

GENERAL ORDER XXXII

SUBJECT: Suicide Screening & Attempted Suicide

EFFECTIVE DATE: 10-29-07 **REVIEW DATE:** 01-13-12

NOTE: This rule or regulation is for internal use only and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

PURPOSE: To lessen the opportunities of any inmate committing suicide or attempting such an act while confined and to render necessary medical treatment when an inmate incurs a self inflicted wound or injury.

I. Screening & General Provisions

- A. All subjects that following booking are intended to be held in this department's cells or transferred to another law enforcement agency will be subject to a suicide screening. Those subjects that will be released following booking are not subject to the screening.
- B. When an inmate is identified as a potential suicide risk, (e.g., overt attempts to commit suicide, statements made by the inmate, information received from family members, etc.), the Chief of Police will be notified.
- C. The Chief of Police or his designate will make a decision to either immediately transfer the subject to a mental health facility for a 96 hour emergency mental health commitment; to transfer to another law enforcement agency; to retain the subject in the department facilities under a suicide watch; or to release the subject to a family member or guardian.
- D. The mental health facility, county or other agency taking custody of the inmate will be informed of the potential suicide determination.
- E. Each officer is responsible for the detection and prevention of suicides and is further responsible for notifying their immediate supervisor that they have reason to believe that a particular inmate is a suicide risk.

- F. Each officer will routinely observe inmates during periods of personal contact for evidence of depression, despondency or expressions of intent to commit suicide. Close observation will be maintained over those inmates who display such tendencies. Whenever such evidence is detected, it will be called to the attention of the Chief or his designate. Once this information is received a decision to contact mental health personnel should be made to perform the appropriate follow up. A report will be prepared detailing the suicide risk with copies forwarded to the inmate's file.
- G. Holidays such as Thanksgiving and Christmas are times when inmates may become depressed. Officers should watch for signs of depression, despondency, and expressions, which might indicate that an inmate may attempt to inflict bodily harm against them-selves.
- H. If possible all holding cells should be equipped with video monitoring. All recordings should be kept for a minimum of 48 hours. Shift supervisors are responsible for reviewing the recordings from his or her watch. If there are unusual activities or the activities listed below, the recording shall be maintained for a minimum of five years.
 - 1. The inmate is injured (either causing the injury to himself or is injured by another).
 - 2. The inmate causes injury to others, including detention staff.
 - 3. The inmate causes damage to property.
 - 4. The inmate threatens to sue or complains of injury to himself.
- I. All officers will be certified in CPR and First Aid.
- J. Emergency kits should be readily available to detention officers that contain: an appropriate cutting tool, gloves, CPR mask and first aid kit/supplies.

II. **Suicide Watch – Management Conditions**

- A. If the Chief (designate) determines it necessary, for the protection of the inmate, a special watch will be initiated. The Chief will create an observation form establishing the special management conditions to be observed and notify the watch commander. The conditions shall address the following:
 - 1. The inmate will be housed in one of the cells where heightened observation can be maintained.

2. That an inspection of the inmate's welfare is made as close to every fifteen (15) minutes as possible and recorded on the daily activity log.
 3. Whether a paper gown/suicide preventive clothing is to be issued instead of a jumpsuit/normal attire. Inmates will not be held naked.
 4. Any personal clothing the inmate may retain.
 5. What bedding/linen the inmate will be issued.
 6. What personal property, if any, the inmate may retain.
 7. Access to a razor.
 8. The inmate will not have access to telephones, exercise, family or ministerial visitation until cleared by clinic staff.
 9. Other special management conditions necessary to increase the safety of the inmate.
- B. Copies of the observation form will be forwarded to the on-duty detention officers and to the subject's case file.
- C. A qualified mental health practitioner should be contacted to interview and evaluate the inmate.
- D. The special observation (including suicide monitoring and 15-minute checks) will continue until a competent medical authority releases the inmate to normal observation procedures (30-minute checks).
- E. Any inmate required to be dressed in a paper gown will be changed into a jump suit and escorted for movement within the facility, (e.g., medical clinic). The inmate will be placed back into a paper gown upon return to his/her cell.

III. **Suicide Prevention Procedures**

- A. Inmates who are identified by their actions, comments or information from an outside source as being potentially suicidal will be placed in cells where heightened observation may be maintained.
- B. All items such as belts, shoelaces, or other articles of attire (coats, scarves, etc.), should be removed.
1. Paper gown/suicide preventive clothing should be utilized.

2. An in person inspection of the inmate's welfare is made as close to every 15 minutes as possible and recorded on the daily activity log.

IV. **Suicide Attempts**

- A. Upon discovery of an inmate who has attempted suicide, the officer will notify dispatch. Dispatch will in turn notify the emergency medical services and other available personnel of the suicide attempt in order that immediate assistance may be provided. The officer may request the assistance of inmates housed in the unit to render immediate assistance until staff help arrives. For example, in the event the suicide attempt is made by hanging, inmates located within the unit can be instructed to elevate the hanging inmate to remove pressure from his/her throat. Whenever possible, the assisting inmates should be directed to untie the noose and place the victim on the floor pending the arrival of staff.
- B. The area where the suicide or attempt suicide occurred will be treated as a crime scene and an officer detailed to safeguard the scene.
- C. Investigators will be called to process the scene.
- D. An outside agency must investigate all in-custody deaths.
- A. This policy is issued by the authority of the Chief of Police. Any policy additions, deviations or revisions shall be made only at the direction of the Chief of Police.

By Authority of:

Charles Brotherton, Jr., Chief of Police