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RE: COVID-19 Recommendations for Utah Sheriffs

The ACLU of Utah has called on all sheriffs in Utah to exercise their authority to protect the people who are, will soon become, and who may remain incarcerated during the current pandemic. Among the measures suggested are for sheriffs to:

- Ensure that their correctional facilities are as empty, safe, and clean as possible;
- Ensure that all facilities have adequate supplies of soap, hand sanitizer, tissues, and other hygiene products all provided free of charge.
- Implement procedures to care for those who become ill in their facilities, including: screening and testing of people for COVID-19, increasing access to medical care and removing all copays; obtaining access to the medication and equipment necessary to treat those who contract the virus; and immediately transferring sick patients to outside facilities for care when necessary; and putting into place non-punitive procedures for housing people who are exposed to the virus, who are at high risk of serious illness, or who screen or test positive for COVID-19.

The ACLU of Utah has also called on sheriffs to take steps to avoid taking new pre-trial detainees and holds from other agencies into their correctional facilities, especially those individuals who more vulnerable to COVID-19. Screening procedures will not fully protect inmates or staff or the broader community from infection from asymptomatic individuals. Moreover, the ACLU of Utah recommends that sheriffs assess detained and incarcerated populations and maximize the number of people – with a heightened focus on populations identified by the CDC as particularly vulnerable – who can be immediately released.

We recommend that sheriffs work with law enforcement agencies to reduce the number of people entering the jails. This means balancing the public safety justifications for arrest with the overwhelming health concerns presented by COVID-19. This can be operationalized by identifying categories of offenses where the public safety justification for arrest or enforcement is likely to be outweighed by the public health risks associated with COVID-19 (including the risks to both officer and the broader community associated with physical contact).

The ACLU of Utah has further advised sheriffs that they should also suspend all practices of holding people in local jails and prisons for civil immigration purposes, i.e. pursuant to a contract with U.S. Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE) or an ICE detainer.

These and other recommendations can be found in a longer letter to all policy officials and stakeholders in the Utah criminal justice system, found [here](#).