HIV Rates Drop Among State and Federal Prisoners

About 17,000 inmates were known to have HIV in 2015, down from a high of nearly 26,000 in 1998.

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At the end of 2015, an estimated 17,150 state and federal prisoners were known to be HIV positive, the lowest number since 1991, when such figures started being tracked, according to a Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) press release about a report titled HIV in Prisons, 2015—Statistical Tables.

In 1991, BJS found that 17, 680 prisoners were known to have HIV. The highest number recorded was 25,980 prisoners in 1998. Separating the state and federal populations, the BJS press release notes that between 1998 and 2015, the number of federal prisoners with HIV declined from 24,910 to 15,610, a drop of 9,300 people. During the same period, the number of state prisoners known to have HIV grew from 1,066 to 1,536, an increase of 470 prisoners.

AIDS-related deaths of state prisoners dropped from a total of 73 deaths in 2010 to 45 in 2015. For federal prisoners, the number of deaths has remained less than 10 each year between 2010 and 2015.

The press release notes that the state and federal prison systems have various practices for testing prisoners for HIV, whether when admitted, while incarcerated or when released from prison.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2010, the rate of HIV diagnosed among the state and federal prison population was five times higher than among those not incarcerated.

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