

## Preface

This book, published in 2024, 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 or jail. 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 this main manual, the *JLM* publishes several “supplements” geared towards people incarcerated in particular states, as well as an *Immigration and Consular Access Supplement*. In our over four decades of existence, the *JLM* has reached tens of thousands of incarcerated people across the United States.

Now more than ever, jailhouse lawyers are sorely needed. In 1978, when the first edition of the *JLM* was published, around 300,000 people were incarcerated in the United States. Today, that number is 1.9 million. Our last edition was published at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which exposed serious flaws in the mass incarceration system and led to the death of thousands of incarcerated people. Today, while the pandemic is no longer a national crisis, its impacts continue to ripple in prisons and jails across the country. A nationwide shortage of correctional staff impacts the daily lives of incarcerated people by leading to more frequent lockdowns, a higher risk of abuse by overworked and under-supervised workers, and a lack of access to many critical services. During a time in which the harms of mass incarceration are particularly severe, jailhouse lawyers are critically important.

Like previous editions, the 13th Edition of the *JLM* contains important updates to the law and procedures relevant to incarcerated people across a wide range of issue areas. There have been many important legal since the 12th Edition's publication. For example, the First Step Act provided many key changes for incarcerated people, which are now included in this edition. Additionally, we have continued to update outdated, biased, or exclusionary language in the *JLM*. We continue to use the term “incarcerated person” rather than “prisoner” or “inmate,” except where we are directly quoting a legal authority. We will continue to update our language and always welcome your feedback.

All *JLM* material is available to view and download for free on our website, which is listed below. 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:

*A Jailhouse Lawyer's Manual*  
435 West 116th Street  
New York, NY 10027  
jlm.board.mail@gmail.com  
<http://jlm.law.columbia.edu/>

The responses and feedback we receive from incarcerated people across 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. As you read this, we have already begun the process of improving the next edition of the *JLM* to make it even more accessible and easy to understand. We ask that the readers of the *JLM* continue to share their invaluable ideas and suggestions with us.