



COMMISSIONERS COURT  
COMMUNICATION

COURT ORDER NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_  
PAGE 1 OF 19  
DATE: 11/12/2024

**SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF CORRECTIONS REPORT  
FROM THE TARRANT COUNTY'S SHERRIFF'S OFFICE**

The Tarrant County Sherriff's Office will update the Commissioners Court on the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) Report.

SUBMITTED BY	Sheriff	PREPARED BY:  APPROVED BY:	Miriam Garza  Kandice Boutte
--------------	---------	----------------------------------	------------------------------------

U.S. Department of Justice  
National Institute of Corrections

# **Critical Incident Response Team SITE VISIT REPORT**

**TARRANT COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE**

**Fort Worth, Texas  
May 13-15, 2024**



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

In **February 2024**, Sheriff Bill Waybourn **invited** the U.S. Department of Justice to inspect the Tarrant County Jail.

The U.S. Dept of Justice sent the Chief of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) and the Falcon Group to inspect the TCJ **May 13-15, 2024**.

The inspection of the facility was comprised of several virtual meetings, a thorough review of documents and three days of on-site tours and interviews.

The DOJ/NIC visit took place during a “no-notice” jail inspection by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards in which there were NO demerits against detention.



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Who is the Falcon Group?

They are a consulting and management firm that evaluates mental health services in jails and prisons for the 1.5 million incarcerated Americans.

U.S. Dept of Justice chose the Falcon Group for their expertise and decades of experience inspecting jails and prisons across the country.

Grounded on proven methodology, they provide expertise to government and community leaders for the advancement of stronger, safer, and more innovative programs.

The Chief of the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), an arm of the DOJ, led the on-site team of experts in the field of jail management, correctional medical and mental health issues.

**Very common practice for an agency to contract with experts in the field**



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Strengths/Validations

- Commended for “Requesting and expediting this review so shortly after three deaths in custody” and gave us the option to reschedule.
- Appreciated the access provided saying it *“reflects leadership within TCSO and a system that seeks to treat incarcerated individuals as well as possible.”*
- Praised the relationship between TCSO and partners at JPS and MHMR, calling our teams “engaged and thoughtful”. Recognized for being progressive and serious about improving services and embracing best practices.



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Strengths and Validations

- Review Team found TCSO has an “engaged and thoughtful jail administration and clinical leadership staff.”

An example can be seen in the treatment of inmate Kai'Yere Campbell

- Solid retention and recruitment efforts for MHMR, JPS and TCSO

Recruiting is a high priority. 3 recruiting events last week; 5 more this week.

Increased starting pay, offer incentives and lateral opportunities.

One of the highest starting pay rates in the state.

Hired 108 detention officers YTD with 25 currently in the Academy.

- Noted how clean and odor-free the TCJ was especially compared to the other facilities they reviewed. They repeatedly commented on the cleanliness of the jail.



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Strengths and Validations

### Intake Processing/Screening:

TCSO picks up individuals from 54 police entities across the county and transports them to TCJ.

**More than 350,000** inmates have been booked into TCSO custody since 2017.

During booking, a TCSO officer conducts a Texas Continuity of Care Query and notes whether there's a mental health history.

After booking, individuals are health screened, tested, fingerprinted, photographed and issued housing assignments based upon this information.

Any health or mental health referrals are made promptly to providers.

**Findings from the DOJ are these intake screenings are timely and adequate.**

***No recommendations were made to the TCSO/TCJ booking and intake process***



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Strengths and Validations

- Recognized JPS for specialized on-site medical staff who provide timely assessment and chronic care management.
- Provide care for specialties such as dialysis, radiology, obstetrics, orthopedics, and infectious disease management which exceeds national standards of care.
- Utilizes a state-of-the-art medication dispensing service provided by *Maxor*. More than 3 million pills dispensed annually. **Think about that number. No reports of mismanagement or issues with incorrect medications being dispensed.**

**The Tarrant County Jail has more than 200 medical professionals inside the facility capable of treating illnesses ranging from the common cold to more acute ailments.**





# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Strengths and Validations

The jail has one of the lowest suicide rates in the state.

- 6 suicides since 2017.
- In 2023, jail staff intervened and prevented 279 suicide attempts.
- In 2024, jail staff intervened and prevented 350 suicide attempts.
- “The Custody, Medical and Mental Health Teams do a solid job of meeting the needs of incarcerated individuals within a high-volume setting. *No significant backlogs to those seeking mental health care.*”

***\*Detention staff made over 44,000 referrals to MHMR last year\****

***What does that mean?***



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Strengths/Validations

## Progressive Practices that Exceed National Standards

- Maximize continuity of care for our re-entry and competency restoration programs.
  - Ex: Individuals who come into our facility and are diagnosed with mental health issues requiring treatment are set up with a 30-day supply of medications and doctor referrals to ensure continuity of care upon release. We also have staff members who assist with housing placement.
- Creating the County Mental Health (competency) docket helps facilitate transfer of individuals to the state hospital for restoration to competency. *"This is an active, well-coordinated jail-based competency program in place with approximately 32 patients receiving services at the time of the review."*

**Last year, 750 people in the state of Texas were restored to competency.**

**Of those, more than half came from Tarrant County (430).**



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Recommendations

**Adding Lower-Level Infirmary Care:** Currently have two infirmaries that have 24/7 nurse and provider staffing—this level of care is comparable to a skilled nursing facility. DOJ recommends creating a lower-level care unit to attend to non-acute patients who don't require 24/7 nursing.

