



**OFFICE OF THE FIRST JUDICIAL
DISTRICT ATTORNEY OF COLORADO**
District Attorney Alexis King

September 27, 2022

Sheriff Jeff Shrader
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office
200 Jefferson County Parkway
Golden, Colorado 80401

Dear Sheriff Shrader,

The First Judicial District Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) has completed its investigation into the death of Melissa Chavez on February 9, 2022. As you know, the multi-jurisdictional CIRT team conducts independent and thorough investigations in any incident in which a law enforcement officer within the First Judicial District uses deadly force, or attempts to use deadly force, against a person while acting under the color of official law enforcement duties. That is not the case here, but CIRT protocols also allow a law enforcement executive to request CIRT's response in other circumstances. You requested an independent investigation by CIRT when Ms. Chavez's body was discovered.

At the time of her death, Mrs. Chavez was a forty-three-year-old woman in the Jefferson County Detention Facility. Mrs. Chavez was taken into custody on February 6, 2022. Ms. Chavez was housed at 200 Jefferson County Parkway in Golden. The CIRT response and investigation was led by Commander Baros of the Arvada Police Department. Based on interviews of inmates, staff, and relations, as well as surveillance video and other physical evidence, there is no evidence that law enforcement engaged with Mrs. Chavez at or about the time of her death and thus, not criminally responsible for his death.

Commander Baros presented his investigation to my office on April 27th, 2022. CIRT determined that on the day of her death (February 9th, 2022), Mrs. Chavez had her own cell, #29, in Module 6A. That morning, deputies started serving breakfast at 5:00 a.m. to begin the daily routine. At 5:34 a.m., Mrs. Chavez had not come out of her cell for breakfast. Deputy Estes asked Inmate #1, a Trustee, to check with Mrs. Chavez to determine if she wanted breakfast. At 5:35 a.m., Inmate #1 signaled Deputies that something was wrong. At 5:35 a.m., Deputies Kalman and Estes went to check on Mrs. Chavez. Deputy Kalman found Mrs. Chavez face up on her bunk, unconscious and nonresponsive. Deputy Kalman



administered a dose of Narcan on Mrs. Chavez. Deputy Kalman noticed that Mrs. Chavez's skin tone was off. Deputy Kalman broadcasted that she has an unresponsive inmate. Medical staff arrived in the module at 5:36 a.m. Life-saving measures began after their arrival.

At 5:36 a.m. CPR was in progress. It was decided to move Mrs. Chavez out of the cell to allow the medical staff more room to provide her care. At 5:39 a.m., an Automated external defibrillator ("A.E.D.") was attached to Mrs. Chavez, along with the use of an ambu-bag. At 5:40 a.m., the first shock from the A.E.D. was delivered. The A.E.D. delivered eleven shocks between 5:40 a.m. and 6:09 a.m. Golden Fire Department also responded to assist in life-saving measures. Doctor Adler pronounced the time of death at 6:12 a.m. During the course of treatment, three doses of Narcan were delivered to Mrs. Chavez.

After reviewing the surveillance video of module 6A from February 9th, 2022, the last walk through prior to the discovery of Mrs. Chavez was at 4:47 a.m. In the video, Deputy Estes can be seen checking each module and cell, not stopping at any cell. Mrs. Chavez was last seen on February 8th, 2022, at 8 p.m., when Mrs. Chavez refused her medicine.

An autopsy was performed on February 9th, 2022, by Dr. John Carver, a forensic pathologist for Jefferson County. Dr. Carver determined that Mrs. Chavez's cause of death was due to mixed drug intoxication and the manner of death was ruled accidental. Laboratory testing of Mrs. Chavez's blood showed she was positive for methamphetamines and Fentanyl at the time of her death. It was Doctor Carver opinion that Mrs. Chavez consumed those within the time that she had been incarcerated at the Jefferson County Detention Facility. Dr. Carver also noted cardiac enlargement, with concentric left ventricular hypertrophy.

Mrs. Chavez's blood was sent to M.N.S. Labs for testing. As follow-up to the CIRT investigation, my office contacted Doctor Sherri Kacinko (Ph.D. in Toxicology) from M.N.S. Labs. Dr. Kacinko was asked if it was possible that Mrs. Chavez consumed the drugs prior to incarceration, based on the timeline, to which she responded that it was possible. Dr. Kacinko commented that the mixed drug intoxication cause of death would indicate higher levels of methamphetamines and Fentanyl than what was in Mrs. Chavez's bloodstream.

Given the facts set forth by Commander Baros, and upon review by my office, there is no evidence that law enforcement had engaged with Inmate Chavez in the time leading up to her death and are not criminally responsible for her death. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Regards,



Alexis D. King

District Attorney

First Judicial District