



Carceral Health Equity Workgroup Summary

Overview

The Carceral Health Equity (CHE) Workgroup of the Community Collaborative promotes the well-being of people incarcerated in response to the health harms posed by the carceral system. Workgroup members provide advice, insights, and information to help DOH build public health strategies to ensure that those incarcerated or detained receive equitable, comprehensive, culturally appropriate, and compassionate support for their health and well-being. The workgroup centers the voices of those currently and formerly incarcerated in all its work with a focus on anti-racism. By addressing health disparities and championing the human rights and dignity of all those affected by incarceration, we strive to create a more just and inclusive society.

There are 20 members participating in the workgroup, most of whom are currently or have been incarcerated in Washington State facilities. Nearly 100 individuals have been consulted to inform our understanding of priority topics related to carceral health equity.

Workgroup Goals and Activities

The Workgroup collectively developed the following three goals:

1. Center Impacted Voices and Leadership
2. Address Pressing Health Needs
3. Lay Groundwork for Systems Change

In the past year, we have focused on the following activities in support of these goals.

Developing a prioritized list of health priorities and assessing against areas of DOH influence.

This includes:

- Issues related to quality of care, including inadequate care, on-time/available and respectful treatment and access to medication and preventive care.
- Dietary issues, including linkages between nutrition served in facilities and chronic disease and high blood pressure.
- Mental health concerns, noting the inability of incarcerated individuals to call for crisis support/988.
- Air quality and environmental concerns including heat, cold, lack of proper ventilation, mold and more.
- Community oversight.
- Challenges with health upon re-entry and re-integration in communities.



Helped develop draft guidance on air quality, heating and cooling issues for carceral facilities.

Nearly 50 individuals with lived experience informed DOH's understanding of air quality issues and shaped guidance DOH is providing to carceral facilities.

Engaged in policy. CHE workgroup members provided more than 10 hours of expert consultation to inform the Health Impact Review of HB1125: *Providing judicial discretion to modify sentences in the interest of justice.*

Provided consultation to the DOH 988 team on mental health needs and challenges inside WA state prisons. DOH staff met with CHE workgroup members to hear directly on the need for additional mental health services for people incarcerated in adult state prisons while understanding unique considerations for implementation.

Increased visibility of carceral health harms. CHE workgroup members, led by members currently inside, developed and had accepted a proposal for a panel discussion for Washington State Public Health Association in October 2025, titled: *Health Harms of Incarceration: Centering Lived Experience, Healing, and Action.*

Supported connections and events. Workgroup members are reaching out to organizations and individuals aligned with priority areas and in support of incarcerated individuals and their work inside facilities.

Developed an infrastructure to support engagement. We have learned and are documenting and sharing lessons as the CHE Workgroup has sought to create a space for directly engaging incarcerated individuals. One key focus in the coming year is to develop alternate funding to support the future of this work.

Guidance for Engaging with the CHE Workgroup

Workgroup members inside facilities will not be able to view any slides or visuals in the meeting. To create a respectful and accessible environment for all members of the workgroup, including those joining from within carceral facilities, we ask that you consider the following.

Before the meeting:

- Please share materials with Omid Bagheri Garakani and Melissa West at least a week prior to the meeting so they can be sent to members in facilities.
- Only non-formatted text-based messages and up to five photos can be shared. Please provide content with clear titles and headings in a way that is easily convertible to text.

During the meeting:

- Please provide your name, pronouns, and a brief physical description of yourself.
- Please turn your camera on to build trust.
- Please speak loudly and clearly so people who are calling in from facilities can hear you.
- Please refer to the title and/or section of any materials when speaking so members can connect the visual or content you are speaking about with materials sent in advance.