

# American Samoa Implementation Plan for the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA)

## 1. Overview and Objectives

**Purpose:** To create a transparent, accountable system for reporting deaths in custody in American Samoa in compliance with the Death in Custody Reporting Act (DCRA). To ensure compliance with reporting requirements, enhance accountability, and protect the rights of individuals in custody.

**Objectives:**

Establish standardized protocols for reporting and investigating deaths in custody.

Ensure timely and accurate data collection and reporting.

Enhance training and capacity within custodial facilities.

Foster community trust and transparency in the handling of custodial deaths.

## 2. Stakeholder Engagement

**Key Stakeholders:**

American Samoa Department of Public Safety

Department of Corrections

Department of Health

Community representatives, including family members of those in custody

**Engagement Strategy:**

Conduct initial meetings with stakeholders to discuss program objectives and gather input.

Create a stakeholder advisory panel to provide ongoing oversight and feedback.

Establish regular communication channels to share updates and gather community input.

## 3. Data Collection and Reporting Framework

**Establish Reporting Protocols:**

Develop clear guidelines for reporting deaths in custody, including required data elements (demographics, cause of death, location, circumstances).

Implement a standardized reporting format consistent with the DCRA.

**Data Management System:**

Create or adapt a centralized database to collect and securely store data on deaths in custody.

Ensure that the system is user-friendly and accessible to relevant authorities and stakeholders.

Regular Data Analysis:

Conduct periodic reviews of data to identify patterns and trends related to deaths in custody.

Prepare and disseminate periodic reports to stakeholders and the public.

#### 4. Training and Capacity Building

Training Programs Development:

Develop a comprehensive training curriculum for correctional staff, law enforcement, and health care personnel on the following:

1. Requirements of the DCRA
2. Mental health awareness and suicide prevention
3. Appropriate medical care and emergency response protocols

Implementation of Training:

Schedule and conduct training sessions, incorporating scenario-based learning and best practices.

Evaluate the effectiveness of training through assessments and feedback from participants.

#### 5. Policy Development and Integration

Policy Creation:

Draft and implement policies and procedures governing the reporting and investigation of deaths in custody.

Ensure policies align with both federal regulations and local laws.

Review of Existing Policies:

Evaluate current regulations and practices to incorporate the requirements of the DCRA.

Ensure all policies are easily accessible to staff and stakeholders.

#### 6. Independent Oversight and Accountability

Establish Oversight Bodies:

Form an independent oversight committee responsible for reviewing all deaths in custody, investigating incidents, and ensuring compliance.

## Audit Processes:

Develop regular auditing procedures to assess compliance with reporting requirements and the effectiveness of policies and training.  
Provide public reports on audit findings and recommendations.

## 7. Support for Families

### Family Communication Protocols:

Develop compassionate communication strategies for notifying families about deaths in custody.

### Support Services:

Collaborate with local mental health organizations to provide grief counseling and support for families affected by custodial deaths.

## 8. Public Outreach and Community Engagement

### Community Awareness Initiatives:

Develop public education campaigns to inform the community about the DCRA and the rights of individuals in custody.

### Transparency Efforts:

Publish annual reports summarizing deaths in custody, investigation outcomes, and measures taken to prevent future incidents.  
Organize community forums to discuss findings and solicit public input on improving practices.

## 9. Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

### Evaluation Framework:

Establish metrics for assessing the effectiveness of DCRA implementation.

### Feedback Mechanisms:

Create channels for ongoing feedback from staff, stakeholders, and community members to inform continuous program improvement.

### Annual Review:

Conduct an annual review of the implementation plan, adjusting strategies based on feedback, data analysis, and emerging best practices.

## Timeline

### Phase 1: Planning (1–4 months)

Hold initial stakeholder meetings.

Develop data collection protocols and reporting format.

#### Phase 2: Implementation (5–9 months)

Roll out training programs and implement new policies.

Launch community outreach initiatives to raise awareness.

#### Phase 3: Evaluation (10–12 month)

Analyze initial data and assess compliance.

Review training effectiveness and community feedback.

#### Ongoing: Continuous Assessment

Conduct semi-annual evaluations of the program and adjust as necessary.

#### Budget Considerations

Outline potential costs for training, data management systems, community outreach, and mental health support services.

Identify funding sources, including government grants, community partnerships, and other resources.