

“Ed Thomas” Law Protects All Iowans

A new law has been signed by Governor Culver to ensure enforcement officers are notified when individuals hospitalized for a serious mental impairment are released from care if there is an arrest warrant or pending charges against the individual.

Senate File 2352 streamlines the process for notifying law enforcement. It also addresses gaps that became apparent in the system to assure notification takes place.

The bill was prompted by the shooting death of Ed Thomas, the football coach for Aplington-Parkersburg, by Mark Becker. Becker was released from a Waterloo hospital with charges pending, but law enforcement was not notified. Becker drove from the hospital to Parkersburg and later fatally shot Thomas.

The bill says a law enforcement officer can request that any court order include a requirement that the law enforcement agency is notified when an individual hospitalized for a serious mental injury is discharged from the hospital. This would occur when there is an arrest warrant or pending charges for that individual.

In addition, the bill provides an administrative process so law enforcement is notified even if a court order has not yet been completed.

The Department of Public Safety will develop a form to be used by law enforcement to provide contact information to hospitals. Hospitals will be required to notify law enforcement when the form is used.