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Mortality in Local Jails, 2000-2007

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ADVANCE FOR RELEASE AT 10:00 A.M. EDT	**Bureau of Justice Statistics**
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MORTALITY RATES IN LOCAL JAILS CONTINUE TO DECLINE

WASHINGTON – Mortality rates in local jails declined over the period from 2000 through 2007, the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) in the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, announced today. A total of 8,097 jail inmates died in custody of local jails over the study period, during which the mortality rate declined from 151 deaths per 100,000 jail inmates in 2000 to 141 per 100,000 in 2007.

During any given year of the eight-year study, more than 80 percent of the approximately 3,000 jail jurisdictions nationwide had no deaths in their custody. During the entire eight-year study

period, more than four in 10 jails (42 percent) had no deaths. Among jails reporting at least one death during the entire study period, the majority (83 percent) reported only one death.

Suicide was the single leading cause of death in local jails, accounting for 29 percent of all jail deaths. Between 2000 and 2007, the suicide rate declined from 48 to 36 per 100,000, continuing a longer decline from 129 per 100,000 in 1983.

Deaths from any illness-related cause accounted for more than half (53 percent) of all deaths in local jails. Heart disease was the single leading illness-related cause of death, accounting for 22 percent of all deaths in local jails. Deaths from AIDS-related causes accounted for five percent of all deaths in jails.

During the eight-year period, the largest jails (those with an average daily population of 1,000 inmates or more) held 52 percent of the total jail population and accounted for 52 percent of all deaths in jails. The smallest jails (those with an average daily population of fewer than 50 inmates) held three percent of the jail population and accounted for seven percent of jail deaths.

Smaller jails had the highest mortality rates largely due to suicide. In jails holding an average of fewer than 50 inmates, the mortality rate of 282 per 100,000 inmates was almost twice the national average (145 per 100,000). Suicide rates were highest in smallest jails (167 per 100,000) and lowest in the 50 largest jails (27 per 100,000).

Nearly a quarter (24 percent) of jail deaths occurred within two days of admission; more than one-third (38 percent) within the first seven days; and more than half (56 percent) within 30 days.

Suicide rates in jails were more than three times higher than in the general population. Between 2000 and 2006, when comparable data were available, suicide was the only cause of death that occurred at a higher rate in local jails than in the general population (57 per 100,000 vs 13 per 100,000), after adjusting for differences associated with age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin.

BJS collected these data on deaths in local jails in response to the Deaths in Custody Reporting Act (DICRA) (P.L. 106-297). DICRA required the collection of individual-level records of deaths occurring in jails, in state prisons and during the process of arrest. BJS collects data on deaths in local jails and in state prisons through its Deaths in Custody Reporting Program and on arrest-related deaths through its Arrest-Related Deaths collection.

The report, *Mortality in Local Jails, 2000-2007* (*NCJ 222988*), was written by BJS statistician Margaret Noonan. Following publication, the report can be found at http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov.

For additional information about the Bureau of Justice Statistics' statistical reports and programs, please visit the BJS Web site at http://bjs.ojp.usdoj.gov/.

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The Office of Justice Programs (OJP), headed by Assistant Attorney General Laurie O. Robinson, provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to prevent and control crime, administer justice, and assist victims. OJP has seven components: the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention; the Office for Victims of Crime; the Community Capacity Development Office, and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking. More information about OJP can be found at http://www.ojp.gov.

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