



Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction

Division of Parole and Community Services
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Columbus, OH 43222

John R. Kasich, Governor

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Gary C. Mohr, Director

January 23, 2012

David W. Doak, Sheriff
Portage County Sheriff's Department
8240 Infirmary Road, Justice Center
Ravenna, Ohio 44266

RE: Technical Assistance Review of Deaths at the Portage County Jail

On December 22, 2011, at the request of Sheriff Doak, the Division of Parole and Community Services conducted onsite visits at the Portage County Justice Center to review policies and procedures related to the care and supervision of inmates in the facility. Policies and documentation relating to three recent jail suicides and two accidental deaths were reviewed. It should be noted that this was limited in scope and not a complete inspection of the facility for compliance with the Minimum Standards for Jails in Ohio (Minimum Standards).

5120:1-8-01 Reception and Release

The jail properly completed a detailed booking assessment of the inmates upon admission to the facility. Two of the records noted mental health concerns of which only one reported a previous suicide attempt. None of the inmates were identified as suicidal at the time they were booked into the facility. The initial screening process is compliant with the Minimum Standards.

5120:1-8-03 Security

The Minimum Standards mandate inmates are checked by jail staff at least once every sixty minutes. Internal jail policies and documents provided require jail staff to perform personal observation checks of inmates at twenty minute intervals. Staff complied with the Minimum Standards but records indicate noncompliance with internal policy in the case of one of the suicides.

Additionally, the internal policy regarding the number of jail beds is dated 1994 and shows the total number of beds in the jail to be 84. The actual number of jail beds in the Portage County jail facility is 220. Current operational practices, including the actual number of jail beds, must be reflected in the jail policy and procedural manual.

Recommendation: Purchase a new electronic tracking system to permit correctional staff to swipe a card/wand at various checkpoints throughout the facility on jail watch tours. Reduce the watch tours and vary the times. The administration has added 36 new CCTV cameras and connected the 35 existing cameras to a

new recording system. This new system will also allow remote monitoring of the jail CCTV cameras by the jail administration.

5120:1-8-09 Medical

The jail staff performed medical and mental health receiving screenings on the inmates in accordance with the Minimum Standards.

Inconsistencies were found between the jail manual, current operational practices and the Suicide Prevention Plan developed by Coleman Professional Services. The jail manual Suicide Prevention Plan (dated 10.1994) specified observation checks completed at fifteen minute intervals, whereas the Suicide Prevention Policy (dated 07.2011) required ten (10) minute checks. Both policies were provided during the onsite visit. When asked if one policy superseded the other, the response was "we typically go with what medical says". This practice is not in compliance with the Minimum Standards. Additionally, noncompliance is noted in the jail suicide prevention plan provided because it did not include all criteria listed in the current edition of the Minimum Standards.

Recommendation: Revise the jail manual to comply with the current Minimum Standards. All internal policies developed should be in the approved jail manual that is reviewed and signed by the county sheriff and jail administrator. This manual supersedes any other directives used at the facility. Notably, the jail administration is in the process of reviewing and re-writing the jail manual. Jail officials are hopeful the new policy and procedural manual will be complete and effective early Spring 2012. Also of note, Sheriff Doak signed an order in 2011 directing all top bunks in the jail be dismantled and laced on the floor to prevent future occurrences of inmates falling from a top bunk.

5120:1-8-18 Staff Training

Training records show jail staff were trained for emergency situations, which includes AED & CPR training in 2010 and 2011. According to records reviewed, staff performed CPR as soon as the inmates were found. EMS services were summoned in a timely manner.

Many of the training records for calendar year 2010 were not available at the time of the site visits. The records were mistakenly destroyed. Minimum Standards require maintenance of annual in-service training records. At the time of the site visits, from records available, the 2011 in-service training for jail staff totaled 17 hours. Jail staff did complete suicide prevention and AED/CPR training in 2011.

Jail training policies provided were inconsistent with the Minimum Standards regarding the number of hours required annually and by position.

The jail administrator is qualified to run the county jail and his training records meet compliance with the Minimum Standards.

Recommendation: Develop and implement a new system to maintain training records electronically, including sign in sheets and lesson plans so they can be readily accessible. Update jail training policies to reflect the number of annual training hours required by the Minimum Standards for all jail staff.

Summary:

The Division of Parole and Community Services remains committed to providing technical assistance upon request to assist jail officials in maintaining compliance with the Minimum Standards for Jails in Ohio. We believe the actions recommended in this review will provide a framework for compliance with the deficient standards. The Division will follow up with an onsite jail inspection within six months to ensure corrective action is taken.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory J. Dann', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Gregory J. Dann, State Jail Inspector
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