

MEMORANDUM

To: Alaska Legislature

FR: ACLU of Alaska (Jacqueline F. Shepherd, Megan Edge, Mara Kimmel, Michael Garvey)

RE: Redacted Key Summary Report, Alaska DOC Deaths, 2022 to Date

DATE: March 21, 2024 (Updated)

The ACLU of Alaska became aware of the high number of deaths occurring in Alaska Department of Corrections facilities in 2022, after a rash of deaths that spring. Out of grave concern for thousands of Alaskans cycling through Alaska's jails and prisons accused of crimes from misdemeanors to unclassified felonies, or detained on non-criminal charges, and because of vulnerability of many Alaskans entering the system, the ACLU of Alaska Prison Project began an investigation.

Below is information related to each of the deaths that occurred in 2022, 2023, and 2024 (to date). Some names have been redacted to protect the safety and privacy of witnesses.

Background

Eighteen people died in the custody of the Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) in 2022, a record high number of deaths in Alaska's unified jail and prison system in a single year. In 2023, 13 people died, although DOC has only reported ten. As of January 24, 2024, four people died at four different facilities within a six-day period, and another five weeks later. On average, around 5,000 people are detained in the state's 13 facilities, which include both sentenced individuals and those awaiting trial or sentencing (more than half of the population is pretrial status).¹ Because of barriers to obtaining records from DOC, information collected was gathered through family members, Alaska State Trooper (AST), and witness accounts. We are presenting evidence to the best of our ability, given the challenges of obtaining public records.

2022 - 2024 Deaths

¹ According to the Alaska Department of Corrections 2022 Offender Profile found, here: <https://doc.alaska.gov/admin/docs/2022Profile.pdf>

- **May 4, 2022, Lawrence Lobdell (DOB 8/4/1990), White, Sentenced.** Lobdell died at Anchorage Correctional Complex (ACC) in medical segregation. After his initial arrest, it was discovered that he had an aggressive brain tumor, and it was unclear if he would be able to stand trial. When he pled guilty to second-degree murder, he was slumped in a wheelchair with his eyes closed, head covered in scars from surgery. The day he died, he fell in his cell and hit his head, and then was transported to Alaska Regional Hospital, where he died. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **June 5, 2022, Luke Dennis (DOB 8/24/1996), White, Pretrial.** Dennis died at ACC while awaiting trial for criminal mischief and theft charges. According to ██████████, ██████████ ██████████, ██████████ struggled with mental health issues, including schizophrenia. She said she would call the jail to explain the medications Dennis needed and had a hard time getting DOC to give ██████████ the medication they needed. She reported that during Dennis's many periods of incarceration, DOC often held them for months without medication. According to AST, Dennis died while housed in Echo mod, administrative segregation, where they were placed because Dennis identified as a female, Sabrina Dennis. Another inmate, last name ██████████, told troopers that Dennis had been fighting with their cellmate ██████████ ██████████², who was also in segregation at the time of Dennis's death, claims Dennis's body was left in his cell for nearly 12 hours where other inmates could see their body and were not allowed out of their own cells for rec time or showering. **According to AST, the cause of death was asphyxiation by strangulation.**
- **June 11, 2022, Kitty Douglas (DOB 12/20/2001), Alaska Native, Detained.** Douglas died at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center (HMCC), where she was being held. Prior to incarceration, she was living at the Anchorage cold-weather homeless Sullivan Arena shelter, where she had a verbal altercation with a police officer, who booked her on criminal mischief charges, which were never filed. According to ██████████, Kitty suffered a mental breakdown a year before her death, after miscarrying a baby seven months into her pregnancy. Her ██████████ spoke with her hours before her death. After their call, Douglas was moved to the acute mental health solitary confinement wing, where she committed **suicide**, according to AST. ██████████, the ██████████ of ██████████, who died in DOC custody ██████████ after Kitty, was housed with Kitty in the quarantine space until she was transported to suicide watch and died hours later. She remembers

Kitty and interactions she had with staff. [REDACTED] says it was obvious Kitty was “mentally off,” but that she was friendly and in a good mood until she was taken to segregation.

