John Howard Association Prison Monitor Position

About JHA

The John Howard Association (JHA) is Illinois’ only independent, non-profit, citizen correctional oversight organization and criminal justice reform advocacy group. JHA monitors state prisons and publicly reports our findings and recommendations. In service of this work, we conduct onsite prison monitoring visits, conduct interviews during our visits, survey thousands of people who are incarcerated in Illinois and staff who work inside the prisons in order to gather their thoughts, concerns, perceptions and experiences, and confidentially communicate with incarcerated people about their experiences through privileged mail. We use on the ground observations, data analysis, and recommendations grounded in research and best practice to advance policy reform and advocate for changes to the conditions and treatment of people inside prisons. Our work informs and educates stakeholders, decision makers and the public about the realities of Illinois’ prisons and the need for system change. The organization’s key objectives include advocating for improved conditions in prison while highlighting the urgent need for reform in closely related areas of the criminal justice system (e.g., sentencing, parole, and reentry); leveraging our unique access to promote transparency and accountability in Illinois state prisons and throughout the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC); and working to expand the field of civilian correctional oversight through the development, documentation and publication of available oversight methods and best practices in order to promote visibility into all carceral settings.

JHA has monitored prisons and correctional policies and practices for 120 years, advancing needed reform to achieve a fair, humane and effective criminal justice system. JHA monitors both the adult and juvenile state prisons in Illinois.

About the Position

JHA seeks a highly qualified professional to join our monitoring team and carry out the organization’s core programming. This role is an exciting opportunity for a motivated professional with experience conducting systems reform advocacy and authoring high-impact written materials. JHA’s Prison Monitor will: plan, prepare and lead prison visits; collect data and observe all units in the prison in order to evaluate the conditions, programming, treatment of prisoners and implementation of policy; help draft and analyze surveys of the incarcerated population and correctional staff; write reports that include findings and recommendations; and participate in working groups and coalitions to educate stakeholders, policy makers and the public about prison conditions and the impact of incarceration on individuals, families, and communities and advocate for needed reforms.

In addition, this individual will be part of a small, dedicated team that uses our work and knowledge of Illinois prisons to change laws and policies that impact people who are incarcerated. One of the unique aspects of JHA’s work, beyond our access to prisons, is that our ongoing and continued monitoring allows us to evaluate and report on the implementation of
new policies and practices and observe first hand if there is compliance with mandated changes and determine if the outcomes are as expected or if there are unintentional consequences that need to be addressed.

The Prison Monitor position at JHA is an exciting opportunity to help build the foundation for prison and criminal justice system change in Illinois and use your exceptional communication skills to inform, educate and advocate for reform.

**Key Responsibilities**

JHA’s Prison Monitor will carry out activities related to providing meaningful oversight of Illinois’ state prisons and advancing criminal justice reform more broadly. The work of JHA Prison Monitors includes:

- Collaborate with JHA staff, volunteers and interns to support our core program work and further our mission to advance correctional policies, practices, treatment and conditions that are fair, humane, and effective.
- Build the capacity of JHA’s monitoring work through on-boarding and training of volunteers, including providing relevant materials and coaching on best practices in detention monitoring.
- Work with colleagues to design surveys, collect and manage data, interpret results, and report on both the data and anecdotal findings.
- Develop and maintain expertise on IDOC policies, practices and data, as well as stay informed on legal, advocacy, and compliance frameworks (such as settlement agreements pursuant to litigation or accreditation efforts) influencing operations, and conditions and concerns in the institutions.
- Work with Prison Communications manager to read, analyze, document, track and respond to incoming letters, calls, and website inquiries from incarcerated individuals and their loved ones and incorporate this information into monitoring efforts.
- Plan, prepare for, attend and lead monitoring visits to state prisons, including communication with correctional administrators and JHA volunteers in advance of a visit, on site engagement, and post-visit follow-up. Ability to obtain IDOC clearance required. State-wide travel is required.
- Author reports, make public presentations, and support the communication of findings to the public.
- Review and edit reports and presentations written by JHA staff.
- Work with colleagues and allies to set and advance policy and research goals.
- Participate in JHA projects focused on collaboration and learning about correctional oversight in other jurisdictions and identifying and documenting best practices and novel approaches to monitoring, oversight, advocacy efforts to promote independent correctional oversight and seed increased replication.

**Experience and Qualifications**

JHA is seeking an accomplished candidate comfortable working across a variety of functions as part of a small, hard-working team. Desirable attributes include:

- Advanced degree in a related field.
- Experience and knowledge of corrections - consideration of both academic and professional background/experience will be given, combination preferred.
• Ability to comfortably and productively work inside prisons of every security level.
• Knowledge and understanding of penal policies and practices at local, state and national levels.
• Excellent writing skills which demonstrate ability to critically evaluate data and articulately convey observational information.
• Strong research skills and ability to include relevant research in written materials.
• Demonstrated analytical abilities, including data analysis, and critical thinking skills, reflected in written work and oral presentations.
• Ability to effectively manage multiple projects simultaneously and produce high quality work products that demonstrate strong attention to detail.
• Strong communication skills, including ability to effectively and respectfully dialogue with stakeholders, including prisoners, staff and administrators, as well as diverse groups of people in a variety of other professional settings and situations.

Compensation

This is a full-time position with benefits and generous time off allowance. Salary range is $50-55,000. JHA is currently working remotely due to the coronavirus pandemic but anticipates returning to work in our office in downtown Chicago once it is safe for us to do so.

How to Apply

JHA is actively recruiting highly qualified candidates to begin immediately. Interested candidates are strongly encouraged to apply as soon as possible by sending a cover letter and resume via email to Dan Hoffman, dhoffman@thejha.org.

Diverse candidates are encouraged to apply. At JHA, we believe that differences and diversity benefit our staff, our mission, our work and our community. JHA is an equal opportunity work place and we welcome applications from all candidates regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, veteran status, disability status, and age. Further, we highly value those who have lived criminal justice system experience.

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