



# CHAIRMAN'S MEMORANDUM

## NO. 4-98

April 1, 1998

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**TO: SHERIFFS, JAIL ADMINISTRATORS, COMMISSIONERS OF CORRECTION,  
MEDICAL COORDINATORS**

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

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The Correction Medical Review Board has reviewed an increasing number of suicide deaths under circumstances wherein the deceased told someone that he or she may attempt or commit suicide. In every case this was not reported to jail officials. This evidence has been found in telephone calls that inmates have made, in their letters to friends or family members and in reported conversation between inmates.

Commission research has shown that inmates in temporary mental health crises 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 increased supervision until mental health staff can intervene.

The Commission of Correction and its Medical Review Board recommend that the enclosed flyer be posted in jail lobbies, in visiting rooms, in inmate housing areas, in the booking area, interview rooms and any other area of your facility where inmates or visitors are permitted. Copying this poster on colored paper would also attract attention. You might want to have it translated into Spanish if needed.

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New York State Commission of Correction  
4 Tower Place  
Albany, New York 12203-3702  
(518) 485-2346

Alan J. Croce, Chairman/Commissioner  
Thomas J. Goldrick, Commissioner  
Patricia R. Tappan, Commissioner

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

Birthdays in jail  
First time in custody  
Fear associated with imminent sentencing to state prison.  
Personal relationship problems  
Gang activity  
Diagnosis of HIV/AIDS

If you need assistance in using this poster or have any other questions regarding this information please contact Bill Gaunay of our Forensic Medical Unit staff at 518-485-2482.

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Alan J. Croce  
Chairman/Commissioner

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