- **June 16, 2022, Leefisher Tukrook (DOB: 02/02/1994), Alaska Native, Unsentenced.** Tukrook from Point Lay, died at Spring Creek Correctional Center in Echo Mod, a mental health housing unit. According to AST, Tukrook had just been released from suicide watch and cleared by a psychologist before he was found hanging in his cell. **AST did not provide an official cause of death.**
- **June 20, 2022, Jarvis Sours (DOB:7/5/1975), Alaska Native, Remanded for Parole Violation.** Sours, from Selawik, died at Anvil Mountain Correctional Center. According to [REDACTED], he was the father of nine children. DOC reported that Jarvis was in jail on an escape charge related to a prior misdemeanor assault charge. According to AST, his death was ruled a **suicide**.
- **July 29, 2022, James Wheeler (DOB 1/11/1931), White, Sentenced.** James Wheeler died at Goose Creek Correctional Center (GCCC) after a long illness. He had filed for compassionate release twice, due to illness, but was denied. The cause of death was **pneumonia and natural causes**, according to AST.
- **August 5, 2022, Austin Wilson (DOB 10/22/1987), Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Wilson from Noatak, died at ACC and friends of Wilson reported the cause of death to be **suicide**, related to alcohol withdrawal. He was being held on a misdemeanor and in jail for less than 24 hours. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **August 8, 2022, David Bristow (DOB:8/24/1959), White, Remanded for Technical Violation.** Bristow was in custody on a revocation for a previous conviction when he died at the ACC. Bristow had served time for sexual assault charges and was remanded because of confusion about how often he needed to register as a sex offender. His family says he told them if he ever went to prison again, he would kill himself rather than relive the horror. The cause of death was ruled a **suicide**, according to AST.
- **August 23, 2022, Natashia Minock (DOB 2/14/1987), Alaska Native, Remanded for Parole Violation.** Minock, from Pilot Station, was being held at HMCC and was in jail for one day at the time of her death. [REDACTED] have suggested she was struggling with withdrawal, which troopers confirmed in their investigation. AST reported the State Medical Examiner’s Office reported multiple ailments contributed to her **“natural death.”**
- **August 24, 2022, Robert Vann (DOB 6/13/1976), Black, Sentenced.** Vann died at Palmer Correctional Complex (PCC). According to AST, he died of **natural causes**.

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- **September 6, 2022, Bernie Alexia (DOB 7/12/1946), Alaska Native, Sentenced.** Alexia, from Nikoli, died at GCCC. He applied for compassionate release in January of 2022 and was denied. He died of **natural causes**, AST said.
- **September 9, 2022, James K. Rider (DOB 5/2/1991), White, Violating Conditions of Release.** Rider died at the Mat-Su Pretrial Facility. According to his brother, Michael Cox, Rider had been begging his PO for mental health help to no avail. Rider was in jail for 11 days when he was found hanging from his bunk alone in a cell. According to Cox, citing the State Medical Examiners report, said Rider's death was a **suicide**.
- **September 25, 2022, Lewey Matoomealook (DOB: 1/7/1985), Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Matoomealook, from Wainwright, died at ACC, where he was pretrial for misdemeanors. He had been in custody for 11 days when he died. On September 22, 2022, he fell to the floor and began to seize, then was transported to Alaska Regional Hospital. Troopers said he was diagnosed with sub-arachnoid hemorrhage. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **September 26, 2022, Marcus Gillion (DOB: 5/16/1974), Black, Pretrial.** Gillion died at ACC, where he was being held on a misdemeanor assault charge. He was a diagnosed schizophrenic, with a heart condition. He had been in jail for seven days when he died. Gillion was found alone in his cell, but his former cellmate, [REDACTED], told AST a few days before Gillion died he'd been complaining of chest pain, and called for a nurse who said he needed Nitroglycerin. [REDACTED] reported that in the last few days they were cellmates, Gillion was "coughing up a lot of shit." **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **October 2, 2022, William Ben Hensley, III (DOB:4/19/1988), Alaska Native, Unsented.** Hensley, from Kivalina, died at GCCC. He was there for 32 days, when he died. Other incarcerated people reported he hung himself, which troopers confirmed in their investigation. AST reported the cause of death a **suicide**.
- **October 23, 2022, Paul Allen Harris (DOB 6/25/1953), White, Sentenced.** Harris died at GCCC. Prior to his death, he provided the ACLU of Alaska with information regarding severe brain cancer. DOC facilitated one surgery to remove tumors from his brain, but Harris was waiting for another surgery to remove more. He said he was not given medications on time and was suffering from severe seizures and pain. DOC told AST he died of a **pre-existing condition**.
- **November 11, 2022, Khari Wade (DOB 3/8/1971), Black, Sentenced.** Wade died at GCCC. DOC listed this death as "anticipated." According to troopers, Wade had been on end-of-life care prior to his death. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**

