



NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT
OFFICE OF THE CORPORATION COUNSEL

Michael A. Cardozo, Corporation Counsel

Press Release

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For Immediate Release

**NEW YORK CITY LAW DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCES
SIGNING OF LANDMARK MENTAL HEALTH AGREEMENT FOR RELEASED
INMATES**

***THE CITY AGREES TO PROVIDE ENHANCED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES FOR INMATES RELEASED FROM
NEW YORK CITY PRISONS.***

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New York, January 8, 2003 -- Corporation Counsel Michael A. Cardozo announced today the development of a comprehensive, multi-agency program designed to provide mental health discharge planning to mentally ill inmates in city jails. The signing results from a settlement agreement in a lawsuit, Brad H. v. City of New York.

The settlement provides a wide range of services to ensure the inmates continuity of mental health care upon release, including medication, Medicaid and public assistance benefits, continuing mental health treatment and housing. The court must now approve the final document. Earlier in the case, the court had awarded a preliminary injunction to the plaintiffs requiring the City to provide discharge planning in accordance with the New York State Mental Hygiene Law.

In announcing the settlement, Cardozo noted the while the City did not agree that the State statute required such services, the City has nonetheless recognized the benefit that such discharge planning services provided both for the released inmate and for society in general. Accordingly, during the course of the litigation, the City had engaged in extensive discussion with the plaintiffs in an effort to resolve the case.

"These discussions have been prolonged because of the extreme complexity of providing discharge planning to inmates," Cardozo observed. "In our view, the law was never intended to apply to inmates receiving care but rather to people receiving such care in hospitals. In order to provide such services to a population of inmates, the involvement of many City agencies is needed, including the Health and Hospitals Corporation, the Department of Correction, the Human Resources Administration, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Department of Homeless Services."

He added, "Despite these complexities, New York City has developed a program unique in the country in its content and scope which we believe will provide significant assistance to mentally ill inmates with the hope that these inmates will be able to successfully reintegrate into the community."

Deputy Mayor Dennis Walcott praised the efforts and cooperation of the many City agencies in developing the program which is set forth in the settlement. He also noted that many aspects of the program have already been in effect for over a year and a half. "This is an example of a large number of City agencies working together to resolve a highly complicated issue for the benefit of the entire City," he said.

The New York City Law Department is one of the oldest, largest and most dynamic law offices in the world, ranking among the top three largest law offices in New York City and the top three largest public law offices in the country. Tracing its roots back to the 1600's, the Department's 650-plus lawyers handle more than 100,000 cases and transactions each year in 17 separate legal divisions. The Corporation Counsel heads the Law Department

and acts as legal counsel for the Mayor, elected officials, the City and all its agencies. The Department's attorneys represent the City on a vast array of civil litigation, legislative and legal issues and in the criminal prosecution of juveniles. Its web site can be accessed through the City government home page at www.nyc.gov or via direct link at www.nyc.gov/html/law/home.html.

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