

Chasidy Grantham  
Chelby Goodwin

### Correctional Health

**Question:** In the incarcerated population, how can inmate suicides be prevented while reducing the costs associated with suicide watches to improve general correctional health?

**Summary:**

The incarceration process has been shown to elevate the likelihood of suicidal behavior due to accompanying stressors such as loss of autonomy and freedom, reduced social (family and friends) and financial support, substance withdrawal, and feelings of hopelessness, shame, and embarrassment (Dixon, Ertl, Leavitt, Sheats, Fowler, Jack, 2020). According to Suicide Prevention in Correctional Settings: Current Standards and Recommendations for Research, Prevention, and Training, implementing prevention programs, instead of intervening after a suicide is attempted is key to decreasing the occurrence of suicide in correctional facilities. An example of a prevention intervention is performing a thorough intake screening of inmates when they enter a correctional facility, regardless of reason for arrest (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). This tool addresses common risk factors of suicide, such as their personal history of any suicidal ideation or behavior (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). In addition to using this assessment, inmates should also be assessed following major events such as court proceedings and transfers to different facilities (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). A thorough screening and assessment of inmates costs the correctional establishment no extra charges and provides better care for the individual. Research shows that housing assignments, such as isolation and segregation, are directly linked to an increased risk of inmate suicide (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). Instead of using these isolation techniques for disciplinary actions, the principle of “least restrictive environment” should be considered (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). There is a “balance of potential consequences of segregation with the inmate’s level of indicated distress” (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017). This action of avoiding segregation does not cost the facility anything and it also maximizes social interaction for the inmate to prevent suicidal thinking or attempts.

**Conclusion:**

Suicide is the leading cause of death in local jails, and data from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) showed that “from 2013 to 2014, the number of suicides in state prisons increased by 30%, and the number of suicides in local jails increased by 13%, reaching 50 suicides per 100,000 jail population” (Choi, DiNitto, Marti, 2019). The increasing numbers of suicides throughout prisons in the United States should encourage health care workers and correctional officers to improve care and all individuals who report suicidal ideation should have access to treatment. After numerous research and case studies, it has been shown that there are ways to prevent suicide in incarcerated individuals while also reducing the costs associated with suicide watches. Encouraging social interaction instead of isolation and performing in-depth mental health assessments on those who are brought to correctional facilities has been proven to decrease the number of suicides/ suicide attempts in prisons and jails, therefore improving general correctional health (Cramer, Wechsler, Miller, Yenne, 2017).

**Work Cited:**

**Primary Article:**

Cramer, R. J., Wechsler, H. J., Miller, S. L., & Yenne, E. (2017). Suicide Prevention in Correctional Settings: Current Standards and Recommendations for Research, Prevention, and Training. *Journal of Correctional Health Care : The Official Journal of the National Commission on Correctional Health Care*, 23(3), 313–328.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1078345817716162>

**Secondary Article:**

Dixon, K., Ertl, A., Ertl, C., Leavitt, R., Prevention, D., Sheats, K., . . . A., T. (2020, July 01). Suicides among incarcerated persons in 18 u.s. STATES: Findings from the National

violent Death reporting SYSTEM, 2003–2014. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1177/1078345820939512>

**Tertiary Article:**

Choi, N., Choi, C., DiNitto, D., Marti, C., J, A., P, A., . . . B., W. (2019, January 01). Suicide decedents in correctional settings: Mental health treatment for suicidal ideation, plans, and/or attempts. Retrieved February 16, 2021, from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1177/1078345818819500>