- **December 11, 2022, Morris Pius Teeluk (DOB 5/27/1958), Alaska Native, Sentenced.** Morris, from Kotlik, was listed as an “anticipated” death by DOC. AST did not investigate. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **March 26, 2023, William Floyd Miller, Race Unknown, Sentenced.** Miller died at GCCC. DOC said his death was expected and that he died of **natural causes.**
- **April 12, 2023, Jay Allen Stevens (DOB 9/6/1962), American Indian or Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Stevens died at ACC, after spending less than a month in custody on federal charges. AST had no records of his death. DOC reported he died of **natural causes.**
- **April 23, 2023, Mark Christopher Cook, Jr (DOB 3/6/1996), Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Cook, of Hoonah, died at Lemon Creek Correctional Center (LCCC). According to his grandfather, Tom Abel, Cook had been remanded in Hoonah on misdemeanors, while awaiting back surgery. Abel said his grandson had been transferred to LCCC so he could receive medical care for his severe back pain. He says Cook was placed in solitary confinement, where he committed **suicide** after telling his grandfather he was in so much pain he could barely walk and had been left lying in his own excrement. AST did not provide records and cited an ongoing investigation. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **(UNREPORTED) April 27, 2023, Lewis Jordan, Jr (2/14/1970), Black, Parole Revocation,** Jordan was incarcerated at GCCC. According to his cellmate, [REDACTED], and others in the housing unit³, Lewis began telling COs that his ear hurt, and they didn’t believe him. Witnesses reported that his condition began to deteriorate to the point where he couldn’t get up at mealtimes. Eventually, he collapsed on the floor and was transported to Mat-Su Regional Hospital in a coma, with a spit hood over his head and in wrist and leg shackles. According to [REDACTED] and hospital records, DOC told his family and hospital staff that Jordan suffered a drug overdose. The hospital staff began administering Narcan, and responding to what they were told was a drug overdose. Hours later the hospital determined Jordan was suffering from spinal meningitis. According to toxicology reports, there were no drugs in his system. Jordan spent a month in the hospital in a coma until his family took him off life support. During this time DOC paroled him. Because he had been “paroled” while in a coma, DOC did not report Jordan’s death to the State Medical Examiner. As such, no autopsy was performed, until the ACLU of Alaska sent a letter to the Medical Examiner, who then got in touch with Jordan’s family. The State Medical Examiner had the body

shipped back to Alaska from Georgia, to perform an autopsy. On May 30, AST said they had no records regarding Jordan's death. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**

- **(UNREPORTED) April 25, 2023, Jimmie Singree (DOB 8/05/74), White, Sentenced.** According to witnesses, Singree committed suicide while housed at Wildwood Correctional Complex. He was transported to the local hospital, wearing a spit hood and wrist and leg shackles, despite being brain dead at the time. The ACLU of Alaska was made aware of his death by Alaska lawyers. When the ACLU of Alaska called the facility, staff said Singree had been "released". DOC never reported his death. On May 30, AST declined to provide records and cited an ongoing investigation. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **June 11, 2023, Landon William Morgan (DOB 05/09/1980), White, Pretrial.** Morgan died at the Ketchikan Correctional Center a day after he was booked for a DUI. Landon had been in a severe boating accident a year before and was suffering some major medical setbacks due to TBI and friends and family were raising money to help him cover medical costs. **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine cause of death.**
- **July 18, 2023, Michael Philip Padilla (DOB 5/05/1957), 66, Alaska Native, Sentenced.** Padilla died at the PCC. DOC said the "Death is believed to be related to natural causes." **The ACLU of Alaska could not determine an official cause of death.**
- **August 3, 2023, James David Kraus (DOB 11/31/1944), 78, White (?), Sentenced.** Kraus died at GCCC of "natural causes." Because Kraus was convicted of a sexual crime, he was not eligible for medical or geriatric parole.
- **August 29, 2023, Tristan Andrew (DOB 11/15/1993), 29, Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Andrew was remanded on August 27, 2023, for failure to register as a sex offender. His public defender believes Andrew may have been homeless. At time of booking, he blew over .4, but was conscious. He was transported to hospital unconscious on August 28. **Cause of death unknown at this time.**
- **September 22, 2023, Laron Carton Graham (DOB 10/27/1977), 45, Black, Pretrial.** Graham Remanded June 30, 2023. At that time, he started reporting to friends and family that he was worried he was being poisoned. He could not breathe, and his stomach hurt badly. At some point, his private attorney's investigator alerted DOC that Graham needed to be transported to the

hospital. Graham was in the hospital for more than two weeks before he died. As of October 2, 2023, no one from DOC had called his family to report his hospitalization or death.