*ALL inmates have access to healthcare for ailments as minor as a common cold or a headache. Medical staff are available 24/7. Inmates make a request to be seen through tablet or KITE system and a provider is dispatched to see them.*

**Adding Health Assessment:** Inmates are given health screening when booked. Those without any medical conditions aren't seen again unless a need arises. DOJ suggests adding a more comprehensive 10-14 Day Health Assessment.

*This takes increased funding to hire additional medical staff. We'd work with our partners at JPS to identify funding and how to implement the added layer of health screenings.*

*ALL inmates have access to healthcare and are seen with very little wait times. Average response time for medical emergencies is 90 seconds.*



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Recommendations

**Detox Protocol:** Administered by JPS and based on National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) standards.

Those identified at risk for withdrawal are assessed using scoring protocol. Those identified as stable are housed in general population and monitored. Those with more severe symptoms are housed in a medical housing unit and confined in a cell for 23 hours a day. That is also inline with the NCCHC standards and *comparable to those detoxing in a hospital setting.*

*However, it is the DOJ team's opinion and recommendation that those individuals detoxing are housed differently to include more out of cell time in a more pleasant physical environment.*

**This would be an ideal way to detox if the jail were a hospital or residential treatment facility. The reality is we're a county jail and current methods are the safest ways to handle this process in the jail environment. JPS manages and follows the detox protocol based on NCCHC standards.**



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Recommendations

**Physical Environment:** The TCJ housing units are dated and lack natural light in most areas. Doesn't reinforce a culture of rehabilitation and humane treatment. It is recommended that current TCJ facilities and housing units are remodeled or replaced. Less costly improvements to the existing facilities may also be explored and completed.

We can ask the County Commissioners and Voters for funding for this project. However, to accomplish this takes money and resources. The TCJ was built in 1991/2010. *The TCJ was designed as a short-term housing facility. It's a county jail. It's not designed to house inmate's long term like a treatment facility or prison.* The average stay on felony charges is 140 days—which is on the higher side for a county jail.



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Jail Deaths

There's been a lot of talk about the number of deaths in the jail since 2017, but no context has been given to those statistics.

Take into account the following:

- Tarrant County Jail Data.
  - Increase in bookings due to enforcement of CCP 218.
- How do we compare to other major county jails in Texas?
  - What is the cause of death of these inmates?



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Tarrant County Jail Fact Sheet

Jail capacity is 5004 with 4620 active beds

50% have pre-existing medical conditions

Books-in an average of 41,000 inmates per year

66% have mental health issues

More than 350,000 people have been booked into TCJ since 2017

TCJ has “passed certification inspection every year since 1995.”

Tarrant County Jail is regulated by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards which has stricter guidelines than National Correctional Standards



# Jail Deaths By Texas Counties

\*Source: Texas Commission on Jail Standards a/o 6/17/24

## How we compare to other large county jails in Texas

Year/County Rated capacity	Harris 10,466	Dallas 7,552	Bexar 5,108	Tarrant 5,015	Travis 3,631	El Paso 2,976
2017	10	6	6	0	3	5
2018	11	5	6	2	5	4
2019	9	5	10	6	3	3
2020	16	7	14	17 (11 Covid)	1	7
2021	21	8	17	13	6	6
2022	26	12	14	11	6	10
2023	19	13	18	9	3	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>43</b>





# TARRANT COUNTY JAIL

## Inmate Cause of Death (since 2017)

### Cause of Death

#### (58) Inmates died at the Hospital

#### 45 NATURAL/MEDICAL

(17) cardiac (7) advanced cancer (1) sickle cell (2) seizure (11) COVID (1) HIV related  
(2) natural-non-specific (3) hypernatremia (1) Ischemic Bowel

06 SUICIDE \*279 suicides were prevented in 2023; 350 intervened and prevented ytd

07 TOXICITY (alcohol and/or drugs)

03 ACCIDENTAL \* 2 from falls, 1 drug overdose

02 HOMICIDE

01 GUNSHOT (\*inmate died at Medical City Arlington from injuries following shootout with US Marshals and never set foot in the jail)

01 PENDING (cause of death)

a/o 11/08/24

Source: Tarrant County Medical Examiner

\*Note: Some of these cases may still be open. The cause of death is only one part of the investigation.



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Visit

## Mortality Review Process

The process for review of an in-custody death not only includes investigations by multiple law enforcement and legal agencies, but also includes separate reviews by an Incident Review Committee- which is made up of JPS and MHMR correctional leadership and a review by custody as dictated by the Texas Commission on Jail Standards.

The DOJ Team read the minutes of the most recent IRC meeting concerning the death of an inmate and found ***“There were no recommendations or corrective actions related to a recent death noted within this document.”***



# Tarrant County Jail DOJ/NIC Recommendations/Response

## Conclusion

The TCSO-affiliated JPS and MHMR staff are progressive and serious about improving their services and embracing best practices to meet and exceed prevailing standards of care.

As noted throughout the report, several practices meet and may even exceed national standards of care.

The facilities were all quite clean as compared to the vast experience of the TA review team in assessing jail settings.

Requesting and expediting this review so shortly after three deaths in custody and facilitating the access, openness, and candor that was exhibited during this process reflects leadership within TCSO and a system that seeks to treat incarcerated individuals as well as possible.

During the final briefing of their visit, the NIC/Falcon Group continually referred to us as “a model jail facility” calling us the “Cadillac of Jails.”