

PERSONAL ACCOUNTS FROM SURVIVORS
OF PRISON SEXUAL ASSAULTS

COMMISSIONER SMITH: One of the things that I heard as a recurrent theme from all of you is the importance of psychological -- of those in medical or in mental health positions. I wonder if you have any recommendations about ways to strengthen their roll or recommendations about how they might be useful because a number of you have talked about sort of that being a place where you felt like you could get some help.

MR. CUNNINGHAM: I think that all units, psychologists should have more, you know, discretion and a lot more avenues for them to pursue to help prisoners out that go to complain to them rather than being limited in their ability of what they can do because I've complained to the unit psychologist over a period of weeks about this officer and he always come back telling me the same thing, that he's limited in what he can do, and always referred me back to the security department, which was telling me to keep my mouth shut and this

officer was doing his job.

So, I think that that would be an avenue for all prisoners, you know, if they're open as long as these psychologists, you know, were not limited in their abilities of what they can do to help the prisoners that are complaining to them.

And I agree with Marilyn as far as the two officers at all times. I don't think any one officer should be working on any shift by himself. I think that would help not only, you know, for the protection of the inmates, but for the officers as well. And this way here, you know, if something happens in any particular area or dorm that these two officers are assigned, then not one officer has to write an incident report, but both. And if one did not see something, then he has to be held accountable for why he did not see it. And officers, I believe, are there to maintain security, which are basically all of your correctional officers, I think that they should also be held accountable for stuff that happens on their shift. Although, there's a lot of things that they, you know, cannot prevent, but a lot of

it can be prevented with the proper security of an area that they're assigned to secure, and if they was, you know, moving around more and if they had a partner with them to help maintain the security, you know, not just the inmates, but the officers as well.

MR. DEBLASIO: I would like to address further the psychology department and the medical department. Being independent, I keep coming back to the issue of rape is not reported often enough and you have to lay the ground work to make people feel like they can report it.

In many institutions that I've seen, including some federal institutions, the psychology department is operated through one of the local colleges or something. The fact that that individual is coming in as an intern or employed separately, for some reason makes it not part of the DOP mechanism, you're not scared to go in and tell that person what happened.

In my situation in Morgantown, that was the case. When I got to Milan where the assault occurred, psychology was part of the medical staff

that was hired directly by the Bureau of Prisons so; therefore, I certainly did not feel comfortable speaking with the individual, the same individual that the other victim went to. And he was able to recognize, even though I didn't feel secure about talking to him, he was able to recognize that he couldn't go to security. He went directly to the Attorney General's office. And I think we have to recognize that there has to be a division.

If they're hired and employed by the Bureau of Prison, there is that psychosis again. They are part of that mechanism. They are part of that cover up. And whether that is always the case or not, when you've been victimized, that is your mind set, especially if you have any separate justification. And in my situation I watched this assailant be excused from, you know, beating a guy to the point that you could not recognize him any more.

So I knew that staff was allowing the violence. I knew they put pressure on the victim to sign a waiver and come back out of segregation. So you have to have that independent person that

you can somehow trust to go report it to and
medical and psychology are the most important.

The psychology department being operated by
community organization or the college is probably
one of the biggest things that backs an abutment in
this type of situation. You have a place to report
that you feel like it's somebody on the outside not
part of the mechanism.