



Expecting Justice:

The Status of Pregnancy and Reproductive Health Care Policies in Illinois County Jails



Expecting Justice is the first study ever conducted of reproductive health care, pregnancy and postpartum policies in county jails throughout Illinois. Developed as a joint effort of the Women's Justice Institute (WJI) and the ACLU of Illinois, it includes recommendations for systemic changes that are critical to the health, well-being and safety of incarcerated pregnant people statewide.

“In jail, you are treated like your child is a mistake and that because you're in jail, you're going to be a horrible mother. People who are pregnant in jail deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. **Our health, and the health of our babies, should matter. We are humans, not animals.**”

– Toni Tranchita, detained while pregnant

Expecting Justice documents startling narratives from women who have been pregnant in Illinois county jails. Repeated themes included:

- Lack of appropriate medical care
- Dismissal of requests for assistance
- Dangerous use of restraints, like belly chains
- Lack of sufficient nourishment
- Dehumanizing verbal abuse
- Isolation

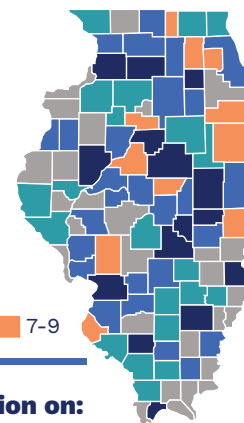
Expecting Justice collected information from Illinois' 102 counties regarding their policies on the following categories:

- Access to menstrual products
- Testing and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV/AIDS
- Access to contraception
- Access to abortion
- Prenatal and postpartum care
- Labor and delivery care
- Lactation support
- Use of restraints for pregnant and postpartum individuals
- Use of solitary confinement for pregnant and postpartum individuals

The data analyzed in Expecting Justice showed that most Illinois county jails lack written policies needed to safeguard reproductive health and appropriate treatment of pregnant and postpartum individuals.

- 28 counties did not provide written policies or other information related to the nine categories.
- No county provided written policies related to all nine categories, and only one county provided written policies or other information related to all nine categories.
- Only 11 counties provided written policies or other information related to at least seven of the nine categories.

Written policies or other information provided: 0 1-2 3-4 5-6 7-9



Counties provided the most written policies or other information on:

- Prenatal and postpartum care (60 counties)
- Use of restraints during pregnancy/postpartum (66 counties)

Counties provided the fewest written policies or other information on:

- Use of solitary confinement during pregnancy/postpartum (6 counties)
- Contraception access (17 counties)
- Lactation (18 counties)

Expecting Justice calls for measures to ensure access to reproductive health care, and that protect the health, dignity and well-being of pregnant and postpartum individuals in the custody of county jails. These include:

- Banning the unnecessary use of restraints on pregnant or postpartum individuals in all jails and prisons statewide.
- Creating a Task Force to examine the issue, collect data, and develop additional recommendations.
- Oversight of jail compliance with relevant state laws by the Illinois Department of Corrections.