comment.

In public testimony, Thamkittikasem touted the incredible decline in violence at the George R. Vierno Center and George Motchan Detention Center, which were pilots for the Restart model.

Thamkittikasem “reported violence in these units is down by over 70% and assaults on staff are down by 82%, as compared to other housing units,” according to minutes from an [Oct. 2016 Board of Correction meeting](#).

The sketchy stat was cited again in a March 2017 budget report by the City Council’s Committee on Fire and Criminal Justice Services.

“Violence was down approximately 70% in the GRVC [George R. Vierno Center] Model Facility units in 2016 with McKinsey’s support,” the report noted.



A correction officer at Rikers Island's George R. Vierno Center. (James Keivom/New York Daily News)

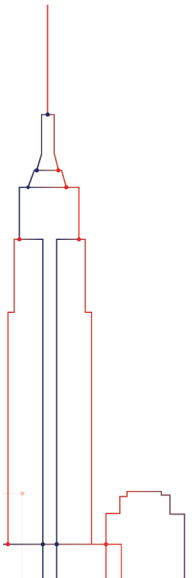
On May 8, 2017 – over a month after being alerted to the issues with the violence stats — Ponte went [before the same committee](#) and cited the same figure to describe declines in violence at four Rikers facilities.

A source said DOC abandoned those stats only one month later. The News was

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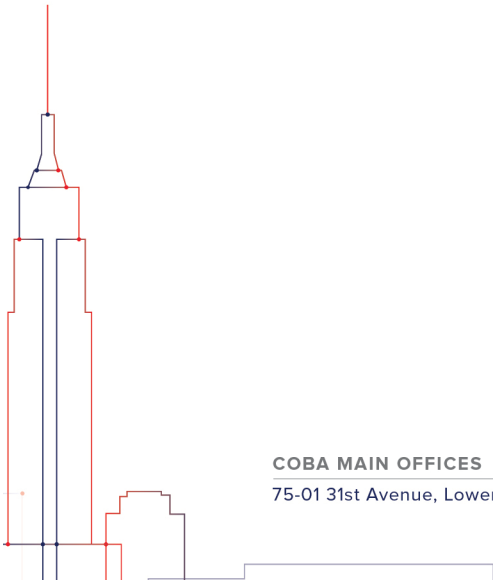
unable to find any mention of the figures in public testimony or reports to various oversight agencies after that period.

Commissioner Brann described a “sudden spike in violence” at GMDC [George Motchan Detention Center] in the summer of 2016 in a July letter to the Board of Correction, seemingly contradicting earlier statements about the decline in bloodshed.

The claim of a 70% reduction in violence does not appear in any of the federal monitor reports.

Around the same time Ponte and Thamkittikasem touted the decline in violence through the Restart model to the Board of Correction and City Council, the federal monitor reported violence in many of those same facilities was up — and missing documentation.

Rikers facilities involved in the Restart program were among five jails that “account for the largest amount of missing documentation for incidents analyzed from August to October 2016. Not surprisingly, they also generally account for the largest number of incidents,” the monitor, Steve Martin, [wrote in April 2017](#).



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# EXHIBIT “B”

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## Leading the Way on Ending Punitive Segregation

by [Joseph Ponte](#)

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Today, the New York City Department of Correction formally ended the practice of punitive segregation for young adults ages 19 through 21 years old, resulting in the complete elimination of punitive segregation, which some call solitary confinement, for inmates ages 16 through 21 in our custody. This is an unprecedented milestone in New York State correctional history and, even more important, across the nation. To date, no other city or state has accomplished comparable punitive-segregation reforms for the 19-21 year-old age group.

As Commissioner of the NYC Department of Correction, I understand this has not been easy, and something that has required us to methodically implement, test, and refine options that ensure the safety of our staff and inmates. However, I am extremely proud of what our uniform and non-uniform staff have accomplished by reforming our punitive-segregation practices and policies.

When I became Commissioner in April 2014, there were almost 600 people in punitive segregation and a backlog of over 1,700 people. And violence in our jails was on the rise. On October 6, we had 124 inmates in all forms of punitive housing -- a reduction of nearly 80% over two years. We accomplished this by creating non-punitive, incentive-based alternatives to safely manage inmate behavior.

And we have done all this while still reducing violence in our jails.

We started our reforms even before the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District, Preet Bharara, issued a report in August 2014 that concluded that “DOC relies far too heavily on punitive segregation as a disciplinary measure” and before we negotiated the agreement in the federal lawsuit *Nunez v. City of New York*, which was approved by a judge in October 2015.

Through a raft of initiatives, we fundamentally transformed the use of punitive segregation for all age groups.

When we ended punitive segregation for adolescent inmates aged 16-17 in December 2014, and later, for 18-year-old inmates in June 2016, we created therapeutic alternatives to help them manage their behavior.

For the adolescents, these comprise Second Chance Housing and Transitional Restorative Units (TRU), which feature higher staffing levels – one officer to five inmates in Second Chance and one to two or even one to one in TRU. The officers in these units receive training on youth brain development, crisis prevention and management, and trauma-informed care practices for adolescents.



