



ACLU Settles Lawsuit Charging Inadequate Care At Wisconsin Women's Prison

Dramatic Improvements in Medical and Mental Health Care Will Ensure Female Prisoners Receive Same Levels of Care As Men

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 20, 2010

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MILWAUKEE, WI – The American Civil Liberties Union, the ACLU of Wisconsin and the law firm Jenner and Block today filed papers seeking court approval of an agreement to settle a longstanding class-action lawsuit charging that grossly deficient medical and mental health care jeopardized the lives of female prisoners at the state's largest women's prison.

As part of the agreement, filed today in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Wisconsin, state officials have agreed to implement a number of significant structural improvements aimed at ensuring that constitutionally adequate levels of care are provided to all prisoners at the Taycheedah Correctional Institution (TCI), and that female prisoners receive the same levels of mental health care as the state's male prisoners.

"Today's settlement is a real victory for all female prisoners at TCI who will no longer have to suffer needlessly in a system that fails to comply with the requirements of the U.S. Constitution," said Gabriel Eber, staff attorney with the ACLU National Prison Project. "This settlement will lead to dramatic improvements in the quality of health care prisoners will receive."

Under terms of the settlement agreement, state correctional officials must hire a full-time medical director who will oversee all health care at TCI, be on-site five-days-a-week and be devoted to administration and patient care. State officials will also be required to hire a consultant charged with regularly monitoring the medical care being provided to prisoners, provide recommendations about how to improve care and analyze TCI's compliance with agreed-upon health care performance standards.

State officials must also complete construction by June 2012 of an off-site women's resource center that will accept prisoners from TCI who need inpatient-level psychiatric services. Construction of planned annexes at TCI which will provide space for out-of-cell therapeutic activities and group and individual therapy for prisoners with serious mental illnesses must also be completed by June 2012.

Additionally, state officials must make a number of improvements to ensure the safety and access to core programs and services of prisoners with disabilities, including providing prisoners with hearing impairments access to sign language interpreters, reading assistance and Braille

materials for prisoners with vision impairments and increased maintenance of paths, walkways and thoroughfares between buildings.

"The health care system at TCI has been in crisis for years and today's settlement agreement is a monumental step toward achieving much-needed improvements and accountability," said Larry Dupuis, Legal Director of the ACLU of Wisconsin. "The measures that will be put in place will have a positive impact not only on the prisoners at TCI but on the communities to which prisoners will return upon release."

The first-of-its-kind class action lawsuit was filed in 2006 by the ACLU on behalf of women prisoners at TCI. The lawsuit charged that the state prison system put the lives of women prisoners at risk through grossly deficient health care, provided far inferior mental health treatment as compared to men and failed to provide reasonable accommodations to allow prisoners with disabilities to access basic prison services.

The lawsuit sought reforms to the system so that constitutionally adequate care be made available. In April 2009, U.S. District Court Judge Rudolph T. Randa entered a preliminary injunction ordering that significant changes be made immediately to TCI's dangerous system of administering medications to prisoners.

The ACLU's lawsuit charged that the prison's health system violates the Constitution's Eighth Amendment prohibition on cruel and unusual punishment and that the mental health care system violated the Fourteenth Amendment guarantee of equal protection, because the women received mental health care far inferior to what male prisoners receive.

A copy of today's settlement agreement is available online at: www.aclu.org/prisoners-rights/flynn-et-al-v-doyle-et-al-settlement-agreement

The ACLU of Wisconsin has approximately 8,500 members who support its efforts to defend the civil liberties and civil rights of all Wisconsin residents. For more on the work of the ACLU of Wisconsin, visit our [webpage](#). You can also get news and opinion on civil liberties in Wisconsin on our [Cap City Liberty blog](#). Find us on [Facebook and Twitter at ACLUMadison and ACLUofWisconsin](#).

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