



# CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

## NO. 9-2008 December 8, 2008

**TO:** SHERIFFS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION, JAIL ADMINISTRATORS, POLICE CHIEFS

**RE:** Need for Family, Friends, and Inmates to Report Knowledge of Inmates Threatening Self Harm or Suicide

**This Chairman's Memorandum is a reissue of No. 22-2001 issued October 2, 2001 and No. 4-1998 issued April 1, 1998**

The Correction Medical Review Board continues to review a number of suicide deaths under circumstances wherein the deceased has revealed to someone that he or she may attempt to commit suicide. In every case this information was not reported to jail officials other than jail staff. This evidence has been found in telephone calls that inmates have made, in their letters to friends or family members, during visits, and in reported conversations between inmates.

Commission research has shown that inmates in temporary mental health crisis may act impulsively in a suicidal manner even though they are not necessarily determined to commit suicide. Intervention allows time for the crisis to pass.

If information regarding suicidal speech or behavior is made known to jail officials, they can refer the inmate to mental health staff for evaluation, and place the inmate on constant supervision until mental health staff can intervene.

The following are events and situations that have triggered suicidal thoughts and/or behavior among inmates:

- Holidays and birthdays in jail
- First time in custody
- Fear associated with imminent sentencing to state prison
- Family and personal relationship problems
- Gang activity
- Drug and alcohol withdrawal

New York State Commission of Correction  
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Thomas A. Beilein, Chairman

Daniel L. Stewart, Commissioner  
Frances T. Sullivan, Commissioner

Through proactive work by the state's Sheriffs and Jail Administrators, our correction officers, police officers, medical staff, and mental health clinicians, the number of completed suicides in New York State jails and lockups has begun to dramatically decrease. By providing proper suicide prevention, training, inmate supervision, and mental health care, we can continue to decrease the number of completed suicides and help make our jails and lockups the safest possible.

The Commission of Correction and its Medical Review Board recommend that the enclosed flyer be posted in jail lobbies, in visitation rooms, in inmate housing areas, in the booking area, interview room and any other area of your facility where inmates or visitors are permitted. Copying this poster on colored paper would also attract attention. A Spanish version has been included. This information should also be included in your inmate handbook

Questions and comments may be directed to Peggy Loffredo, Field Supervisor Forensic Medical Unit; Christopher Ost, Forensic Medical Unit or to the Field Supervisor in charge of the Regional Unit serving your facility.



Thomas A. Beilein, Chairman

\_\_\_\_\_ County  
Correctional Facility

**PLEASE READ THIS IMPORTANT  
INFORMATION**

**For  
Family Members, Visitors, &  
Inmates**

If an inmate informs you directly that he or she is thinking of self harm, or suicide, in any letters, telephone calls, during a visit, during any conversation, or if you indirectly "overhear" an inmate talking of suicide, PLEASE notify jail staff immediately. Jail staff can have the inmate evaluated to determine what assistance is needed for him/her to deal with the specific problem.

**YOUR INFORMATION CAN SAVE  
SOMEONE'S LIFE**

Institución Correccional  
del Condado \_\_\_\_\_

**FAVOR DE LEER ESTA**  
**INFORMACIÓN IMPORTANTE**

Para  
Los Miembros de la Familia, Visitantes y  
Reclusos

Si un recluso le informa directamente que él o ella está pensando en hacerse daño a sí mismo o suicidarse en cualquier carta, llamada telefónica, durante una visita, durante cualquier conversación o si "alcanza a oír" indirectamente a un recluso hablar del suicidio, **POR FAVOR** notifíquelo al personal de la cárcel inmediatamente. El personal de la cárcel puede someter al recluso a una evaluación para determinar el tipo de ayuda que se necesita para que él/ella pueda bregar con el problema específico.

**SU INFORMACIÓN PUEDE SALVAR**  
**LA VIDA DE ALGUIEN**