

AR 28266

April 27, 2018

Jennifer Fuchinsky
Fatality Inquiry Coordinator
Alberta Justice Legal Services Division
Civil Law - Litigation
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Dear Jennifer Fuchinsky:

Recently, a fatality inquiry concluded that reviewed the circumstances surrounding the death of inmate Travis Lee Halmrast at the Lethbridge Correctional Centre (LCC). The Honourable Judge S.L. Oishi chaired the inquiry and provided two recommendations for the prevention of similar deaths that pertain to the Adult Centre Operations Branch (ACOB).

Recommendation #1: There should not be structures within a correctional facility cell that would support the weight of a human body such that hanging might occur. This would include "C" shaped handles on the interior side of cell doors. This is particularly the case where the cell is used to house inmates who are suicidal; who have any other serious mental health issues; or those in remand awaiting case outcomes including bail hearings. The latter group may tend to be more emotionally unsettled about their legal status than those who are serving a sentence.

Following the death of Mr. Halmrast, a review of the "C" shaped handles on the interior side of cell doors was conducted. Housing units within LCC designated for inmates with mental health concerns or those who are suicidal were immediately identified and had the "C" shaped door handles removed.

In addition, ACOB will comply with the recommendation to remove the "C" shaped handles from units that house remanded inmates. Management at LCC will formulate a move forward plan with this project. This will incur the removal of "C" handles for a total of 83 cells.

Recommendation #2: Written requests by inmates to speak to health care workers, particularly the psychologist, should be deposited in a single location at the correctional facility where it is certain to be received and addressed in a prompt manner.

In response to this recommendation, a review was conducted by LCC and Alberta Health Services (AHS) management to assess the reliability and timelines of the current inmate request form system. Management concluded that the current system was both effective and efficient in communicating inmate concerns to the applicable departments within the facility.

The process of submitting the Request for Interview (RFI), or Health Services Request (HSR), first to unit staff provides certain benefits;

1. Any urgent requests that could jeopardize the safety of the inmate or of others can be immediately identified by unit staff and acted upon;
2. Unit staff can immediately notify health care staff when an urgent medical requests is identified;
3. Requests which are less serious in nature, like a request for a pencil and paper, can be actioned in the moment by unit staff. This early intervention allows for positive interaction by assisting the inmate, reduces any anxiety or stress that may have otherwise affected the inmate while awaiting a response, and reduces the volume of mail to be sorted.

In addition to the RFI process, an AHS nurse attends each unit four times per day. During these visits, an inmate may speak to the nurse about any health concerns or medical referral requests that they may have including; a request to speak with a psychologists.

Although the recommendation from the Honourable Judge S.L. Oishi is valued, ACOB feels that the current request form practice, paired with the daily availability of health care staff, is sufficient at addressing any medical requests or concerns that an inmate may have. As such, response to this recommendation requires no further action.

Yours truly,

Original signed

Dennis Cooley, Ph.D.
Associate Deputy Minister
Justice and Solicitor General

cc: Kim Sanderson
Wayne Reddon
Lisa Farion
Jennifer Stengel
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