- **(UNREPORTED) October 10, 2023, Angelena McCord (DOB 07/27/1994), 29, Alaska Native, Pretrial.** McCord was remanded September 19, 2023, for shoplifting. Another incarcerated person called her parents to report that McCord was not feeling well, but that she wanted to stay in Hiland to “get help.” On September 22, McCord was transported to Alaska Regional Hospital after reportedly suffering two heart attacks at Hiland Mountain. Her attorney says that she died due to complications related to opioid withdrawal. Charges against her were dropped by the state while she was hospitalized. DOC did not report her death. **McCord’s official cause of death was global anoxic brain injury post cardiorespiratory arrest, consistent with withdrawal from ethanol and fentanyl.**
- **December 3, 2023, Artemy Arthur Hapoff, Jr. (DOB 05/30/1954), 69, Alaska Native, Sentenced.** Hapoff was a sentenced person and had been in custody since 2010 on a sexual abuse of a minor charge. **His death at GCCC was listed as “expected by medical personnel.”**
- **December 26, 2023, Robert Michael Vidic (DOB 05/06/1958), 65, White, Pretrial.** Vidic was an unsentenced person who had been incarcerated since July of 2022. He was charged with Felony DUI, Assault 3 and driving with a canceled license. **His death at GCCC was listed as “expected” by DOC.**
- **January 12, 2024, John Malcolm Groff, (DOB), 82, White, Sentenced.** Groff was incarcerated at Goose Creek Correctional center since July 2008, convicted of sexual abuse of a minor. His death is listed as “expected” by DOC.
- **January 12, 2024, Joshua Keith Zimmerman (DOB 09/10/1990), 33, Alaska Native, Pretrial.** Zimmerman was an unsentenced inmate at ACC, where he was remanded on December 12, 2023. DOC said foul play is not suspected and cause of death is “unknown.”
- **January 15, 2024, Daniel Eugene Rosendahl, (DOB) 37, SCCC White, Pretrial.** Rosendahl was a sentenced inmate held at Spring Creek Correctional Center. ██████████ contacted the ACLU of Alaska after his death to say that he began urinating blood around the New Year and asked to go to medical several times. She reports that the nurse he talked to told him to drink more water. Finally, after three days of asking to go to medical, he refused to leave the dining hall until he was seen. On January 8, 2024, he contacted the Office of Public Advocacy and asked them to contact his sister and tell her he was about to be transported to the hospital and it did not look good. He was then medevacked to Anchorage, where he remained until his death on January 15, 2024. He

was diagnosed with TTP, a rare clotting disorder that causes clots in small vessels and ultimately leads to organ failure. Rosendahl had AIDS and ██████ believes this disorder was caused by him being on the wrong medication to treat AIDS while in DOC custody. His family was never contacted by DOC. Initially, his sister was not allowed to talk to him because there were DOC orders not to let him have visitors or phone calls. Eventually, she was allowed to talk to him daily but was never allowed to visit before his death. ██████ had contacted the ACLU of Alaska prior to Rosendahl's death, stating that he also suffered from mental health issues and exhibited abnormal behavior. **The cause of death is listed as Thrombotic Thrombocytopenia Purpura and HIV.**

- **January 18, 2024, Sherri Rose Wein, (DOB 09/07/1972), 51, Alaska Native (?), Pretrial.** Wein was unsentenced on arson related charges. She had been incarcerated since April 28, 2023, at Hiland Mountain Correctional Center. The ACLU of Alaska was contacted by an inmate who reported Wein's death on January 18, claiming that Wein died in the shower. ACLU reached out to DOC for confirmation and a press release was issued on January 20. DOC then responded to the ACLU's inquiry on January 22 saying they could not confirm a death until they contact family. **DOC did not release a cause of death,** however inmates reported it was a suicide.
- **February 22, 2024 Ruthann Helen Boone, (DOB 12/08/67), 56, Alaska Native, Sentenced.** Boone was in custody for about 24 hours before she died. She was booked on a misdemeanor charge for operating under the influence. Fellow inmates report her death was a suicide, however, the DOC has not reported an official cause of death.

Related Statistics

The ACLU of Alaska Prison Project's investigation into DOC deaths include every known death from 2022 to date. During this time, as reported by DOC, family contacts, and AST:

- Twelve people died of suicide (*from official and unofficial reports.)
- Fourteen people died of medical issues, "natural causes," or their death was "anticipated".
- Nine people died of "unknown" causes.
- One person died by homicide.⁴

⁴ The ACLU of Alaska discovered in early March that one of the deaths that had previously been reported as "unknown" was actually a homicide. Investigations are currently pending, but it has been confirmed by Alaska State Troopers.

To the best of our ability to confirm the race of the deceased we found:

- Eighteen were Alaska Native (or American Indian)
- Five were Black
- Twelve were white
- One is unknown

For context, we know from the annual DOC Offender Profile report and Census data reports:

- Alaska Native people make up 41.22% of Alaska's incarcerated population, and 22% of the state population.
- Black people make up 10.24% of the prison population and 3.7% of the state population.
- White people make up 39.05% of the prison population and 64.1% of the state population.

Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

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