

# As In-Custody Death Lawsuits Rise, Public Safety Agencies Rethink Risk Detection

*Agencies face mounting pressure to identify distress sooner amid limited resources*



WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES,

January 20, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Public safety](#) agencies across the United States are reassessing how they detect and respond to emergencies in custodial settings, as staffing shortages, substance use, and rising legal scrutiny increase pressure on detention and correctional operations. Agencies have traditionally relied on periodic physical checks and staff observation to identify behavioral distress or signs of crisis. Officials say those methods are increasingly strained by reduced staffing levels and by the complex conditions of individuals entering custody.

Public safety officials note that a significant share of detainees arrive with substance use or mental health issues, increasing the difficulty of distinguishing between someone who is sleeping and someone experiencing distress, particularly during routine checks or overnight hours when crisis intervention may occasionally be required.

"When someone is intoxicated, withdrawing, or in mental health crisis, the signs of serious trouble are not always obvious," said a public safety official familiar with detention operations. "That creates real risk when staff are responsible for monitoring large populations with limited resources and must intervene quickly when a crisis emerges." Legal experts say lawsuits tied to in-custody deaths often focus on whether agencies identified distress promptly and whether response decisions were adequately documented.

"Duty of care increasingly turns on what agencies should have known and when," said a public safety risk consultant who advises state and local governments. "That's driving interest in tools that improve visibility and create clearer operational records, particularly when crisis intervention is needed."

In response, some agencies are beginning to evaluate continuous monitoring technologies designed to provide earlier indicators of potential crises. One such system, OverWatch, developed by technology firm [4Sight Labs](#), has been deployed at a U.S. public safety facility seeking improved oversight and situational awareness, according to people familiar with the

implementation.

"We needed better visibility into risk, especially when staffing is tight," said a senior public safety official involved in the deployment, who was not authorized to speak publicly. "The goal is earlier awareness and faster response, not replacing staff judgment." According to 4Sight Labs, the system integrates with existing workflows and is used alongside established response protocols to support on-duty personnel and supervisory staff, including during crisis intervention.

Public safety analysts say interest in such systems reflects a broader effort to modernize operations amid rising accountability expectations, federal oversight, and civil litigation.

"Agencies are being asked to manage growing risk with fewer resources," said a 4Sight Labs executive. "What we're seeing is a shift toward earlier detection and clearer documentation, which can help reduce harm and protect both individuals in custody and the agencies responsible for them." While adoption remains uneven, analysts say continuous monitoring tools are increasingly being evaluated by agencies responsible for detention and emergency response, particularly following high-profile legal settlements and investigations.

#### About 4Sight Labs

4Sight Labs develops mission-critical technology designed to support public safety operations, operational oversight, crisis response, and duty-of-care responsibilities.

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