



TECHNICAL UPDATE

Volume 29 Number 3 | January 21, 2025

JAIL INTAKE & SUICIDE PREVENTION GUIDELINES

Due to exposure for jail-related death claims, it is important to remember a few basic guidelines regarding jail intake and suicide prevention.

MINIMUM RECOMMENDED RULES ON JAIL INTAKE

- Always remain calm and courteous.
- If apparent alcohol and/or drug usage is present, or if detainee is bruised, battered or bleeding, complete a fit for confinement medical/mental exam before accepting detainee into the jail.
- Always conduct a pat-down even if the delivering officer may have already completed one.
- Always conduct a written medical and psychological screen prior to lockup.
- Never permit a detainee to have access to keys, weapons, drugs, property room, or other dangerous items.
- Never admit a detainee without proper paperwork showing a criminal charge.
- Never leave a detainee alone before completing a full screening.

SUICIDE PREVENTION PRINCIPLES

- Strict compliance with screening procedures and facility safety standards along with proper monitoring practices is the best prevention against detectable risk factors for suicide.
- All verbal threats of self-harm or suicide are to be taken seriously, and must be followed up with a screening interview or evaluation by trained staff using a medically accepted screening tool that is recorded. (No exceptions.)
- If the screening evaluation indicates a high risk of suicidal behavior, a follow-up evaluation by the designated medical officer should be scheduled with sufficient urgency in order to prevent imminent risk to life or limb.

SUICIDE PREVENTION AUTHORITY AND LIMITS

- If staff has reasonable belief that another person is about to attempt suicide or to inflict serious bodily injury upon himself, that staff may use reasonable and appropriate physical force to prevent the intended result. C.R.S 18-1-703
- Failure to do so may result in an intentional negligence claim under common law.
- Excessive restraint may result in a "cruel and unusual punishment" violation.
- Failure to monitor restraint conditions may result in a "due process" violation.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION FOR JAIL STAFF

An essential component of effective risk management in jail intake and suicide prevention is ensuring all staff receive comprehensive training and ongoing education. Jail staff should be trained to recognize signs of mental distress, substance abuse, or suicidal behavior and understand the appropriate protocols to follow in such cases. Role-specific training should also include de-escalation techniques, proper restraint procedures, and the use of medically approved screening tools. Regular drills and scenario-based exercises can help reinforce these skills and ensure that staff are prepared to respond effectively in critical situations. Additionally, staying informed about evolving legal standards and best practices is vital for maintaining a safe and compliant facility.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

Sheriff deputies should be vigilant in intake and suicide prevention for the inmates entrusted to their care. Policies and procedures must be developed, and staff must be trained in the implementation and use with strict enforcement. For more information on policies and training, please contact CTSI Loss Control at (303) 861-0507.