

## As Utah Corrections Department Reaches Vaccine Milestone, ACLU Pushes For More Access In Local Jails

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By [Emily Means](#)

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The Utah Department of Corrections has fully vaccinated nearly 2,700 people in the department's care.

The Utah Department of Corrections reported Thursday that every inmate at its Draper and Gunnison locations has been offered a COVID-19 vaccine, though that doesn't include new arrivals.

According to a corrections department spokesperson, 2,659 individuals have been fully vaccinated. That's around 40% of the prisoner population, based on recent counts.

"I actually think it is a milestone for the protection of our population here against COVID," said Colleen Guymon, the department's deputy director of clinical services. "It's not over, and we are going to continue to be vigilant and educate and protect our population as best we can."

Over the course of the pandemic, the corrections department has confirmed [more than 3,300 COVID-19 cases](#) among inmates and 16 deaths.

Meanwhile, the American Civil Liberties Union of Utah says vaccine distribution at county jails — which also house state prisoners — has been inconsistent.

Sara Wolovick with the civil liberties group said it's the government's responsibility to make sure prisoners can access health care.

"Incarcerated people are completely reliant on government actors to get them their vaccines," Wolovick said. "They cannot make appointments, they cannot go to clinics on their own."

She argued vaccinating inmates also protects the larger community because correctional facilities aren't closed systems.

"If people are leaving the jail, if there are people working in the jail who are from the community, it's not a safe situation," she said. "It's not good for public health as a whole."

The ACLU is pushing local health departments to make a vaccination plan for incarcerated people by next May 4.