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Inmates in these programs are afforded enhanced programming and counseling to better their life skills and job prospects and a behaviorally based incentive system enables them to earn privileges and commissary points.

For young adults aged 18-21, we have also created Second Chance and TRU units, but we have added two levels of management.

“Secure Housing” is designed to safely house young adults who are engaging in serious violence and assaultive behavior -- closely supervising them while providing individualized therapeutic programming for their behavioral needs.

For persistently violent young adult offenders, such as those who have seriously assaulted staff or stabbed or slashed other inmates, we have created special young adult units of Enhanced Supervision Housing, where inmates spend seven structured hours daily out of cell. Similar to adolescents, they are provided a behaviorally based incentive system that enables them to earn more privileges and eventually move back into the general population.

Using punitive segregation less means using it as a more targeted and meaningful tool. Through rule-making with our partners at the Board of Correction, our oversight body, we have made punitive segregation more effective and fair.

Inmates no longer serve any time that was accrued during a previous incarceration. A tiered system ensures that only serious, violent infractions earn full punitive-segregation time. With few exceptions, we have capped the maximum sentence to 30 days and have limited the number of days one can spend in segregation to 60 days in any single six-month period.

It's a significant accomplishment to have done this while continuing to push a downward trend in violence throughout the Department through comprehensive reform.

In the first eight months of the year, from January to August, the most serious assaults on staff have dropped 40% compared to the same period last year. Overall assaults on staff dropped 17% in that period. Even one assault on our staff is one too many, so we have a lot of work to do, but the trend is moving in the right direction.

These reforms also increase inmate safety. Uses of force by officers on inmates that result in serious injury dropped by 40% in the first eight months of the year, largely because of our de-escalation training.

The bottom line is that, contrary to the assertions of some, you don't need overwhelming numbers of inmates in punitive segregation to make jails safer. Heavy use of segregation does not prevent violence or deter it, particularly in the younger age groups. In fact, it may make matters worse. The latest research on brain development shows that punitive segregation is inappropriate for individuals aged 21 and under.

In New York, we are proud to have made history by ending punitive segregation for our youngest offenders and curtailing its overuse for all others – all while providing safer alternatives that support both staff and inmates.

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Joseph Ponte is New York City Correction Commissioner. On Twitter [@CorrectionNYC](https://twitter.com/CorrectionNYC).

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# EXHIBIT “C”

## Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte Announce NYC Department of Correction has Ended Punitive Segregation for Inmates 21 and Under

October 11, 2016

*New York City becomes first in nation to reform practice for young adults*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio and Commissioner Joseph Ponte today announced the Department of Correction has ended the practice of punitive segregation for inmates 21 years old and under. The Department of Correction has created alternative, rehabilitative approaches for managing young inmates’ behavior that have paved the way for ending a practice that can be counterproductive to the development of young adults.

“Today’s announcement shows that New York City is leading the nation down a new path toward rehabilitation and safety. Commissioner Ponte has established viable options for managing and disciplining young inmates that can bring about better outcomes while reducing violence – and has done so years ahead of other jurisdictions. New Yorkers can be proud that their correctional facilities are pioneering these smarter, more humane approaches,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**.

“This accomplishment culminates much hard work on the part of our dedicated staff. During the last two years, the Department created and tested a number of models for safely managing our youngest inmates. Each step of the way, we assessed our progress and setbacks with safety for staff and inmates foremost in mind.

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Our ending of punitive segregation today is founded upon thoughtful evaluation, flexibility and adjustments with the needs and safety concerns of staff and young adults front and center,” said **Correction Commissioner Joseph Ponte**.

This announcement represents an unprecedented milestone in New York State correctional history and puts the DOC at the forefront of correctional reform across the nation. No other state has accomplished comparable punitive-segregation reforms for inmates ages 19 through 21.

The Department ended punitive segregation for 16 and 17 year olds in December 2014 and in June 2016 ended punitive segregation for 18 year olds. The number of inmates serving punitive segregation sentences has dropped almost 80 percent since Commissioner Ponte arrived on the job in April 2014, from about 600 to 123 as of October 6. Along with the elimination of punitive segregation for inmates ages 21 and under, the Department has capped punitive-segregation sentences. The reform comes as violence is dropping throughout the City’s jails, with two of the most serious violence indicators down 40 percent this year as compared to a year earlier.

The Department accomplished the reform by creating three therapeutically oriented alternative housing models for managing the behavior of young inmates, who are responsible for a disproportionate amount of jail violence. Each housing option – Second Chance, Transitional Restorative Unit (TRU) and Secure – provides a progressively therapeutic and structured approach for incentivizing positive behavior, with heightened staffing, programming, and inmate engagement. Today, the Department announced that it is working to adapt its Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH) to meet the needs of 18-21 year olds. Transferring the last few young adults into ESH officially ends punitive segregation for the Department. Young adults ages 18-21 comprise about 10-12 percent of the jail population but commit about a third of the violence in the City’s jails.

