



U.S. Department of Justice

Office of the Deputy Attorney General

The Deputy Attorney General

Washington, D.C. 20530

December 3, 2024

MEMORANDUM FOR

DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF PRISONS
DIRECTOR, UNITED STATES MARSHALS SERVICE
ALL UNITED STATES MARSHALS
DIRECTOR, EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF UNITED STATES
ATTORNEYS
ALL UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS
DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
ADMINISTRATOR, UNITED STATES DRUG ENFORCEMENT
ADMINISTRATION
DIRECTOR, BUREAU OF ALCOHOL, TOBACCO,
FIREARMS, AND EXPLOSIVES
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, CIVIL RIGHTS
DIVISION
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL,
CIVIL DIVISION
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL,
CRIMINAL DIVISION
ACTING ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, OFFICE OF
JUSTICE PROGRAMS
ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL, JUSTICE
MANAGEMENT DIVISION
PRINCIPAL DEPUTY ASSISTANT ATTORNEY GENERAL,
OFFICE OF LEGAL POLICY

FROM:

THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL

SUBJECT:

Actions to Reduce the Risk of Suicide by Adults in the Department's
Custody and Advance a Culture of Safety in Our Institutions¹

The Department of Justice is committed to protecting the health and safety of every individual in our custody—including, to the greatest degree possible, from suicide or other self-directed violence. We must strive to avert every preventable death of an individual in the Department's custody.

¹ The document provides internal guidance only and does not create any rights enforceable in law or otherwise.

In pursuit of that goal, individuals who are detained or incarcerated in the custody of the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) or Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) should receive timely mental health assessments and ready access to potentially life-saving mental health services. USMS and FBOP should implement effective policies that reduce incidents of self-directed violence and that promote a culture of wellness in FBOP institutions and those that contract with the USMS for pretrial detention. We must also acknowledge the unsustainable mental health challenges experienced by correctional personnel and the impact that has on the Department's capacity to provide an appropriate level of care. Therefore, the Department is dedicated to adopting a multifaceted approach to reducing the risk of suicide and self-directed violence among those in its care and custody, as well as among those who work in its custodial institutions.

At my direction, a working group of experts from across the Department reviewed and assessed the current state of policies and practices at FBOP and USMS-contracted facilities. In addition to reviewing research, analyzing data, and receiving briefings from Department components, the group convened listening sessions with external experts and partners. Those included sessions with researchers who specialize in suicide prevention in custodial settings; representatives from federal, state, and local law enforcement from across government; representatives from the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts; representatives from federal defender and national defense counsel organizations; and suicide prevention and prison reform organizations that advocate on behalf of individuals in the Department's custody. The review also included consultation with the Office of Inspector General, which recently completed an evaluation of inmate deaths at FBOP institutions and has identified institutional safety and security as a critical Department challenge. Finally, individuals from leadership offices and FBOP visited FBOP and USMS-contracted facilities to speak directly with Department personnel and adults in custody to assess the challenges implementing current policy addressing suicide risks and to identify policy gaps.

Based on the working group's exhaustive review of existing policies, research, and stakeholder input and the recommendations that emerged therefrom, I am announcing the following policy and protocol reforms across the following five objectives and directing over 50 specific actions by USMS and FBOP, as well as the U.S. Attorney community, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, and Justice Management Division, to advance these priorities in the short, medium, and long term.

- Objective 1 – Focusing prevention efforts through enhanced information sharing
- Objective 2 – Improving access and delivery of suicide prevention-related care
- Objective 3 – Promoting a healthy culture in facilities for employees and adults in custody
- Objective 4 – Reducing opportunity for and lethality of incidents of self-directed violence
- Objective 5 – Using data and research to refine suicide prevention policies

While implementation of these objectives will affect some components more than others, our shared goal is to reduce the risk of suicide by individuals in the Department's custody and to improve institutional conditions for all who live and work there. We all stand to benefit from the safety and protection of adults in custody, as well as the enhanced well-being and preparedness of our staff. With your engagement, I am confident that the Department can achieve these important goals.