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Disability Rights Vermont (DRVT) announces its release of **An Investigation into the Death of Ashley Ellis** that highlights specific systemic concerns and provides specific recommendations for changes in policy and practice that should be implemented immediately to prevent future similar tragedies. The investigative report and the response from the Department of Corrections can be found on www.vtpa.org/Investigative_reports.html.

DRVT is Vermont's protection and advocacy system designated to protect and advocate for the rights of individuals with disabilities. In keeping with our mission to investigate incidents of abuse and neglect and to protect civil rights we have conducted this investigation of the death of Ashley Ellis while in Vermont Department of Corrections' custody in August 2009.

In this report DRVT identifies several critical areas of needed improvement in Department of Corrections' protocols and practices, including:

- Improving the process by which prisoners are identified as needing medical treatment in response to substance withdrawal
- Assuring that important medical information regarding a particular prisoner received by various segments of the Department's staff are **promptly** and **verifiably** shared with appropriate medical providers
- Assuring that adequately qualified nursing staff are available at all shifts, including weekends, to provide minimally effective assessment and treatment of incoming prisoners

In addition to this investigative report, DRVT has cooperated with the Department of Corrections in reaching an agreement on new protocols for the Department's assessment and treatment of prisoners with withdrawal/detoxification needs. To view that agreement please visit www.vtpa.org/Investigative_reports.html

DRVT wishes to thank Ms. Ellis' family for their assistance in obtaining information about her death and for their permission to publish our report. DRVT hopes that the information contained in our investigative report will be useful to prevent similar future tragedies within the Department of Corrections.

For further information please call Ed Paquin or AJ Ruben at 1-800-834-7890.

DRVT is the protection and advocacy system for the State of Vermont.

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