



Criminal justice system

Corrections



The criminal justice system incorporates several governmental institutions to prevent and deter crime, and sanction those who violate laws with criminal penalties and rehabilitation efforts. This *Get the Facts* provides an overview of the adult incarceration and parole process in Illinois.

What is the Illinois Department of Corrections?

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) is a state agency responsible for the adult prison system in Illinois. IDOC operates 27 adult correctional facilities, including five that house only women. County jails and local police lockups are not part of the state prison system.

What happens when an adult begins a prison sentence?

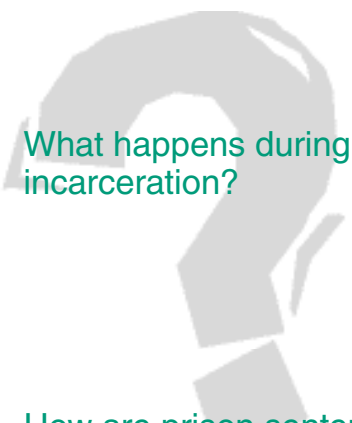
Inmates begin their sentence at an IDOC Reception & Classification Center within one of the state's correctional centers. There, officials evaluate inmate risk levels for violence, escape, or disciplinary infractions to determine security classification. Inmates sentenced to 20 years or more are assigned to maximum security prisons. Inmates with an 8- to 19-year sentence are eligible for medium security facilities. Inmates sentenced to seven years or less may be assigned to minimum security facilities. Inmates who do not follow the rules at minimum or medium security facilities may be assigned to maximum security prisons regardless of length of time left to serve.

What happens during incarceration?

During incarceration, inmates remain confined in one of the state's 27 adult correctional facilities for the duration of their sentences. If eligible, inmates may participate in education, drug treatment, and/or Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) programs. Thirty-eight ICI programs operate in 19 correctional centers producing a variety of products, including food, clothing, office and university furniture, eyeglasses, mattresses, and pillows, and providing services such as service dog training.

How are prison sentences determined?

All criminal offenses are classified as either felonies or misdemeanors. These categories are then divided into classes. Felony classes include Murder, Class X, and Classes 1, 2, 3, and 4. Misdemeanor classes include A, B, and C. Each class has a range of possible sentences by law, and judges impose sentences within those ranges. Some offenses do not allow for sentence of probation and a period of incarceration is required. For a felony conviction, an individual sentenced to incarceration will serve time in a state prison. For a misdemeanor conviction, sentences of incarceration are served in a county jail.





How are release decisions made?



Illinois instituted determinate sentencing in 1978, prescribing specific lengths of incarceration based on seriousness of offense. However, inmates may earn good time credit to reduce the length of incarceration.

Statutory Good Time refers to the percentage of time an inmate has left to serve. For example, inmates convicted of non-violent crimes must spend 50 percent of their sentences incarcerated. Inmates convicted of violent crimes must spend 85 percent of their sentences incarcerated under truth-in-sentencing laws, and serve the full sentence given for a murder conviction.

Meritorious Good Time refers to a discretionary 90 days the prison director may grant to any inmate based on how they behave while incarcerated.

Supplemental Meritorious Good Time is a second block of 90 days that may be awarded to nonviolent offenders by the director, but only after meritorious good time is awarded.

Earned Good Conduct Credit is time earned by an inmate for participating in educational programs, drug treatment, or Illinois Correctional Industries programs. Inmates earn one-half day off of their sentences for each day of participation after completing the program.

What is parole?



In Illinois, parole is called *mandatory supervised release* (MSR). Adult inmates are freed on MSR when they complete their prison sentences. While on MSR, parolees must meet conditions and requirements, such as not committing another crime, refraining from possessing a firearm or other dangerous weapon, consenting to property, residential, and personal searches, refraining from the use or possession of illegal drugs, and any requirements specifically set for them upon release.

Parole officers ensure parolee compliance, and parolees who do not meet set conditions and requirements risk being returned to prison.

What is the Illinois Prisoner Review Board?

The Illinois Prisoner Review Board (PRB) is made up of 15 people appointed by the governor. The PRB conducts hearings to address allegations of misconduct and illegal activity during parole or imprisonment. They also make prison release decisions and decisions on whether to revoke a person's parole.

For more information about IDOC, visit www.idoc.state.il.us.

About *Get the Facts: Criminal Justice System*



The *Get the Facts: Criminal Justice System* series was created to answer common questions about the criminal justice system. Other topics in this series include victims' rights, arrests, the pretrial process, the courts, and sentencing.

