

DOC to Pay \$4 Million for Assault on Inmate

Local News

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SHELTON, Wash. - The Department of Corrections has agreed to pay \$4 million to a former offender who sustained permanent, severely disabling injuries when he was assaulted by his cellmate at Washington Corrections Center near Shelton in 2006.

Ryan Alwine, 26, was hospitalized and remained in a coma for nearly four months following the attack. The incident occurred in the early morning on September 7, 2006.

"Our deepest sympathies go out to Ryan for the pain and suffering he has endured," said DOC Secretary Eldon Vail. "This settlement will enable him to continue receiving the medical and rehabilitative care he needs for his lifetime following this senseless, violent act."

Washington Corrections Center (WCC) is a close-custody facility with the primary responsibility to process, test, and classify all adult male felons sentenced to prison in Washington State, except for those sentenced to capital punishment. While the facility places special emphasis on screening, housing and monitoring high-risk offenders, a departmental review of the incident revealed that the intake screening process could be improved with enhanced access to medical records, improved communication with county jails concerning the transfer of high-risk inmates, and increased availability of mental health staffing.

"While Ryan's injuries were inflicted on him by another inmate, there are things we could have done differently that may have prevented this tragedy," said Vail. "This is a very unusual case."

As a result of the review, WCC has implemented several procedural changes to the intake screening and inmate placement process. The facility now screens all readmission electronic records, and has improved access to mental health providers. The prison also employs a Behavior Alert Specialist who assists in screening offenders to obtain information needed to make housing placement decisions. The Department of Corrections introduced a statewide strategy that reduced offender violent infractions by five percent between July 2007 and July 2008. Most noticeable were reductions of offender violent infractions at Clallam Bay Corrections Center, Washington State Penitentiary and Washington Corrections Center.

The violence prevention measures include better tracking of violent incidents and their causes, and better methods of identifying and separating offenders who may cause violence.

"The safety of offenders, staff and visitors in our facilities has always been and continues to be our highest priority," said Vail.