



CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM NO. 10-2007 September 18, 2007

TO: SHERIFFS, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION, POLICE CHIEFS, HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATORS

RE: SUICIDE IN LOCAL CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

The Commission's Correction Medical Review Board reports a marked and troubling increase in the rate of inmate suicide in local correctional facilities in upstate New York and Long Island. As of the beginning of the third quarter of this year, there have been 12 suicides in county jails and police department lockups in 2007. When adjusted for population, this represents a rate 47% higher than the 2005-2006 average for county jails and a nearly two-fold increase in police lockup facilities. While the precise causes of these changes remain unclear, the Medical Review Board has advised the Commission that a review and reiteration of the essential elements of suicide prevention in custody is warranted.

Since 1985, the Commission has been engaged in a statewide collaborative effort with the New York State Office of Mental Health and with sheriffs and jail administrators around the state to improve mental health crisis intervention and prevent suicide in local correctional facilities. The Local Forensic Suicide Prevention - Crisis Service Model is an initiative designed to facilitate the identification, referral and treatment of prisoners who are suicidal and/or seriously mentally disturbed. The program, which is a mandated aspect of compliance with NYS Correction Law §500-b and with *Minimum Standards* Part 7013 Classification, establishes direct service linkages among county jails, police lockups, and local mental health service providers. The program also clearly defines roles and responsibilities of mental health and local correctional agencies in the identification and management of prisoners at high risk for suicide attempt.

The Local Forensic Suicide Prevention - Crisis Service Model consists of the following major components:

- ◆ Policy and procedure guidelines to clarify roles of county jail, police department lockup and mental health agency personnel;
- ◆ Screening of detainees by trained correction/police officers using Commission Form 330ADM;
- ◆ Supervision - rigorous direct supervision of high risk prisoners;
- ◆ Mental health observation housing;
- ◆ Mental health crisis intervention;

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- ◆ Scheduled mental health evaluation and treatment;
- ◆ External hospitalization when warranted;
- ◆ Training which integrates roles and functions of local law enforcement and mental health staff; and
- ◆ Critical incident review of prisoner suicide attempts and deaths.

Sheriffs, Commissioners of correction, jail administrators and police chiefs are reminded that careful attention to the maintenance of this program in New York has shown proven results over the past 20 years in reducing rates of suicide in custody and in improved mental health services in jails. This program, in particular its screening and training components, is also a required element of compliance with New York State Correction Law §500-b and *Minimum Standards* Part 7013 Classification.

The Commission, in cooperation with the New York State Office of Mental Health, provides regular field training offerings of the 16-hour Instructor Development (Train-the-Trainer) certification program in the Local Forensic Suicide Prevention - Crisis Service Model as well as the eight hour Suicide Prevention Basic Course and a four-hour refresher of the Basic Course. Thus far in 2007, two Instructor Development programs have been delivered, another is scheduled for October 2007. Additional programs are offered based upon demand.

All New York State correction and law enforcement executives are encouraged to assess the training and program participation status of their departments and to avail themselves of this valuable resource.

For further information, please contact Christopher Ost at the Commission's Forensic Medical Unit in Albany at (518) 485-2475.

Daniel L. Stewart, Chairman

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