



**MULTNOMAH COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFICE**
Sheriff Nicole Morrissey O'Donnell

**Community letter from Multnomah County Sheriff Nicole Morrissey O'Donnell on recent deaths in custody
Aug. 3, 2023**

My commitment remains firm, to identify and implement solutions to prevent deaths in our jails and achieve our collective health and safety goals. You can read my initial community letter published on July 21, [here](#).

These deaths are extremely distressing and impact an individual's family, other adults in custody, victim(s), and staff working in our corrections facilities.

When a traumatic event occurs in our community, supportive resources are provided to those impacted. I value the importance of these services and I have coordinated similar supportive resources for our adults in custody, as well as our staff who invest in the care of our population, who may be affected by a loss.

Recently, the Multnomah County Medical Examiner finalized their investigations into the manner of death of several individuals, dating back to 2022. There were no deaths in custody in both 2021 and 2020. In the interest of transparency, I am sharing the findings with the community.

Name: Jess Rivas-Castillo Age: 36 Date of death: May 9, 2022 Manner of death: Accident, acute cocaine poisoning
Name: Stephen Wayne Murphy Age: 63 Date of death: July 26, 2022 Manner of death: Natural
Name: Kenneth L. Hurley Age: 55 Date of death: November 19, 2022 Manner of death: Natural
Name: Donovan Anthony Wood Age: 26 Date of death: May 2, 2023 Manner of death: Suicide
Name: Martin Todd Franklin Age: 58 Date of death: June 16, 2023 Manner of death: Suicide

Medical Examiner reports are not yet finalized for:

- George Allen Walker. Age: 31. Date of death: [May 13, 2023](#)
- Josiah G. Pierce. Age: 31. Date of death: [July 19, 2023](#)
- Kashi Abram Harmon. Age: 53. Date of death: [June 22, 2023](#)
- Clemente Pineda. Age: 36. Date of death: [August 1, 2023](#)

As my team and I continue to engage our local, state and federal partners in discussions for solutions, we are implementing a number of short, mid and long-term strategies. These strategies are in addition to the medical, mental health and addiction services and resources our corrections health partners already provide.

Short term strategies already implemented:

- Requested an assessment from subject matter experts of our correctional facilities and their operations from the National Institute of Corrections.
- Modified physical characteristics of the facilities to increase safety.
- Expanded Narcan availability for more rapid deployment in the event of an overdose in the jail.
- Increasing scope of search criteria for contraband.
- Expanding law enforcement resources to investigate and hold accountable individuals who introduce contraband in our jails.
- Continuing ongoing partnerships with the Multnomah County Corrections Health Department, the Multnomah County Auditor's Office and Disability Rights Oregon.

Mid and long-term strategies:

- Implementing technology solutions, such as providing tablets to all adults in custody. Tablets will provide AICs with educational courses, vocational opportunities, rehabilitative programming, and communication with family and friends and electronic mail.
- Evaluating workforce models to best serve the needs of adults in custody and staff placement.

In the four Medical Examiner's reports yet to be finalized, toxicology results are still pending. Early indications suggest some of the deaths may be drug-related.

Outside of prisons and jails, drug overdose deaths are at historic levels, and the trend of drug use, primarily driven by opioids, including counterfeit fentanyl, is reflected in corrections environments. Synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, are dramatically more potent, more addictive and deadlier than heroin or other drugs. In June 2023, the [Multnomah County Health Department](#) reported that overdose deaths from synthetic opioids have increased by 533% in Multnomah County from 2018 to 2022. They continued stating that drug overdose deaths, both unintentional and intentional, have had a sharp upward national trend over the past five to six years.

Contraband, which includes drugs, weapons or prohibited items, is a constant challenge for all corrections facilities. [According to the most recent data](#) from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in county jails across the country, overdose deaths increased by over 200% from 2001 to 2018, with most of the deaths occurring in 2018. We expect future data to show a continuation of this tragic trend.

Swallowing and hiding drugs in the body are desperate actions some people are willing to make to fuel addiction. These smuggling practices significantly reduce the chance of detection in jail, even with our use of body scanning equipment and technology.

Our corrections health care partners, the Multnomah County Corrections Health Department, provides exceptional care to our adults in custody, and there have been ongoing, frequent discussions involving mental health and addiction services. Collectively, we are always looking for ways to provide better care and access.

To combat contraband, we have numerous security measures in place, and we're constantly adapting our strategies. Like all corrections facilities, our measures are continuously being tested or subverted. If we receive information that there is contraband entering our facilities, we use all available resources to prevent this from happening, conduct a thorough investigation and prosecute those responsible.

My office is committed to taking responsive and proactive measures to identify and implement new strategies and methods to ensure health and safety in our jails, for adults in custody, as well as our employees. We are sharing information and learning from other public safety and public health partners who have or are experiencing similar circumstances, and we are engaging resources through the Oregon State Sheriff's Association and the National Institute of Corrections.

The Medical Examiner's Office is continuing to investigate the recent deaths in custody and their findings will be made public at a future date.

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