




J. Hanley

WINNEBAGO COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

DATE: July 6, 2026
TO: The People of Winnebago County
FROM: J. Hanley, State's Attorney 

**JAIL INVOLVED DEATH
DECISION MEMORANDUM
Decedent: Miranda Joiner**

I. Introduction

On December 7, 2025, a Winnebago County Sheriff's Department corrections officer entered Miranda Joiner's cell in the Winnebago County jail and found her unresponsive. Jail personnel performed lifesaving measures. Joiner was transported to a local hospital where she was pronounced dead. The Winnebago-Boone County Investigative Cooperative (WBIC) (f/k/a Winnebago-Boone County Integrity Task Force) conducted the investigation of Joiner'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 a memorandum of understanding between 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 Joiner's death and video evidence.

On December 6, 2025 Rockford Police Department officers arrested Joiner for the offense of Theft. In addition, at the time of her arrest, Joiner also had an outstanding warrant. During her arrest, Joiner stated that she had been sick with a cold for approximately one month. Joiner was showing signs of being ill, including coughing deeply in the back seat of the squad car. Joiner also admitted to officers that she was a drug user and had relapsed many times. She stated she was currently using crack cocaine. Joiner did not request any medical attention or present as being in any obvious need of medical care.

Joiner was lodged into the Winnebago County jail in the early morning hours of December 6, 2025. Ofc. Ciaccio said Joiner was not aggressive nor had any behavioral issues when she was taken in the jail and secured in cell 4A7. Ofc. Ciaccio was familiar with Joiner from previous incarcerations and said Joiner was typically an inmate who kept to herself. Ofc. Ciaccio observed Joiner have marks on her arms indicative of drug use.

Ofc. Ciaccio reported that on the evening of December 6, she located Joiner vomiting in her cell and Joiner reported being ill. Joiner told Ciaccio that she vomited 10 times and denied being sick due to drug withdrawal. Joiner asked for Ofc. Ciaccio to call the nurse, which Ofc. Ciaccio did. The nurse did not recommend any specific treatment. Joiner was located sleeping by Ofc. Ciaccio with no incident for the rest of her evening shift - from December 6 into the following morning.

On the evening of December 7, Ofc. Ciaccio said she was alone working pods 4A and 4B. For this reason, Ofc. Ciaccio's evening shift on December 7 was only headcounts and basic cell checks. A headcount cell check involves opening the door and having the inmate show her identification bracelet. A basic cell check involves the corrections officer looking into a cell from outside of the cell.

Ofc. Ciaccio performed a headcount cell check of Miranda Joiner at 6:21 p.m. on December 7. The video shows Joiner in a left side sleeping position facing the wall on the lower bunk of the cell. Joiner reacted normally to Ofc. Ciaccio's request to check her bracelet and then turned back over to her left side sleeping position.

Ofc. Ciaccio did a basic cell check of Joiner's cell again at 7:13, 9:07 and 10:01 p.m. Ofc. Ciaccio said she did not specifically remember each of Joiner's cell check but did not recall anything abnormal. Ofc. Ciaccio's checks of all the cells were similar, and her body worn camera is not high enough to show any view through the window. There were no cameras inside of Joiner's cell.

At 10:47 p.m. Ofc. Ciaccio performed her next headcount cell check of Joiner's cell. Joiner was in the same left side sleeping position. Joiner did not respond to Ofc. Ciaccio's request to see her bracelet, so Ciaccio tried to rouse Joiner and discovered she was not breathing. Ofc. Ciaccio used her radio to initiate an emergency medical response and lifesaving attempts were begun immediately by Ofc. Ciaccio.

Statements of Ofc. Ciaccio, other responding corrections officers, and nurses suggest that Joiner was exhibiting signs of obvious death during the emergency response, including stiffness in her arms and jaw and having abnormal color. There were numerous body worn cameras activated during the lifesaving measures, which showed responding officers and medical staff's efforts to provide lifesaving care.

Forensic Pathologist Dr. Mark Peters performed an autopsy of Joiner. The autopsy report documents that there were no signs of significant natural disease, injury, or active infection. Dr. Peters attributed Joiner's death "to cardiac arrhythmia caused by left ventricular hypertrophy." The toxicology report for Joiner showed positive for cannabis, naloxone, and inactive metabolite of cocaine.

V. Application of the Facts to the Legal Standard

In order to charge a person criminally for Joiner'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 Joiner'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 Ofc. Ciaccio or any other employee of the jail that caused Joiner's death. As described in more detail above, Ofc. Ciaccio discovered Joiner unresponsive when conducting a headcount cell check of Joiner's cell. She then called other jail personnel, including medical personnel, to aid in lifesaving measures. Joiner was transported to the hospital where she was pronounced dead. There was no act, committed recklessly or otherwise, that caused Joiner'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 Joiner’s cell, any of the corrections officers knew that Joiner was in need of medical attention. When corrections officers did enter Joiner’s cell and found her to be unresponsive, they called for medical personnel and Joiner 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.