

# CALIFORNIA PRISON HEALTH CARE SERVICES

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Immediate Release

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## 2009 Death Rates in California's Prisons Show Decrease

**SACRAMENTO**-Federal Receiver for Prison Health Care J. Clark Kelso today released the *2009 Inmate Death Reviews* which shows significant improvement in the preventable death rates in California's 33 prisons.

The fourth annual analysis of California's inmate deaths focused on three areas: trends in inmate deaths; identifying lapses in health care; and trends in the number of unnecessary inmate deaths.

After each inmate death, a board-certified physician or licensed mid-level provider from the Clinical Support Unit (CSU) reviewed the care provided to the patient and completed a standardized death review template.

The report shows that in 2009 there were **\*395** inmate deaths, and 347 were deemed unpreventable, or more simply, there were 46 preventable deaths in 2009. Of these deaths, 43 were found possibly preventable and 3 were likely preventable. **\*Two deaths are still being reviewed.** This is a 31% reduction from the three previous years in which the sum of preventable deaths were: 66 in 2006, 68 in 2007, and 66 in 2008. The number of deaths because of lapses in health care also decreased to 306 from 359 in 2008.

*"Last week, the Office of Inspector General released a report showing that we still have much work to do to bring the level of care up to constitutional standards," Kelso noted. "But the death review report we are releasing today demonstrates just how far we have come in the last three years in reducing the number of avoidable deaths. Even though we have more to do, it is gratifying to see that the reforms we are putting into place are having clear, measurable impacts upon inmate medical care. I am so proud of the great work being done by our clinicians and support staff in the field and here at headquarters under extremely difficult, overcrowded and stressful conditions."*

The improvements in the rate of preventable deaths in 2009 are likely attributable to two major initiatives that took place: guidelines for specialty referral were introduced and a Primary Care team-based system of healthcare was installed in all of the 33 California prisons. **The full report by Dr. Kent Imai, MD is on the CPHCS Website at [www.CPHCS.ca.gov](http://www.CPHCS.ca.gov)**

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