



John Howard Association of Illinois

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ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS TO IMPROVE PSYCHIATRIC CARE AT DWIGHT

The Illinois Department of Corrections has moved to remedy a significant problem in psychiatric care provided to inmates at the Dwight Correctional Center following a report by the John Howard Association documenting the issue.

On January 26 a group of John Howard Association board members, staff and volunteers conducted a monitoring tour of Dwight, the state's main prison for women. Although Dwight is authorized for 60 hours of psychiatric care a week, prison management said that since the summer it had been able to provide only 40 hours a week.

As a result, inmates were suffering unacceptably long delays in receiving psychiatric treatment and medication. The John Howard Association researched this problem by interviewing numerous inmates and then reported its findings to senior management of IDOC.

On Feb. 11 Dr. Wendy Blank, chief of mental health services for IDOC, said Dwight would begin providing the full 60 hours of psychiatric care effective Feb. 18. Blank said this will eliminate the backlog in psychiatric care and benefit inmates needing mental health treatment.

The John Howard Association is pleased that IDOC management acted promptly to resolve the problem of delayed psychiatric care, and will monitor their progress in coming months.

Robert Manor
Prison & Jail Monitor
John Howard Association