After years of departmental neglect and rising violence under previous administrations, Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte embarked on a [14-point anti-violence reform agenda](#) in March 2015. Through an unprecedented \$200 million investment in officer safety reforms to reduce violence in specific facilities and throughout the Department, DOC has registered a 40 percent drop in the most serious assaults on staff and uses of force through the first eight months of 2016 as compared to the same period in 2015. “Even a single assault on staff is unacceptable, but our numbers are moving in the right direction,” said Commissioner Ponte.

Mayor de Blasio and Commissioner Ponte announced a series of [officer safety measures](#) in September, including new contraband scanners, Tasers for supervisors in the Emergency Service Unit and an infusion of 1,200 recruits – the largest class of new officers ever – to decrease overtime

“When young people interact with the correctional system, the stakes are the highest they can be – lives can be restored or irrevocably derailed by what happens in our jails,” said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. “I thank the mayor and Commissioner Ponte for working to promote more rehabilitative approaches and phasing out policies that we know have done more harm than good.”

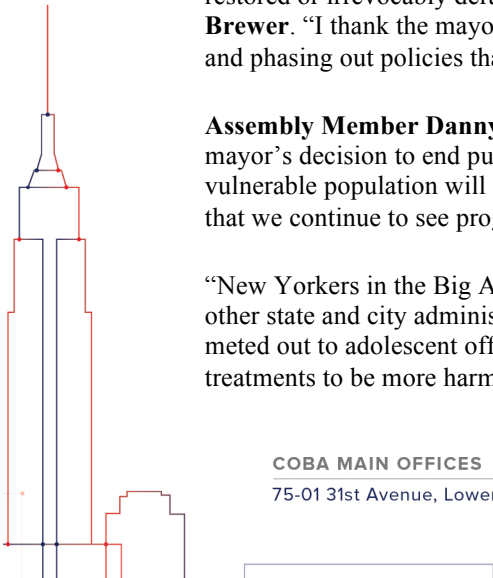
**Assembly Member Danny O’Donnell, Chair of the Committee on Corrections**, said, “I support the mayor’s decision to end punitive segregation for young adults in New York City. With this change, this often vulnerable population will instead participate in rehabilitative programming. I applaud these efforts and hope that we continue to see progressive changes for young incarcerated adults across the state.”

“New Yorkers in the Big Apple can be proud of today’s announcement which separates New York City from other state and city administrations where punitive segregation is unfortunately the cruel but usual treatment meted out to adolescent offenders in their prison systems. Empirical research has repeatedly found such treatments to be more harmful than useful in positively altering behavior.

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The new approach will not only reduce violence, but will also make our terrible prison systems more humane and safer for employees who must interact with prisoners regularly throughout their time of incarceration. It is the right thing to do, and I commend the Mayor and the New York City Department of Corrections for this bold initiative, which certainly makes New York City a leader in ensuring the respect of human rights in our prison system,” said **Assembly Member Nick Perry, Chair of the Black, Latino and Asian Caucus.**

“As a member of the state Assembly Committee on Correction and chair of the Subcommittee on Transitional Services for released inmates, I applaud this historic move by Mayor de Blasio and Correction Commissioner Ponte. For too long, our city's correctional system has lagged behind in dealing with serious issues that affect not only inmates, but the reputation of our city as a forward thinking, progressive urban center. I look forward to working with Mayor de Blasio and his administration to bring about even further – and much needed – reforms to the city's correctional system,” said **Assembly Member Luis Sepulveda.**

"I commend Mayor De Blasio and the NYC Department of Correction for ending punitive segregation for our incarcerated young adults. This is a well thought out, thoroughly examined plan that brings meaningful reforms to confinement. **Said Assembly Member Jeffrion Aubry.** "The torture of punitive confinement and its negative effects on our youngsters in particular are damaging, long-lasting, and can significantly permeate their adult years. I'm thrilled that the Mayor and the Commissioner have put forth a plan that balances the safety of staff and the rehabilitation of our youth. Though this change has been a longtime coming, it is no doubt a significant milestone on the road to a more humane form of confinement."

“Ending punitive segregation for our youngest inmates is a victory for due process and prisoners’ rights,” said **Council Member Corey Johnson, Chair of the Committee on Health.** “Our goal must be to build a correctional system that reduces recidivism. Inhumane punishments will not help us bring down rates of recidivism and they do not make our City safer, so this reform is wise and much needed. I commend Mayor de Blasio, Commissioner Ponte and our City’s correctional officers for leading our city in the direction of progress and justice.”

“JustLeadershipUSA (JLUSA) and our allies have adamantly called for the Mayor to eliminate the practice of punitive segregation for young adults. Prolonged segregation for anyone, but especially for young people, is counter-productive as well as cruel. This form of confinement makes people suffer without making Rikers safe for detainees or correction officers. While we continue to demand the closure of Rikers Island, JLUSA thanks the Mayor for his leadership in moving New York City’s jail system towards being more fair, humane and just,” said **Glenn E. Martin, President of JustLeadershipUSA.**

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