



J. Hanley
WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

DATE: January 19, 2026

TO: The People of Winnebago County

FROM: J. Hanley, State's Attorney 

**JAIL INVOLVED DEATH
DECISION MEMORANDUM
DECEDENT: Ruben S. Yanez**

I. Introduction

On June 27, 2025, Winnebago County Sheriff's Department corrections officers and jail medical personnel entered Ruben Yanez's cell in the Winnebago County jail because he was unresponsive. Yanez was breathing and had a pulse, but he was not responding to jail personnel. Yanez was transported to a local hospital where he was later pronounced dead. The Winnebago-Boone County Investigative Cooperative (WBIC) (f/k/a Winnebago-Boone County Integrity Task Force) conducted the investigation of Yanez's death. During the course of their investigation, investigators interviewed jail personnel, reviewed video evidence, and the results of an autopsy. The WBIC provided its final report of investigation to the State's Attorney pursuant to the policies and procedures of the WBIC.

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the community with an explanation of the facts of the incident, the legal principles involved, and this Office's decision as to whether any corrections officer or jail personnel should be charged criminally for their actions that night.

As detailed below, criminal charges are not appropriate and none will be filed.

II. Review of Officer Involved Deaths

Pursuant to an agreement of the participating law enforcement agencies in Winnebago and Boone Counties, the WBIC may investigate any death occurring in the jail. When this occurs, the State's Attorney determines whether criminal charges are appropriate.

The State's Attorney does not make any determinations regarding whether an officer may have violated police department policy or civil (non-criminal) laws.

III. Prosecutorial Standard for Filing Criminal Charges

In making a charging decision, the State's Attorney makes a determination of whether there is sufficient admissible evidence to prove each element of an offense beyond a reasonable doubt. This analysis is consistent with the American Bar Association Criminal Justice Standard 3-4.3 which provides: "A prosecutor should seek or file criminal charges only if the prosecutor reasonably believes that the charges are supported by probable cause, that admissible evidence will be sufficient to support conviction beyond a reasonable doubt, and that the decision to charge is in the interest of justice."

This is the same standard that the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office applies to all criminal prosecutions. This analysis also requires the State's Attorney to evaluate whether there is sufficient evidence to overcome any affirmative defense that the accused is likely to raise.

IV. Facts

Unless otherwise noted, the following recitation of the facts is derived primarily from interviews of those working in the jail at the time of Yanez's death and video evidence – including footage from pod 2.

Yanez was housed in the Winnebago County jail for felony charges related to a vehicle theft which occurred on Monday, June 16, 2025 near UW Health SwedishAmerican Hospital. Video evidence showed that Yanez got out the stolen vehicle and walked into the hospital.

Yanez was charged with Theft and Leaving the Scene of an Accident in case 25CF1657. Further, Yanez had an active "bench" warrant for failing to appear in court on a prior charge of possession of a controlled substance, 24CF3216.

Yanez was treated at the hospital for a subdural hematoma (brain bleed) for four days. Yanez disclosed to hospital staff that he had sustained a head injury during a failed suicide attempt. Video evidence near where the vehicle was stolen and abandoned did not capture the stolen vehicle being in a collision, however, there was minor damage to the front quarter panel of the stolen vehicle.

On June 20, 2025, Yanez was discharged from the hospital and lodged in the Winnebago County Jail. Yanez was assigned to pod 2C from June 20 to June 25. His cell was a non-camera monitored cell. No other inmates were assigned to 2C with Yanez.

At 12:09 a.m. on June 25, it is discovered that Yanez had damaged the light fixture in his and he had injured his hand in punching the light fixture. He had also made suicidal statements. Also, on June 25, Yanez told Corrections Officer White that "he wanted to bang his head on the wall because he did not feel safe in pod 2C." CO White noticed an abrasion on Yanez's forehead. Yanez was moved to pod 2G, cell 5 at approximately 8 p.m. on June 25, which is a fully padded cell under constant video surveillance. The video footage is very poor quality, however, the video is clear enough to show Yanez does not have any physical interactions with any inmates or

jail personnel from June 25 to June 27, when Yanez was found unresponsive. The twelve hours prior to Yanez being found unresponsive are unremarkable. Yanez eats, moves around his cell, bangs on the door and wall briefly, and then lays on the floor of his cell sometime after 8 p.m. He appears to be sleeping for most of the remainder of the night. Review of video evidence showed that at approximately 4 a.m., Yanez rolled over from his side to his back and about fifteen minutes after that, his hands fall to his sides.

At approximately 7:50 a.m. on June 27, corrections officer Dugan was assisting with getting inmates ready for court. Yanez had previously been ordered to be detained and had a court date on June 27 at 8:30 a.m. Dugan states that Yanez was not responding to any verbal instructions. Dugan observed Yanez lying on his back, with his eyes open, and it sounded like Yanez was snoring. Dugan notified other corrections officers and medical staff so that they could enter Yanez' cell and access his condition.

