



WINNESHIEK COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH

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May 11, 2022

Delbert Longley
State Department of Corrections
Jesse Parker Bldg
510 E. 12th St
Des Moines, IA 50319

Dear Mr. Longley,

The annual Winneshiek County Jail Tour was conducted on April 13, 2022 by Jeanne Sebastian, Jail Administrator and Sam Courtney, Assistant Jail Administrator. Winneshiek County Board of Health members present included: Jay Elsbernd, DVM; Janet Ryan, MD; and Mark Vick, County Board of Supervisor. Krista Vanden Brink, Winneshiek County Public Health Administrator and Recording Secretary was also present.

The addition of the safety cell is an asset to the jail. Members had the opportunity to visualize and feel walls of the safety cell to have a better understanding of the purpose. Jail staff were able to answer questions Board members had about the cell. The safety cell has been utilized several times.

Jail staff recognize that there are many challenges accessing mental health care services for inmates. It was shared that several inmates have had mental health challenges prior to being incarcerated and inmates would benefit from more mental health counseling opportunities provided through telehealth services. Mental health funding is reverting to the State of Iowa starting July 1, 2022 and local jail officials are concerned that the smaller counties may not receive funding to support inmate access or care by mental health professionals.

Individuals are products of their respective environments and jail staff have recognized the need for education about trauma-informed care. Staff would like to see additional jail diversion programs in place to help teach life skills to individuals. The jail staff completed required annual educational updates and seek additional training opportunities to provide better care to the inmates.

The Board of Health recognizes the importance of a good working environment and the ability to maintain a fully staffed employee roster. Board members were surprised to learn that correctional officers have high suicide, mortality, divorce and substance abuse rates. The Board appreciates the additional benefit of the Employee Assistance Program for staff to access as needed, especially for their own mental wellness.

The COVID-19 mitigation measures put in place by the jail staff kept the jail COVID-free. The Jail staff are to be commended for all they are doing to care for the inmates. There is respect between inmates and staff and the inmates needs are being met. The Jail staff continue to maintain a very clean jail environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jay Elsbernd". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jay" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Elsbernd".

Jay Elsbernd, DVM

Chair

Winneshiek County Board of Health

Cc: Winneshiek County Board of Supervisors
Jeanne Sebastian, Winneshiek County Jail Administrator
Dan Marx, Winneshiek County Sheriff
Jeff Burns, Winneshiek County Chief Deputy