



Hello *Rasho* class members! We are thrilled and relieved that prisoners are now in “Group 1B” for the COVID vaccine in Illinois, which means you’ll be able to get the vaccine at the same time as prison staff and other “essential workers.” We pushed for you to get the vaccine as soon as possible because (1) it is safe, and (2) people incarcerated need to be able to protect themselves from this serious illness. The vaccine is how you can protect yourself and things can get back to normal. We hope that you will accept the vaccine when it is offered to you.

As you know, before the pandemic hit, we regularly toured prisons throughout Illinois, and talked to hundreds of prisoners face-to-face. We have not been able to do this since February. We very much want to talk to you about what has been happening over the last year. We understand that the pandemic has been hard on you, affecting the amount and frequency of the mental health services provided, out-of-cell time, and virtually everything else.

As soon as you and all of us get the COVID-19 vaccine, ***we will be back!*** Lawyers are in group 1C, but you are in 1B—which means IDOC will be offering you the vaccine soon. The more people who get the vaccine, the sooner things can get back to normal. All of us will get vaccinated as soon as we can, and when we are, we look forward to visiting you again!

About the Vaccine

Vaccines teach the immune system how to recognize and fight viruses. The COVID-19 vaccines currently available are about 95% effective at preventing the virus. They have been extensively tested, and found to be safe. We have reviewed the research and that is why we believe they are a safe way for you to protect yourself.

We have asked IDOC to distribute other materials from trusted outside health professionals and activists, including the FAQs from AMEND available on the tablets. We have also worked with other organizations on a handout for all prisoners in IDOC, and hope you’ll have that soon (if you haven’t received it already). We want to make sure you have information that is accurate and trustworthy about the vaccines.

(over, please)

Message From Dr. Stewart, Independent *Rasho* Monitor

“My name is Pablo Stewart, M.D. and I have been the Federal Monitor of the *Rasho* lawsuit since May 23, 2016. Over the last five years, I have had the opportunity to meet many of you in person. Some of you may have also seen me touring the various IDOC facilities. Due to the pandemic, however, I have not been able to tour any of the IDOC facilities for the past year. Thankfully, this will be changing due to the COVID vaccine. I have now received both doses of the vaccine, on December 18, 2020 and January 7, 2021, and have had no side effects. Thanks to the vaccine, I will soon be able to tour the IDOC facilities and speak with you in person. I urge all of you to join me in receiving the vaccine when it becomes available to you! As a doctor who has been practicing medicine for almost 40 years, I have full faith in the science behind the COVID vaccine. I encourage each and every one of you, as I have encouraged my friends and family, to please get the vaccine. I look forward to visiting with all of you when I begin touring in February.”

In Conclusion

We hope you will choose to get the COVID vaccine, so we can come visit soon. Please encourage your loved ones on the outside to get the vaccine when they can, as well. It benefits everyone for as many people to get vaccinated as possible, as soon as possible.

Rasho v. Jeffreys is a class action lawsuit that seeks to improve the treatment and conditions of people with mental illness incarcerated in Illinois prisons. For more information about it, please write to UPLC, 4413 N. Sheridan, Chicago, IL 60640 or Equip for Equality, 20 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago, IL 60302.

If you have any loved ones on the outside who would like to get involved, and/or stay informed about our work, please send a letter with their names and emails (preferred) or home addresses to UPLC. Thank you!

Take care and be well,



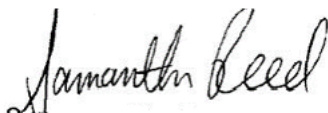
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