

**Missouri CURE**  
**Help End Mass Incarceration!**



*Since 1990*

**Missouri CURE Board:**

*Edna (Hedy) Harden, Chair*  
*Keith Brown El, Vice-Chairman*  
*Renese Drake, Secretary*  
*Kathy Franklin, Treasurer*  
*Ronnie Amiyin*  
*Stephanie Charles*  
*Shirley Miner*  
*Angelika Mueller-Rowry*  
*Denorce Starks*  
*Shirley Sutton*

**Advisory Board:**

*Kenneth Bell*  
*Shango Bey*  
*Kevin Hammerschmidt*  
*Travis Henderson El*  
*Lonnie Lockhart Bey*  
*Shon Pernice*  
*Judy Pickens*  
*Patricia Prewitt*  
*Roosevelt Price Jr.*  
*Michelle Smith*  
*Joseph Williams*

January 23, 2020

To: Missouri House of Representative Members of the Corrections Committee

**RE: Conditions of Confinement in Missouri Department of Corrections (MDOC) Facilities pertaining to Corizon Health LLC Negligent Medical Care, Obstructed Grievance Procedures, and Issues with Solitary Confinement/ Administrative Segregation.**

Dear. Legislator:

On this occasion of a 'Rally for Reform', Missouri CURE, a prison reform and advocacy organization, takes the opportunity to bring to your attention our deep concerns pertaining to the conditions of incarceration, which violate prisoners' human rights as well as state law, since they undermine any attempt at meaningful rehabilitation. The issues raised are pervasive, based on hundreds of complaints that we have received from MDOC prisoners over a number of years. We ask that the Corrections Committee address and seek solutions for those concerns in order to ensure that, upon release, prisoners under the jurisdiction of the Missouri Department of Corrections will be capable of becoming productive citizens of the state.

The citizens of Missouri can be truly proud of RSMo 217.230 which, based on the 8th and 14th amendments of the U.S. constitution, stipulates providing medical care to prisoners "equivalent to community standard." It describes medical services as **"stressing health care education, disease prevention, immediate identification of health problems and early intervention to prevent more debilitating chronic health problems."**

Yet, a disturbing number of letters from prisoners housed all over the state tell a very different story. In the past six years Missouri CURE has documented more than 250 cases of often very clear and egregious violations of Missouri Statute 217.230. Prisoner medical neglect by Corizon Health LLC (heretofore referred to as Corizon), the for-profit contractor that provides a managed care system to the Missouri Department of Corrections, ranges from delayed diagnoses and treatment of all kinds of illnesses (even contagious ones such as HIV, Hepatitis A, B, and C, Staph or MRSA), to withholding necessary medical care such as specialist encounters, diagnostic exams, and surgical procedures that are deemed "unnecessary" or "elective". Denials or delays very often cause irreparable harm. Deliberate or negligent misdiagnoses of life-threatening illnesses such as heart attacks and cancer are rampant. Even prisoners who, after months or even years of filing grievances, "qualify" to see a community specialist, are then advised that the Corizon Regional Director makes the "final judgement call". Several reports state that, hours after the initial neglect, prisoners had to be "flown out by chopper" to save their lives.

In several facilities Corizon provides medical services under insufficiently sanitized, unhygienic conditions such as infestation with black mold.

Corizon's 'Standard Operating Procedures' not only cause increased long-term costs for taxpayers—when those prisoners are lucky enough to survive and become 'chronic care' patients—but also result in horribly high numbers of avoidable deaths.

***Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants***

**Missouri CURE ♦ POB 28931 ♦ St. Louis MO 63132 ♦ [hedyharden995@gmail.com](mailto:hedyharden995@gmail.com)**  
**Phones: 314-730-CURE (2873) ♦ 1-816-377-CURE (2873) ♦ [www.missouricure.org](http://www.missouricure.org)**



**Missouri CURE believes that for-profit medical providers like Corizon are not suited to provide the medical care stipulated by state law due to their primary focus on increasing profits through reduction of operating costs. Prisoners would be better served by a community-based system of care that encompasses the enrollment of all prisoners in Medicaid and which would allow for greater public oversight. We call on you as a member of the Missouri Corrections Committee to ensure that adequate prisoner health care does not only exist on paper but becomes a reality.**

While these reports of Corizon negligence and deliberate indifference are disturbing enough, it is just as concerning that prisoners, even when faithfully utilizing the MODOC grievance procedure as required by institutional policy, scarcely ever succeed in receiving the care they need, or having other issues of concern addressed and resolved.

To the contrary, Corizon staff, as well as institutional (correctional) staff reportedly retaliate against prisoners and circumvent accountability on an enormous scale and in appalling ways that not only threaten prisoners' lives but also utterly undermine the goal of rehabilitation by setting bad examples of anti-social behavior.

Prisoners' complaints are so pervasive and widespread throughout the state's correctional facilities, implicating health care staff at all levels of responsibility, individual correctional officers, as well as the condoning and stonewalling by the local and state prison administration (documented by paper trail from 2014 to this day) that these issues have to be considered systemic.

To give you a few examples: when prisoners file Informal Resolution Requests (IRRs) against doctors or nursing staff, colostomy bags overflow, wounds fester without new dressings, emergency calls are ignored, wheelchairs for the disabled suddenly become so scarce that disabled prisoners are forced to pull themselves across the floor or have to forego meals, and paperwork authorizing medications and lay-ins for special needs accommodation either vanish or are withheld while medical records are being falsified, which makes it difficult for MODOC contract monitors to detect mismanagement as they solely rely on such records as well as on staff reports. Video camera footage is routinely withheld from prisoners who seek to defend themselves against unjustified allegations. Often prisoners are even denied filing grievances, or those filed never get a response.

Equally concerning is the extensive use of solitary confinement (or worse: forced double-celling in segregation) for purposes of retaliation and punishment, often under the pretense of "investigation". This pervasive practice negatively impacts existing health problems, often to a degree that it threatens a prisoner's life. Petty conduct violations are often deliberately characterized as major ones, and mentally ill prisoners are assigned to adseg for "acting out" (which may be symptomatic of their illnesses). It is scientifically proven that prolonged social isolation and sensory deprivation cause lasting and severe physical, emotional and cognitive consequences, and exacerbate or bring about mental illness. This occurs above all with arbitrary or indefinite placement in adseg, often experienced by African-Americans at the maximum security prisons. Scores of prisoners have reached out for help to Missouri CURE, reporting severe abuse such as being "cuffed to the bench" for so long that blood circulation stops and they have to urinate and/or defecate on themselves, of being denied follow-up medical care after being stun-gunned or pepper sprayed (and denied water to remove it from their eyes), or of being left naked in cells in frigid temperatures. They report being left without hygiene articles, and suffering daily violation of their civil rights, many during years and years of being literally buried in the "hole". Many prisoners are placed "under investigation" as retaliation for filing grievances or speaking out against abuses.

This letter barely skims the surface of the inhumane treatment prisoners experience on a daily basis. Missouri CURE urges you to use your legislative leverage to investigate and remedy these terrible and ongoing injustices that take place within the Missouri Department of Corrections. Missouri state laws are being violated and human beings are suffering. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Edna (Hedy) Harden  
Chair of Missouri CURE



Angelika Mueller-Rowry  
Prisoner Health Committee Coordinator

***Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants***

**Missouri CURE ♦ POB 28931 ♦ St. Louis MO 63132 ♦ [hedyharden995@gmail.com](mailto:hedyharden995@gmail.com)  
Phones: 314-730-CURE (2873) ♦ 1-816-377-CURE (2873) ♦ [www.missouricure.org](http://www.missouricure.org)**