



COLLIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE

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MEDIA CONTACT

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For Immediate Release:

Sheriff Jim Skinner welcomes the grand jury's June 22 recommendation for Collin County to convene a work group of community leaders and members to look for lessons learned from Marvin Scott, III's tragic death on March 14 and solutions for the treatment of persons with mental illness who come into contact with the criminal-justice system. Sheriff Skinner looks forward to participating in the group.

Like sheriffs and other leaders across the country, Sheriff Skinner recognizes—and expects the work group will agree—that communities must care for persons with mental illness, behavioral-health issues, or an intellectual or developmental disability. Peace officers arrest some persons with mental illness on serious charges and bring them to the county jail. But peace officers also arrest some on low-level, non-violent, misdemeanor charges, and these persons should be diverted from jail where it is safe to do so. County jails are not generally mental-healthcare facilities, especially jails not closely associated with a county hospital. Communities need appropriate treatment facilities and an effective diversion system. This is a community-wide challenge. In Collin County, it will take multiple stakeholders to improve the care for the mentally ill, including enhancing the County's diversion system.

As to facilities, the County started planning for an expansion of the Collin County Detention Facility by late 2018ⁱ, and the plans should ultimately include a new jail infirmary with over 300 new beds for mental healthcare. Sheriff Skinner applauds the Commissioners Court's recent decision to explore accelerating the timetable to build the new infirmary.ⁱⁱ Although a larger jail infirmary will help with the treatment of persons who meet the criteria for confinement in a county jail, it will not necessarily help with beds for the treatment of persons suffering from mental illness who meet criteria for diversion from the county jail.

A community-based work group should be able to contribute valuable insight to these matters.

In the meantime, the Sheriff's Office is taking several measures in response to Marvin Scott's death:

- As Section 511.021, Gov't Code, requires, Sheriff Jim Skinner referred the matter of Marvin Scott, III's March 14 death in the Collin County Detention Facility to the Texas Rangers by the next morning.
- After reviewing evidence gathered in an internal-affairs investigation, in early April, Sheriff Jim Skinner terminated the employment of seven detention officers for violating policies governing the use of force and the restraint of inmates in Mr. Scott's death. An eighth detention officer resigned while under investigation. Sheriff Skinner is appealing the reinstatement of one officer's employment under the civil-service system.

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- Sheriff Jim Skinner, and members of the command staff, met with each shift of detention officers and deputy sheriffs and discussed the duties to care for inmates and the duty to intervene. They emphasized the principles in the Sheriff's June 4, 2020 directive on the duty to intervene to stop the use of excessive force.
- The Sheriff's Office is reviewing its policies regarding the use of force, use of restraints, and use of less-lethal force (including OC spray) in the county jail.
- Sheriff Jim Skinner further restricted the use of restraint beds and prohibited the use of spit masks, and his Office ordered four new SPAR restraint chairs for the jail. Once the chairs are in operation, the county jail will not use a restraint bed unless somehow medically indicated.
- The Sheriff's Office instituted a new requirement that at least one detention officer be designated as a safety officer to oversee each use of a restraint chair or bed and to pay special attention to the inmate's well-being.
- The Sheriff's Office reduced the number of, and standardized, the other restraint devices in the jail.
- Sheriff Jim Skinner contacted the National Sheriffs' Association for assistance in connection with this critical incident.
- With the help of the County's Dept. of Construction & Building Projects, the Sheriff's Office developed a plan to convert a detox cell in the county jail's Admissions area into a padded cell for the temporary holding of inmates harmful to themselves or others. The Texas Commission on Jail Standards approved the design in May. The County also recently engaged a contractor to for the conversion.
- The Sheriff's Office is arranging for an outside expert to provide interposition training to all staff to enhance their mindset and skill in meeting the duty to intervene. This will include training new instructors on our staff to help carry their skills forward. The training is scheduled to start in August.
- The Sheriff's Office is reviewing a possible program to send detention officers for specialized training with a local mental-health facility to enhance the staff's capability to care for persons arriving at the county jail with mental illness or in a crisis.
- Sheriff Jim Skinner formally requested the National Institute of Corrections—a component of the U.S. Dept. of Justice—for technical assistance and support. He asked that NIC's assistance and support include or address the Sheriff's Office's policies, procedures, training, and operations related to:
 - all aspects of its operation with respect to caring for persons with mental illness, behavioral-health challenges, or intellectual disability, including screening and admission, treatment, supervision, and housing;
 - use of force, the duty to intervene, restraints (including beds and chairs), including restraints in the infirmary setting;
 - the CCDF's physical plant and facilities for the care of inmates with mental illness, behavioral-health challenges, or intellectual disability;
 - the attitudes and culture of the detention staff, including with regard to caring for persons with mental illness, behavioral-health challenges, or intellectual disability, use of force, and restraints; and
 - the mental and emotional health and wellness of the detention officers and related staff.



The care and treatment of persons with mental illness, behavioral-health issues, or an intellectual or developmental disability is a community-wide challenge. Some persons with mental illness are charged with serious offenses and should be in custody in the county jail. The county jail needs an infirmary with sufficient mental-health beds, staff, training, and policies, for this purpose. But peace officers also arrest persons with mental illness on low-level, non-violent, misdemeanor charges, and these persons should be diverted from the jail when diversion is safe. A county needs mental-health beds and resources for these persons as well. In fact, a sufficient healthcare infrastructure is critical to a successful diversion program. A community-based work group should have valuable insight and be able to make important contributions to improving the County's care for persons with mental illness, including enhancing the diversion system. Again, Sheriff Jim Skinner looks forward to participating with the group.

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ⁱ See, e.g., [Collin County, RFQ No. 2019-021](#), Professional Services, Architectural, Adult Detention Center Assessment and Design Services (issued Nov. 6, 2018).

ⁱⁱ See [Collin County Commissioners Court Agenda, AI-50309](#), American Rescue Plan Funds, Administrative Services (June 7, 2021); [Capital Projects Feb. 2021](#),

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