

DIGNITY course on preventive monitoring during the COVID-19 pandemic



Why a course on preventive monitoring during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Places of deprivation of liberty are enclosed environments with limited capacity to apply social distancing and other public health measures recommended to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Moreover, preventing and controlling this pandemic within places of detention poses significant dilemmas to the responsible authorities in terms of protecting public health while also respecting and fulfilling the rights of detainees. In some cases, public health measures may heighten the potential exposure to the risk of ill-treatment in places of detention.

Therefore, there is an increased need for effective and independent oversight to ensure that the risk of ill-treatment is mitigated and addressed appropriately by detaining authorities. Despite this increased need, preventive monitoring bodies are challenged in novel ways during the COVID-19 pandemic. As regular visits are, in many places, not possible and new issues are emerging in detention, there is a great need and potential for alternative and effective ways to monitor the conditions and treatment of people detained.



Who is this course for and what is its scope?

Building on extensive experience and expertise, and acknowledging the unprecedented challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic for both detaining authorities and monitoring bodies, DIGNITY stands ready to support monitoring bodies to continue carrying out their preventive mandate through a specialized training curriculum.

The training is addressed to monitoring bodies (NPMs, NHRIs, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)) that monitor places where people are deprived of their liberty – both within the criminal justice system (e.g. police stations, pretrial detention, prisons) and/or other places of detention (e.g. psychiatric hospitals, social care homes, immigration detention centers, refugee camps and asylum centers). The training curriculum takes point of departure in the prison setting, but it could be applied to other settings, taking into account the specificities of other places of detention.



What is the training approach and methodology?

The course is designed as a virtual blended training course, which will be delivered through materials that participants are able to access online on their own (on-demand) as well as webinars. The course is developed in an online format which is user-friendly and interactive. Its content and mode of learning (on-demand, webinars, blended) will be tailored to the participants' needs and capacity. DIGNITY experts will assess the capacity of the participants to follow online courses and select the most appropriate digital platform and mix of learning methods (on-demand, webinars). DIGNITY will strive to involve and engage participants throughout the learning process. A variety of interactive training methods and techniques (such as small group discussions, exercises, case studies) are employed.



What does the course include?

This training course aims to provide guidance and technical advice on monitoring practice and methodology, while analyzing the most important issues to monitor within places of detention in the COVID-19 context (*'what to monitor'*) as well as possible alternative ways of monitoring with limited or no access to places of detention (*'how to monitor'*). Participants will gain a deeper understanding of the human rights challenges within places of detention during COVID-19 and the necessary practical knowledge and skills to carry out their preventive work in an effective and professional manner during this pandemic. The course includes the following seven modules:

1. COVID-19 general information and developments
2. Prevention and management of COVID-19 in prisons and human rights
3. Challenges for monitoring bodies during the COVID-19 pandemic
4. Issues to monitor during the pandemic ('What to monitor')
5. Methodological approaches ('How to monitor')
6. Preventive monitoring without access (remote monitoring)
7. Reporting and follow-up during the COVID-19 pandemic



What is the duration of the course?

It is estimated that participants will need to dedicate approximately 15-20 hours for completing this training course, including time to complete on-demand training materials and exercises as well as time to attend webinars. It is recommended that the course is delivered over a period of 3-4 weeks. Adaptations to the total time needed to complete the course and the training period will be made, based on the specific needs of the participant group.



Would you like more information?

If you are interested to know more about the course, we will be happy to hear from you. You may contact us at covid19monitoring@dignity.dk

ABOUT DIGNITY

DIGNITY – Danish Institute against Torture is a non-governmental organization based in Copenhagen, Denmark, fighting for a world where fewer people are subjected to torture and victims of torture are helped to a better life (www.dignity.dk/en/). DIGNITY has a rehabilitation clinic, where victims of torture who are currently residing in Denmark obtain treatment and support. Apart from its rehabilitation work, the organization focusses on the prevention of torture and documentation of cases of torture, both in Denmark and across the world.

As part of the Danish National Preventive Mechanism (NPM) in cooperation with the Parliamentary Ombudsman and the Danish Institute for Human Rights, DIGNITY has been engaged in preventive monitoring of places of detention since 2009. DIGNITY conducts preventive monitoring visits to Danish prisons, detention centers, police facilities, closed psychiatric wards and centers for asylum seekers.

On the international arena, DIGNITY has promoted the ratification and effective implementation of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture (OPCAT) since it came into force in 2006. Since 2013, DIGNITY has been engaged in building the capacity of NPMs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and civil society monitoring mechanisms in different regions of the world (Middle East and North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia). These capacity building activities are based on DIGNITY's core training course on preventive monitoring that covers a range of methodological and substantial aspects of monitoring. In parallel, DIGNITY staff have been members and experts of international and regional monitoring bodies (CPT, SPT, UNCAT), which has enabled DIGNITY to accumulate knowledge on best practices in detention monitoring.

DIGNITY cooperates with local partners, including civil society organizations, state actors and research institutions, in more than 20 countries around the world to prevent and combat torture in detention and other places, where people are deprived of their liberty.