

Disability Rights IOWA

Law Center for Protection and Advocacy™

September 17, 2018

Sheriff Dan Marx

Winneshiek County Sheriff's Office
400 Claiborne Drive
Decorah, IA 52101

emailed to: sheriff@co.winneshiek.ia.us

Dear Sheriff Marx:

Last week Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) conducted a monitoring visit to the Winneshiek County Jail. The purpose of our visit was to gain a better understanding of how you provide housing and services to inmates with mental illness and disabilities and to discuss suicide prevention in the context of a county jail setting. I met with you, your Jail Administrator Jeanne Sebastian, and your Chief Deputy Jeff Berns. I also toured your jail facility and spoke with you about the jail remodeling project you are pursuing.

Your assistance and cooperation allowed Disability Rights Iowa (DRI) to achieve a better understanding of the services you provide and the improvements the jail remodeling will have on safety and security. I greatly appreciated the insight you provided concerning systemic problems affecting mentally ill Iowans, including the need to improve access to acute care and coordination with a well-informed court, reducing the incidence of law enforcement transporting individual's long distances to access care, or travel from a care setting for court proceedings - a process that could be modernized.

After touring the facility, meeting with you and your staff, and reviewing the responses to our questions, DRI does not have any recommendations at this time.

DRI appreciates the efforts you have made and we wish you and your staff luck with the planned remodeling. As I mentioned during my visit I plan to release a publication later this year focused on suicides in Iowa's County Jails, and I also hope to bring a national expert to perform a training on the subject in early 2020. I will keep in touch with you on these efforts, and please don't hesitate to reach out in the future should you think DRI could be of assistance to you, or to an inmate with a disability or mental illness.

Sincerely,

Disability Rights IOWA



Whitney Driscoll
Staff Attorney

Our Mission: To defend and promote the human and legal rights of Iowans with disabilities.

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