

Mental Disability Rights International (MDRI) Advocacy Ends the Abusive Use of Isolation Cells in Argentina – MDRI’s advocacy in Argentina has helped end some of the most extreme abuses identified in our investigation of conditions in Argentine psychiatric facilities. MDRI documented the use of near-total sensory deprivation in cramped, dark, and filthy isolation cells of a forensic psychiatric unit on the grounds of Buenos Aires’ largest psychiatric institution. Prisoners were detained naked in tiny cells with no natural light, no ventilation, and no access to bathrooms. After MDRI met with Argentine authorities and wrote a letter with Human Rights Watch and the Center for Legal and Social Studies (CELS) detailing these abuses and making recommendations for reform, the abusive use of these cells was terminated.

In this forensic unit, MDRI also documented physical and sexual abuse, severe overcrowding, lack of appropriate treatment, and the absence of periodic reviews of the prisoners’ detentions. On February 13, 2007, the City of Buenos Aires’ Legislature met to discuss the need to address these problems. MDRI and CELS are currently drafting a proposal to city authorities on ways to bring treatment approaches in psychiatric forensic units into compliance with international human rights standards. For more information about MDRI’s Americas Advocacy Initiative see www.mdri.org