



September 11, 2018

Ms. Jennifer Fuchinsky
Fatality Inquiry Coordinator
Justice and Solicitor General
9th Floor Peace Hills Trust Tower
10011 109 Street NW
EDMONTON AB T5J 3S8

Dear Ms. Fuchinsky:

Re: Aldo Digiacomo – Public Fatality Inquiry, Response to Recommendations

Thank you for providing the Honourable Judge Gordon G. Yake's report. This letter is to provide a response to the four recommendations impacting Alberta Health Services (AHS) at Centennial Centre for Mental Health & Brain Injury (CCMHBI), Ponoka, Alberta.

Recommendation 1

A comprehensive Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) Camera system should be set up to monitor the exterior grounds to which patients have access, with specific policy developed to ensure 24 hour monitoring and recording.

Response

AHS accepts in principle (In Progress)

An approved security equipment upgrade project #17.3049.0167 is currently in the pre-planning phase for scope and design. The upgrade will include increased access control, duress alarms and cameras. Completion of this comprehensive project is aimed for the fall of 2020. Cameras are planned for the exterior entry and exit points of patient care buildings.

CCTV Cameras in use at AHS facilities are intended to be used for live event viewing upon request or post incident investigation. Cameras are recorded and kept on recorded for defined period of time as per policy. AHS has an enterprise-wide CCTV management system that is being continually enhanced through a risk management process that prioritizes AHS facilities. This process will ensure a standardized system throughout AHS resulting in high degree of reliability and efficiency.

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Recommendation 2

Lighting of the exterior grounds should be improved to aid searcher at night and to aid night time CCTV recording of the exterior grounds

Response

AHS accepts in principle (In Progress)

Facilities, Maintenance & Engineering (FM&E) had retro-fitted all the CCMHBI street and parking lights to Light Emitting Diode (LED) starting in 2014 and completed in July 2015 prior to this event. FM&E will be installing two new light standards with LED flood lights behind the Heritage Building in 2018 to mitigate incidents of vandalism and break-ins that will also aid searchers.

The new lighting upgrades will assist in nighttime sightlines. The proposed exterior cameras will benefit from the new lighting systems. The Site staff also have access to Forward Looking Infra-Red (FLIR®) thermal imaging handheld camera that is an appropriate device to assist security patrols and/or emergency response teams to quickly and efficiently search heavily wooded areas for missing and/or eloped patients.

The current lighting plan does cover natural walking areas and gathering points with good sightlines from neighboring buildings and parking areas.

Recommendation 3

Staff members who are assigned to conduct searches should receive training in search and rescue techniques from qualified search and rescue instructors.

Response

AHS proposes an alternate solution (Complete)

Red Deer County Search and Rescue met with members of CCMHBI Emergency Preparedness Committee to provide an overview of search techniques. Information obtained helped inform staff search plan orientation. Training all CCMHBI staff by qualified search and rescue instructors, and to keep them current in search and rescue techniques is not feasible and is not provided as part of the Emergency Code Yellow in AHS.

In late 2015, the CCMHBI began development of an updated Emergency Response Code (ERC) Yellow (missing patient plan). Working through the Site Emergency/Disaster Management Steering Committee and utilizing the existing plan, a new comprehensive ERC Yellow was completed. This was far in advance of release of the standardized AHS ERC Yellow template in early 2018. The CCMHBI plan was completed in April 2016 and a staff education process was subsequently rolled out in the spring of 2016.



The CCMHBI ERC Yellow plan contains recognition, notification and response protocols which include both interior and exterior search processes. CCMHBI sits on approximately 237* (non-leased) acres so the latter process is somewhat unique and challenging for the site. For exterior search, teams of two staff are dispatched to predesignated search areas and utilize maps developed from overhead photos of the site. Search packs are provided that include maps, flashlights, medical supplies and other safety items. In 2018 the packs will also include noise making devices (whistles) for communication use and to ward off animals. A confirmed communication method (phone, radio, etc.) is established prior to teams leaving the building.

In early 2016, AHS Protective Services agreed to store their FLIR® thermal night vision camera at the site which can be utilized to detect heat signatures during site searches at night when required.

Overall, the CCMHBI Emergency Response Code Yellow ranks as one of the most comprehensive in the Province. The site Code Yellow plan currently in place is to utilize site staff who have received the search plan orientation.

* The Honourable Judge Gordon G. Yake's report indicates 550 acres; however, review of facility and maintenance records indicate the site occupies 237 acres of wooded land. There is adjacent land owned by AHS but currently leased out.

Recommendation 4

A regular schedule of security patrols of the exterior grounds should be established and sufficient qualified security personnel should be hired to meet that schedule

Response

AHS proposes an alternate solution (Complete)

AHS Protective Services conducts regular patrols, but does not have a set schedule for these patrols to avoid establishing a predictable pattern which would limit the patrol effectiveness. Patrols are also a task that are completed between specific calls for service that may vary in length from a few minutes to several hours. This may include simple door unlock requests to continued assistance with aggressive patients. Protective Services staff focus on providing measures to assist the safety and security of people first, and property second. Since this incident occurred, the Protective Services staff deployed to CCMHBI have changed from contracted security guards to Alberta Health Services Community Peace Officers (CPO's) and two additional CPO's are in the process of being hired to enhance the resource level at the facility. The CPO's are specifically trained to meet the requirements of a Healthcare facility. CPO's complete an intensive three week healthcare focused training program approved by the Alberta Justice & Solicitor General Peace Officer Training Program. The training consists of several aspects, some being legal authorities, officer safety/physical components, tactical communication, effective report and documentation writing and note taking.



The program includes active simulation exercises to apply training skills learned in actual situations. Protective Services completes Daily Activity Logs to record times of routine functions like exterior patrols and Perspective reporting, a provincial based reporting program capturing incident data for various requests for service.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

Verna Yiu, MD, FRCPC
President and Chief Executive Officer

C: Dr. Francois P. Belanger - Vice President and Chief Medical Officer, AHS
Milton Sussman, Deputy Minister of Health
Mary Persson, Assistant Deputy Minister, Financial and Corporate Services