



Press Release

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Reforms Needed in Reproductive Lockdown

Lack of detailed reproductive health policies in Montana's jails putting pregnant women at risk

HELENA, MT — In 2012, 27-year-old Angela Robinson was forced to deliver her baby girl on the dirty booking room floor of the Yellowstone County Detention Facility after her repeated requests for medical help over the course of several hours went ignored.

In 2008, another prisoner made it to the hospital to deliver her baby, but was humiliated and put in harm's way because detention officers insisted on keeping her in shackles throughout her labor and delivery against the advice of medical staff.

These incidents are just two of several stories that prompted the ACLU of Montana's newly issued report, "Reproductive Lockdown: An Examination of Montana Detention Centers and the Treatment of Pregnant Prisoners."

The vast majority of the 4,000 women booked into Montana county jails each year are non-violent offenders of reproductive age. Yet, even as the number of pregnant prisoners in jail grows and they are staying for longer periods of time, many county jails in Montana provide inadequate medical treatment to pregnant prisoners, and continue to engage in universally rejected practices such as shackling during labor and delivery. Our report seeks to address this issue, by documenting the problem and providing jail and detention center administrators recommendations on how to ensure pregnant prisoners get the care they need.

"These women are at the mercy of their jailers," says ACLU of Montana Executive Director Scott Crichton. "Yet overwhelmingly Montana jails are woefully lacking in policies that will ensure pregnant prisoners get the medical care they need and are protected from abusive practices like shackling."

For this report, the ACLU, under the leadership of former Staff Attorney Anna Conley, surveyed Montana's jails and detention centers, inquiring about policies related to prenatal and postpartum care, labor and delivery, the use of restraints during labor and delivery and access to contraception and abortion.

The ACLU issued the report to county jail administrators across the state with the following recommendations:

- Adopt and implement specific and comprehensive reproductive health care policies.
- Provide routine reproductive care, including examinations and screenings.
- Provide pregnancy testing and contraceptives upon request.
- Treat substance abuse withdrawal.
- Provide access to abortion in a timely manner.
- Provide appropriate prenatal and postpartum care.
- Implement policies for timely transport for labor and delivery.
- Prohibit the use of restraints during medical appointments, procedures and labor and delivery.
- Track and report pregnancy outcomes.

The full report is posted at www.aclumontana.org.