

Psychology Epstein Reconstruction Responses

1. Single Cell Placement

A system has been put in place to ensure inmates are not single celled. A single cell report is completed during each shift by the Institution Duty Officer (IDO).

Psychology discusses the status of inmates who are at-risk for suicidality, their housing needs, as well as their needs for cellmates during staff meetings, department head meetings, SHU meetings, morning meetings, and close out meetings.

When inmates are placed on and off suicide watch, the Warden is notified verbally, regardless of the time of day. The Warden will then determine which suicide watch area a suicidal inmate will be housed and if they will be observed with an inmate companions or a staff member.

Psychology will verbally notify the Lieutenant when inmates are removed from suicide watch and indicate they will need to be placed with a cellmate (Providing direct communication and instructions). Cellmates will be recommended not only for SHU inmates being removed from suicide watch, but also for inmate returning to general population.

Once an inmate is removed from suicide watch, psychology staff will send an e-mail to the Executive Staff, IDO, and Lieutenants informing them the inmate is being removed from suicide watch and can return to a cell with a roommate. The e-mail will indicate the name of the staff member whom psychology verbally spoke with. This recommendation for a cellmate and conversation with the Lieutenant will also be documented in the Post Suicide Watch Report and placed in BEMR/PDS.

Psychology Services has eliminated the use of Psychological Observation to avoid any confusion as to the needs of inmates on a watch status.

3. Cellmate Assignments

Inmates with serious mental illness and those at-risk for suicidality are discussed during staff meetings, department head meetings, SHU meetings, morning meetings, and close out meetings. The Captain, Associate Wardens, Warden and Psychology discuss the inmate's needs. The Staff Attorney also assists when the inmate's attorney or court are concerned. Psychology Services will be more involved in making recommendations regarding the types of cellmates that inmates at-risk for suicidality should celled with. Psychology Services will take into consideration the suicide risk factors involved with a particular inmate and share their knowledge with Executive Staff.

4. Documentation Accuracy

Psychology will consider the information from more than one source when making decisions about suicide watch placement. Clinical judgment will be used to make determinations taking into consideration each person's self-report of a situation as they may be perceived differently.

The Chief Psychologist has spoken to all psychology staff members concerning proof reading all documents entered to reduce typos. Additionally, there is a second Staff Psychologist in the department now which will help reduce the workload on current psychologists, allowing for more time for documentation review.

The Chief Psychologist and Drug Abuse Coordinator counseled the Drug Treatment Specialist (DTS) concerning her documentation in the suicide watch log book. There was no ill-intent on the part of the DTS as all log books were maintained, the original log book written by the officer and the one documented by the DTS. The DTS indicated a desire to assist the officer as he had written in the wrong log book; he wrote in the inmate companion log book rather than the staff log book. However, she was informed that this is not her role and she is not to document for anyone else observing an inmate on suicide watch. In the future, only the staff member watching the inmate on suicide watch will document in the suicide watch log book. Log books are now being closely monitored on a daily basis by the Chief Psychologist.

The Psychology Department has eliminated Psychology Observation at MCC-NY. Both Staff and the Lieutenants will receive additional training on when they are required to complete rounds and sign Suicide Watch log books. With regard to suicide watch log books signatures, a unit officer will be rounding the suicide area hourly and signing the suicide watch log books. Additionally, Lieutenants need to be signing the book for each shift (MW, DW, EW) like they do for the regular housing units. The Unit 2 Officer will sign the books hourly in the SW area when they are doing their Unit 2 rounds. Psychology staff will check the books daily when they interview the inmates on suicide watch. If it is noted hourly rounds are not being conducted by the Unit Officer and/or the Lieutenant's are not rounding and signing the books each shift, the Captain will be notified immediately and will enforce accountability.

6. Direct Observation

The Psychology Department has eliminated Psychology Observation at MCC-NY. Inmates on Suicide Watch will not go to legal visits unless prior authorization is approved by Psychology, Lieutenants, and the Captain. Legal visits will only be provided under special circumstances when an inmate is on suicide watch precautions. When an inmate is on the legal visit, there will be continuous observation by a staff member who will record their observations in the suicide watch log book every 15 minutes.

7. Follow Up

Staff will again be trained that when they have concerns for an inmate's mental health, they need to make verbal contact with either Psychology Staff or a Lieutenant. If Psychology is not in the institution, an inmate will be placed on suicide watch, and the on-call psychologist and Warden will be notified.

All Psychology Staff added a response to their incoming emails. This automatic replay states, "If you are emailing about an inmate that may be at risk for suicide or self-harm, this is an emergency situation. Please make sure that you make contact (verbally) to Psychology Staff or the on-call psychologist. Please ensure to maintain constant visual observation of the inmate until formal steps can be taken to ensure his safety pending a formal assessment by a Psychologist."

The Psychology Department will use PSY ALERT codes more frequently with high profile cases and with inmates with a history or charge of a sex offense. The PSY ALERT code will be applied more immediately and not just when an inmate is about to leave the institution. If an inmate is moved in and out of our institution for court, etc., the inmate will be assessed more immediately prior to being released to a unit.

R&D staff will be reminded of the Marshall and Court alert notices. Psychology Staff need to be notified immediately if there are suicidal concerns noted by the Courts. If Psychology is not in the institution, an inmate that enters the institution with an alert notice will be placed on suicide watch, and the on-call psychologist and Warden will be notified. These inmates will receive a suicide risk assessment by a psychologist before being released to the general population.

8. Inmate Accountability and Assignment Accuracy

With regard to the accuracy and accountability of inmates placed on suicide watch status in the hospital area, Psychology Services now runs a daily Sentry roster of all the inmates on suicide watch in the hospital area. The roster is examined to ensure that the inmates placed on suicide watch in a suicide watch cell are keyed into SENTRY with the correct cell assignment noted. The Associate Warden, Programs, is notified if there are any inconsistencies. Moreover, the four suicide watch cells now all have Sentry Assignments of H01-001L – H01-004L.

11. Post Orders & SHU Training

The Suicide Watch Post Orders will be located in the Lieutenant's Office with a quarterly sign-in sheet. All staff members assigned to a suicide watch post will be responsible for signing the post orders prior to performing the staff suicide watch.

With regard to SHU Suicide Prevention training, this will continue to be carried out on a quarterly basis. However, the sign-in sheets for this training will be examined by the SHU Lieutenant for accuracy. If a staff member who is assigned to SHU misses the training, they will need to see the Chief Psychologist and schedule a time to receive a make-up session for the SHU Suicide Prevention Training.

12. Staffing

The current Drug Abuse Coordinator position is currently a shared position. The Warden is currently working on re-establishing the Drug Abuse Coordinator position as a full-time position to provide the Psychology Department with an additional supervisory psychologist to perform critical clinical services. At the current time, the position has been approved and it has been sent to the region to formally announce.

13. Sex Offense Risk Factors

The Chief Psychologist or her representative will continue to be present at all Executive Staff Meetings, Department Head Meetings, and SHU meetings. During these meetings, the Chief Psychologist will offer feedback regarding the treatment and management of sex offender inmates. Additionally, the Chief Psychologist will continue to educate all staff during IF and AT, about the sex offender specific risk factors and suicidality.