

PRESS
RELEASE



The New York City Department of Correction

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**COMMISSIONER PONTE HAILS PASSAGE OF
GROUNDBREAKING RULES ELIMINATING PUNITIVE
SEGREGATION FOR INMATES 21 AND UNDER,
ESTABLISHING NEW HOUSING UNIT FOR MOST VIOLENT
INMATES AT RIKERS ISLAND**

*NYC Board of Correction Unanimously Approves Rules That Will Pave the
Way for Meaningful Reform Efforts*

NEW YORK— In a move hailed by Correction Commissioner Joseph Ponte, the New York City Board of Correction (BOC) today voted unanimously to pass a punitive segregation rule change that will eliminate the use of punitive segregation for all inmates age 21 and under, and allow for the establishment of Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH), a new housing unit for the most violent inmates on Rikers Island.

“I applaud today’s Board of Correction precedent setting decision to eliminate punitive segregation for inmates age 21 and under. I also thank them for their unanimous vote in favor of Enhanced Supervision Housing. ESH is a critical tool we needed to bring real reform to Rikers Island,” said **Commissioner Ponte**.

“By containing Rikers’ most violence prone inmates in a non-punitive, high-security location we make the island safer for everyone else. After decades of alarming mismanagement today’s vote means meaningful reform is well under way at Rikers.”

The new rules:

- Exclude inmates under 21 years of age from punitive segregation, effective January 1, 2016, provided that sufficient resources are made available to the Department for programming and staff;
- Create additional programming and special housing;
- Reduce maximum punitive segregation sentences to 30 days from 90 days per infraction;
- Limit inmates to a maximum of 60 days in punitive segregation within a six month period (unless, in rare cases, they continue to persistently commit serious violence);
- Create alternative punitive segregation options for non-violent offenses;
- Exclude seriously mentally ill and seriously physically disabled inmates from punitive segregation;
- Codify due process for punitive segregation placement;
- Mandate 40-hours of additional, specialized training for officers assigned to punitive segregation;
- Commit to the assignment of consistent staff to punitive segregation posts, in order to increase officers' familiarity with that population.

“The Health Department looks forward to its continued collaboration with the Department of Correction to reduce violence in the city jails. Eliminating punitive segregation for young adults will contribute to this goal,” said **Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett**.

ESH will house up to 250 of the small number of highly dangerous inmates who are responsible for most of the violence on Rikers Island. This new, non-punitive, highly secure housing unit will feature a number of security elements, including a higher staff-to-inmate ratio and at least seven hours of mandated out-of-cell time. The unit will also limit inmate movement and lower the risk of violence by bringing BOC-mandated services, such as a law library, health and social services, and religious chaplains, directly to the

housing unit, instead of requiring staff to escort inmates to these services elsewhere in the building, as is done in the general population.

ESH is one of several anti-violence measures and reforms funded by \$27.3 million that Mayor de Blasio and the City Council added to the Correction Department's budget in June 2014. Among other reforms already under way, with more than \$15 million in additional funding from the de Blasio administration, DOC is installing a total of 7,800 cameras that will cover every DOC facility on Rikers Island, which will create a more secure physical environment and serve as investigatory tools for department officials.

In December, DOC announced that it had ended punitive segregation for adolescents. It also has enacted measures to meet the needs of mentally ill inmates in cooperation with the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, and revamped the recruiting, training, and retaining of staff.

About the New York City Department of Correction

The New York City Department of Correction (DOC) manages the jail system for New York City. It operates Rikers Island, which houses 10 individual facilities, four borough-based jails and two hospital prison wards, as well as court pens in all five boroughs. In FY 2014, DOC had 77,141 admissions involving 56,218 individuals. Its Average Daily Population is approximately 11,400, over 80 percent of whom are housed on Rikers Island. Most of the inmates in DOC custody are being detained pending the resolution of charges against them; approximately 15 percent are city-sentenced inmates who are serving sentences of one year or less.

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