

Important Information for Women in North Carolina Prisons and Jails



What is the Dignity for Women Who are Incarcerated Law?

North Carolina passed a law in 2021 to improve the care and treatment of women in jails and prisons.

Requirements During Pregnancy through Six Weeks Postpartum:



Prohibits use of restraints starting 2nd trimester*



Restraints prohibited during labor and delivery. No exceptions



Prohibits body cavity searches*



Prohibits restrictive housing*



Provide sufficient prenatal food and vitamins



Beds no more than 3 feet from the floor



Free prenatal, labor, and delivery care



Baby can stay with mom in hospital



Free postpartum pads, underwear, and hygiene products

Guidelines That Apply to All Incarcerated Females:



Free period products must be provided



When possible, male employees shall not perform inspections of undressed females*



When possible, mothers should be placed in a prison within 250 miles of their infant



Infants should be allowed visitation at least 2x week to mothers in state prison*



*Other standards apply outside of facility. Refer to law for limited exceptions.

* Exceptions may be made. Refer to law for limited exceptions.

Written report to sheriff or administrator is required within 5 days documenting instance leading to exception. See the full text for more detail on all provisions of the act.

Report violations to: North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, Inc. | Post Office Box 25397, Raleigh, North Carolina 27611 | (919) 856-2200
NC Division of Health Service Regulation (DHSR) | Call: 1-800-624-3004 | Fax: 919-715-7724
Write: Complaint Intake Unit - 2711 Mail Service Center, Raleigh, NC 27699-2711

Are You Pregnant? Have You Been Pregnant in the Past Year?



Seek medical care right away if you have any signs or symptoms that are listed. These symptoms could be life-threatening.



Headache that won't go away or gets worse over time



Dizziness or fainting



Changes in vision



Fever of 100.4° F or higher



Extreme swelling of hands or face



Thoughts of harming self or baby



Trouble breathing



Chest pain or fast beating heart



Severe nausea and throwing up



Severe belly pain that doesn't go away



Baby's movement stopping or slowing during pregnancy



Severe swelling, redness or pain in leg or arm



Vaginal bleeding or fluid leaking during pregnancy



Heavy vaginal bleeding or discharge after pregnancy



Overwhelming tiredness

If You Are Pregnant and Using Substances



Ask for immediate medical help or to call 911 if you are pregnant and showing signs of withdrawal, including:



Nausea, vomiting, sweating, muscle aches, agitation, or tremors.

It is very dangerous for the mother and baby to experience sudden withdrawal.

For help if you are using substances during or after pregnancy, call:

The UNC Horizons Substance Use Disorder Program (919-903-0591)
Alcohol and Drug Council of NC: Visit alcoholdrughelp.org or call 1-800-688-4232 and ask for perinatal resources.

Health Services Upon Release

Local health departments provide care for women and children regardless of ability to pay.

Find your local health dept:
<https://www.dph.ncdhs.gov/contact/LHD>

Medicaid: Apply online through the NC Medicaid Beneficiary Service Portal (ncgov.servicenowservices.com) or visit your local health department for help with enrollment.