



OREGON: Clark County Jail works to reduce inmate suicides

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[Oregon Public Broadcasting](#) [1]

“For most of us, the way we deal with being overwhelmed is that we talk to somebody, or we go do something or...we drink or use,” said Nancy Griffith, director of corrections health at Oregon’s Multnomah County Health Department. Yet, she pointed out, when a person is put in jail – potentially an overwhelming experience – “All of those...are taken away from you.” Some inmates already have mental health issues that may carry a suicide risk, and for everyone the experience of being jailed itself heightens suicide risk, she said. The Multnomah and Clark county jails are introducing changes to make inmate suicide less likely. Both institutions have increased access to mental health care for inmates, and Clark County Jail has designed the cells in its new mental health unit so as to make hanging – the most common suicide method in the jail setting – more difficult. Lindsay Hayes, project director at the National Center on Institutions and Alternatives, said that the jails with the greatest success at lowering suicide rates are those that have used a combination of these two approaches: physical improvements for the safety of those at risk, and more mental health services for inmates.

Spark Extra! Check out SPRC’s customized information sheet, [The Role of Adult Correctional Officers in Preventing Suicide](#) [2].

Links within this resource

[1] <http://www.opb.org/news/article/clark-county-jail-works-to-reduce-inmate-suicides/>

[2] <http://www.sprc.org/sites/sprc.org/files/CorrectionOfficers.pdf>

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