



DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER - NH

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Disability Rights Center Seeks Access to Death Investigation Records

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In December 2017, an individual with mental illness died in NH State Prison for Men in Concord. According to news reports, the 34-year-old man died alone in his cell due to self-injurious behavior while on the prison's Residential Treatment Unit (RTU), a specialized unit for inmates with mental illness who are unable to function in the general inmate population.

Today, Disability Rights Center - NH (DRC) filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking access to records regarding the individual with mental illness and the investigation into his death, after the Department of Corrections refused to comply with repeated requests for records over the last two months.

DRC is seeking an injunction against the Department's interference with a federally authorized investigation in violation of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illness (PAIMI) Act. The PAIMI Act authorizes DRC to investigate suspected abuse and neglect of individuals with mental illness and obligates facilities such as prisons to cooperate by promptly producing requested records.

"It's critical that DRC be able to fully investigate suspected abuse and neglect of people with disabilities in New Hampshire," said Andrew Milne, DRC staff attorney. "Without prompt access to records, we cannot assess whether individuals' rights are being respected, nor can we fulfill our federally mandated role to protect and advocate for people with mental illness."

DRC asks the court to order the prompt production of requested records so that DRC can investigate the suspected neglect and subsequent death of an individual with mental illness.

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About Disability Rights Center – New Hampshire

Disability Rights Center – New Hampshire is a statewide non-profit organization dedicated to eliminating barriers for people with disabilities across New Hampshire. Disability Rights Center staff help people with disabilities to achieve employment, education, housing, and health care goals.

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