

## Preface

This book is the newest edition of *A Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual (JLM)*. First published in 1978, the *JLM* is a practical legal resource written to provide incarcerated people with information about their rights while in prison. Student members of the *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* at Columbia Law School write, edit, publish, and distribute the *JLM* in collaboration with lawyers and law professors. In addition to the main manual, the *JLM* publishes several “supplements” geared towards people incarcerated in particular states, as well as an *Immigration and Consular Access Supplement*. In the past four decades, the *JLM* has supported tens of thousands of incarcerated people across the United States in understanding and exercising their legal rights.

Now more than ever, jailhouse lawyers are sorely needed. The number of people incarcerated in the United States has increased dramatically since the *JLM* began. In 1978, around 300,000 people were locked up in the United States. Today, that number is 2.3 million. No other country in the world imprisons people at a higher rate than the United States. As this book goes to print, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage in prisons across the country. The loss and prolonged family separation that incarcerated people and their loved ones have suffered throughout the pandemic is devastating. During a time in which the harms of mass incarceration are particularly severe, jailhouse lawyers are critically important.

Like previous editions, the 12th Edition of the *JLM* contains important updates to the law and procedures relevant to incarcerated people across a wide range of issue areas. In addition to our usual updates, we have made a few changes to the language we use throughout the manual. We have moved towards using the term “incarcerated person” rather than “prisoner,” except where we are directly quoting a legal authority. We made this change because we recognize that people in prison are much more than their circumstances, and want the language we use to reflect that. We are also working towards changing other language in the *JLM* that is outdated, biased, or exclusionary. In particular, we have changed much of the language we use to discuss the LGBTQ community. While we continue to use the words “man” and “woman” throughout the *JLM*, our use of those words is not meant to exclude people who are transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming. We will continue to update our language, and welcome your feedback.

All *JLM* material is available to download for free on our website, listed below. We now also have a website where you can order all of our publications. For information about how to order by mail, please visit our website or write to us at the mailing address or e-mail address below:

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The responses and feedback we receive from incarcerated people throughout the country are our most valuable resource for improving and developing the *JLM*. We thank the many jailhouse lawyers whose helpful comments have contributed to the improvements that may be found in this edition. The process of improving the *JLM* begins again even as this edition goes to press, and we ask that the readers of the *JLM* continue to share their ideas and suggestions.