

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

Justice in Every Borough.

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Legal Aid Files Two Lawsuits Demanding Transparency from NYC Department of Correction Over Dangerous Conditions at Local Jails

Lawsuits Specifically Seek Information on Enhanced Supervision Housing, Highly Restrictive Units Akin to Solitary Confinement

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society, in response to the deteriorating conditions in New York City jails, filed [two](#) open records [lawsuits](#) in Queens County Supreme Court against the New York City Department of Correction (DOC) [seeking](#) disclosure of information about some of DOC’s most unsafe housing units.

Legal Aid, the New York City Board of Correction, and advocates have long reported the poor conditions in DOC’s Enhanced Supervision Housing (ESH), which are highly restrictive housing units akin to solitary confinement. Those reports have included the refusal to escort incarcerated individuals to required medical and court services, as well as the failure to provide safe conditions for medically vulnerable individuals during hot weather. These dangers are exacerbated by the current crisis on Rikers Island, which is being worsened by uniformed corrections officers refusing to come to work.

This summer, Legal Aid filed two Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests about conditions inside ESH units, particularly on high-heat days. DOC stonewalled and refused to provide the data.

“DOC’s lack of transparency comes at an extremely dangerous time, as conditions in the city jails have become simply unacceptable by any humane standard,” said **Robert Quackenbush, Staff Attorney with the Prisoners’ Rights Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “These lawsuits will shed light on the conditions in DOC’s most unsafe housing units during a time when basic jail operations have completely broken down.”

In recent weeks, both the federal monitor in Legal Aid’s [Nuñez](#) litigation against DOC and the chief medical officer in charge of medical care on Rikers Island have reported deterioration in fundamental security protocols and delivery of basic services, leading to a collapse in basic jail operations. Yesterday, Legal Aid representatives joined several elected city and state officials in touring the beleaguered jails and demanding decarceration.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org