

From: [Elizabeth Jones](#)
To: [Trisha Linebarger](#)
Subject: FW: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)
Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:54:58 AM

From: sunset@sunset.texas.gov On Behalf Of Texas Sunset Commission
Sent: Tuesday, December 8, 2020 8:54:26 AM (UTC-06:00) Central Time (US & Canada)
To: Sunset Advisory Commission
Subject: Public Input Form for Agencies Under Review (Public/After Publication)

Agency: TEXAS COMMISSION JAIL STANDARDS

First Name: Adasha

Last Name: Knight

Title:

Organization you are affiliated with:

Email:

City: Silsbee

State: Texas

Your Comments About the Staff Report, Including Recommendations Supported or Opposed:

I used to be on the outside of the jail system, working WITH the jailers, officers, and police stations. However, due to a friendship gone wrong, I found myself being handcuffed at 53 in front of my grandchild in tears on a Friday afternoon, not knowing why, and spending the night in the jail I had always been on the outside of. This really opened my eyes to the system we have in place and how being "innocent until proven guilty" does not apply in jail. You are treated worse in the holding cells than those in population.

You are basically a fish in a bowl to be watched until they decide to let you out. It was a horrible experience for myself and the people who came and went from my small holding tank. I use this experience to give comments on everything I've just read regarding the agency, the recommendations, and my horrific view of how it all works now. I worked for a state agency for 14 years, CPS. I know about workloads. To have 4 people in the field investigating and only 1 person reviewing incoming complaints for the entire state is unfathomable. Maybe the reason they are able to justify it is because no one knows this oversight agency even exists. I sure didn't!

There's nothing posted ANYWHERE about it. How did I go 53 years and not know about this oversight agency? How many others don't know? Even still, this agency is top heavy and beyond. If they really cared about what is going on and they are really supposed to be "the public's eyes and ears inside the jails," they need to actually have enough staff to do just that. Four people for the entire state is absolutely a joke.

Of course there are only 3% of cases proven to be true. You have the statement of a potential or convicted criminal, then you call the jail and speak to 5 people there who dispute it, who are you going to believe? It's much easier to justify the statements of 5 versus 1. It should not be this way. Here are the issues I find that should be corrected:

1. Staffing within the agency. End the top heavy staffing and put the people in the field. Every single complaint should be investigated IN PERSON at the jail with the people face to face. That is the only way to read body language, see documents, see the actual place spoken about, etc.

Investigations are investigations, and if they aren't trained to fully conduct them, they need to be. There should be equal distribution of staff depending on the size of facilities. Who cares where the person lives and if they can investigate facilities there or not? Let them! There's no conflict there! Be realistic about this and study agencies who DO it right, and follow their lead. I just found them through the Sunset Commission and filed a complaint on my experience, so we shall see how that goes. I'll see first hand how it's done or not done. But it can't be done with

4 people. It can't be done with no one knowing about the agency. It should be posted in every booking area.

2. The minimum standards ARE vague. I looked at the response by the agency.

They actually thought you meant to give measurements on seating within holding cells, so that's what they gave you. That is a joke. Who can sit in an 18" area for 4 hours or a 24" area for 8 hours? And what about the overnight situation? Because in MY cell, the 3 of us had about 3' each on the cement floor to sleep. They mention the same thing they've said before, that there must be toilet facilities, running water, but it doesn't specify anything about what's important in a facility like I was in. It mentions the floor and seating areas be made of durable and washable materials. My holding cell was a cement floor, cement bench, cement wall, with a toilet and sink open to where anyone could see you using the restroom. On the back of the toilet was a button to push for water to drink, coming from the back of the toilet. NOWHERE does it mention privacy to use the restroom, appropriate items to wash and wipe your hands, or clean quality drinking water to prevent illness. You are correct in that the vagueness leaves too much open for interpretation by individual places. We don't need measurements of how high the benches are. We need specifics on exactly what is required to be in holding cells. VERY SPECIFIC requirements for those who cannot figure it out for themselves! I had two women in my cell, one covered in blood from a domestic fight. Both were arrested IN THE ACT of their crime. I didn't even know why I was there! No one would tell me. Why was I housed with these people? There were PLENTY of single cells open. I came in with health disabilities, mental issues, and was placed in the general holding tank with others. They knew I had no immune system. Yet there I was. That should NOT happen.