Corrections Officer Dugan described entering Yanez's cell as follows:

"I was the first to enter the cell and assumed upper body control. Officer Schabacker assumed leg control, Officer Wyers assumed arm control. Inmate Yanez did not respond to us entering the cell. I checked pulse site at the neck in the carotid artery area, which appeared to be present. I then preformed a flinger flick to the closed eyes to compel a response with no effect. I then preformed a second sternum rub which had no effect. Inmate Yanez's breathing seemed to be labored so the decision was made to move Inmate Yanez into the recover position laying on his left side. Shortly after we repositioned Inmate Yanez, medical responded. [The nurse] took vitals and also performed a sternum rub with no effect. We then moved Inmate [Yanez] to the Wrap Car for mobility. We started to transport Inmate Yanez toward medical when medical staff made the decision to send him to the hospital. We moved Inmate Yanez to the vehicle sally port where emergency services met us and took over the care for Inmate Yanez."

Rockford Fire/EMS transported Yanez to OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center where he was later pronounced dead on June 28, 2025.

The autopsy provided that Yanez's death was attributed to "complications of blunt trauma of the head." The autopsy noted Yanez's initial injury which occurred on June 16. And further stated that when he was transported to the hospital on June 27, he was found to have "re-bleeding of his subdural hemorrhage, brain swelling, compression and occlusion of a cerebral artery, ischemic stroke, and eventual brain death."

Of note, the autopsy notes that photos taken of Yanez during the autopsy show superficial healing of an abrasion on his forehead. And it goes on to state: "There is no evidence of healing subgaleal hemorrhage. This indicates that any head trauma he may have received in the jail is unlikely to have been severe enough to cause the rebleeding of his subdural hematoma."

The abrasion to Yanez's head was noted during WBIC's investigation as corrections officers had noted the abrasion. For example, Yanez had told Corrections Officer White that "he wanted to

bang his head on the wall because he did not feel safe in pod 2C.” CO White noticed the abrasion and it was the reason he was transported to 2G, padded cell #5. The WBIC investigation, including review of video evidence, did not reveal any evidence showing that jail personnel interacted with Yanez in such a way that would have caused the abrasion to his forehead. Based upon the investigation, it appears likely that the abrasion on Yanez’s forehead was self-imposed. Further, as the autopsy indicates, it was not severe enough to have caused the “rebleeding of the subdural hematoma.”

V. Application of the Facts to the Legal Standard

In order to charge a person criminally for Yanez’s death, the most applicable possible charge would be involuntary manslaughter. To prove that charge, there would have had to be some action that caused Yanez’s death. In order to prove involuntary manslaughter, the State would have to prove each of the following elements: (1) an act which causes death, (2) that act was likely to cause death or great bodily harm, and (3) that act was performed recklessly. *People v. Sexton*, 31 Ill.App.3d 593 (5th Dist., 1975). *See People v. Bolden*, 103 Ill.App.2d 377 (1st Dist., 1968) (The gist of the offense is the reckless performance of an act likely to cause death.)

With respect to all those involved, the facts do not support the crime of involuntary manslaughter. There was no act, committed recklessly or otherwise, committed by an employee of the jail that caused Yanez’s death. On June 27, Corrections Officer Dugan discovered Yanez unresponsive when attempting to get Yanez ready for his court appearance. He then called other jail personnel to enter Yanez’s cell. Medical personnel were also present. They evaluated Yanez’s physical status and decided to have Yanez transported to the hospital for further treatment. Yanez later died at the hospital. Again, there was no act, committed recklessly or otherwise, that caused Yanez’s death.

Next, as part of the recently passed “SAFE-T Act,” the Illinois legislature created a “duty to render aid” for “law enforcement officers.” 720 ILCS 5/7-15. The statute reads:

It is the policy of the State of Illinois that all law enforcement officers must, as soon as reasonably practical, determine if a person is injured, whether as a result of a use of force or otherwise, and render medical aid and assistance consistent with training and request emergency medical assistance if necessary.

A failure to render aid would subject a law enforcement officer to prosecution for the crime of “official misconduct.” 720 ILCS 5/33-3(a)(1).

It is almost certain that the definition of “law enforcement officer” would not apply to corrections officers. Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of whether it applies to corrections officers is not necessary because the corrections officers’ involved actions did not violate the “duty to render aid” statute. There is no evidence that prior to entering Yanez’s cell, any of the corrections officers knew that Yanez was in need of medical attention. When corrections officers did enter Yanez’s cell and found him to be unresponsive, they called for medical personnel and Yanez was subsequently transported to the hospital.

VI. Conclusion

Based upon the evidence reviewed and the applicable legal standards, no criminal charges will be filed in this case.