



## **Judge Randa Orders Proper Administration Of Medicine At Taycheedah Women's Prison**

### **Dysfunctional System Puts Lives At Risk**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 24, 2009

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MILWAUKEE – U.S. District Court Judge Rudolph T. Randa today ordered correctional officials in Wisconsin to take immediate steps toward fixing the error-prone system of ordering and administering medication to prisoners at the Taycheedah Correctional Institution, the state's largest women's prison.

In granting a motion for preliminary injunction filed by the American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Wisconsin and the law firm Jenner & Block in January, Judge Randa ordered that correctional officials in Wisconsin begin using licensed practical nurses or medical personnel with equivalent training to distribute and administer prescriptions. Randa also ordered that correctional officials begin to process medication orders and dispense and administer prescribed medications in a timely, accurate and reliable manner.

"Today's order will bring immediate and essential relief to prisoners at Taycheedah who have suffered for too long as a result of a dysfunctional medication system that jeopardizes their health and safety," said Gabriel Eber, staff attorney with the ACLU National Prison Project. "The state will no longer have the option of ignoring the dangers and substantial risks posed by the current system of ordering and administering medications."

According to the ACLU's motion, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, women at Taycheedah in need of medicine for infections, life-threatening chronic diseases, pain and other serious medical conditions are forced to wait weeks on end and, if and when their medications do arrive, they often are the wrong medications in the wrong doses.

At Taycheedah, most medications – including powerful psychiatric medications – are administered to prisoners by correctional officers with no medical training. As a result, prisoners frequently receive medications prescribed for other prisoners and overdoses of their own medications. Expert witnesses for both parties agree that this is a dangerous practice. Taycheedah is one of the few state prisons in the nation that does not require nurses or similarly trained medical personnel to administer prisoners' medications.

According to the motion, the failure of prison officials at Taycheedah to ensure that prisoners properly receive medication forces numerous women to endure unnecessary and prolonged illness, injury, pain and hospitalization, and all prisoners receiving medications are at a significant risk of harm and even death. The motion charged that prison officials have known for years that prisoners have been at significant risk, but despite knowing ways to reduce that risk have simply failed to take the actions necessary to do so.

"Judge Randa has taken a huge step toward alleviating the needless pain and suffering caused by Taycheedah's failed medication system," said Larry Dupuis, Legal Director for the ACLU of Wisconsin. "We hope the Department of Corrections will move quickly to comply with the judge's order and put an end to its unconstitutional medication practices."

The motion was filed as part of a 2006 class action lawsuit in which Taycheedah prisoners charge that grossly deficient medical and mental health care at Taycheedah endangers the lives of prisoners.

A copy of today's order is available online at:

[www.aclu.org/prison/medical/394561gl20090424.html](http://www.aclu.org/prison/medical/394561gl20090424.html)

A copy of the ACLU motion for preliminary injunction is available online at:

[www.aclu.org/prison/medical/384671gl20090123.html](http://www.aclu.org/prison/medical/384671gl20090123.html)

Additional information about the ACLU National Prison Project is available online at:

[www.aclu.org/prison](http://www.aclu.org/prison)

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