3. There is no accountability for jails who aren't doing it right. What needs to happen is not punish the entire jail, but fire the person who is making it not happen right. In my situation, the first shift did everything correct. Shift change happened and it all went to hell. From a group who took my information, a nurse who checked my medications in and filled out the medical sheet, wrote instructions for my medications, etc., turned into one lady on a Friday night who acted like she knew nothing and didn't care to find out. SHE should be fired. I was not fed. I was not given my medications. Yes, the nurse went home and didn't work on weekends, but it was clearly written in my file and she flat out refused to give them to me.

Yes, the nurse noted I couldn't eat gluten or sugar or dairy, yet she just didn't feed me at all. He noted I needed hydration, yet she took my cup away. They forced me to stay overnight even though you can bond out the same day. As you can see, this jail was not forced to follow any standards. And if this is the minimum standards, they need to be definitely changed.

4. Classification. When brought in, such as myself, who was ripped from my yard not in the commission of any crime, never been arrested before in my life, a 53-year old grandmother with serious health issues, how do you justify putting me in with two girls who are in jail almost every weekend, one covered in blood, the other I was hoping they had pat down thoroughly?

How is that okay? With probably 8 more holding cells, why was it okay to put me in there? If I had been caught in a crime, yes. I was accused of something from a year prior, stealing a cup, which I didn't do. (it took me a week to find this out) But to prevent violence, suicide, the transmission of diseases, etc., people need to be separated when they check in and have the issues someone like I did. The nurse should have made that happen. He left and didn't work Saturday. So I didn't get my meds Friday night or Saturday morning. My seizure, depression, pain, and narcolepsy medication, nor my thyroid medication. On top of having no liquids and no food from Thursday to Saturday, I was not in good shape when I left. Why did I have to get the treatment of a convicted criminal? Why don't they care enough to classify people when they come in and say "This person must have this and needs to be alone and can't sleep on cement due to arthritis and osteopenia in her hips."

And then force the next shift to make that happen. It got so bad I used the phone on the wall to call home, who called the head on call at the jail and said I had to be fed and given something to drink. But nothing was ever told to the woman who took my cup away and refused to give me anything at all. A few more hours, and I could have gone into full blown dehydration and been hospitalized. As it was, I went to get iv fluids immediately afterwards and was sick for a week. SOMETHING needs to be in the standards to specify things like this more clearly, if at all. Also, the girl covered in blood, why was she not showered and had no shoes on? Did we all need to be exposed to her blood? That's a serious health hazard and was not even a concern for this second shift.

5. Bedding. The minimum rules say inmates are given a mattress and bedding, and holding cells CAN be provided with same. However, if you have someone sleeping in a cell, there is no reason they should not be given some sort of mattress. I was given a Mexican blanket, cut in half. It covered my toes to my hips. I had to tuck my arms into my shirt and sleep on cement. Having the issues I have and not getting my medication at bedtime, sleeping on

cement, it was torture. EVERY person required to stay overnight should be afforded some sort of mattress and a blanket, a real blanket. Especially when it's so cold in there.

As you can see, based on my own experience, and then going to read these rules, I was horrified. I hope you hold this agency accountable in some way of doing what needs to be done. People in prison or jail are still people. You never know when a false charge could have you on the other side of that door, and think about if you would want to be tortured like I was.

I thank you for your time. Feel free to contact me for more input.

Any Alternative or New Recommendations on This Agency: More staff in the field an less in the headquarters. A searchable database the public can see to help hold them accountable for doing their jobs. This is an agency gone rogue, and it needs to be restructured and refined. If they are going to be approved for 12 years, please make sure they are overstructured and rules are defined. People kill themselves in jail for a reason, and it's not because of what's happening OUTSIDE of those doors.

My Comment Will Be Made Public: I agree