

Groups sue to make jail standards public

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SALT LAKE CITY — Civil rights advocates have asked a judge to release a set of jail standards to the public after a records committee said the requirements should remain under wraps.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Utah and the Disability Law Center sued Davis County Jail in Utah's 2nd District Court on May 21, seeking a copy of the standards and of compliance audits at Davis County Jail.

The county has fought such a release, saying an outside contractor wrote and owns the standards. Making them public would be a breach of contract, county officers have said.

In April, the State Records Committee agreed, noting the rules are housed on a website that jail employees must use a password to access.

But the civil rights groups say the public has a right to know the rules governing the jail in light of the 2016 death of inmate Heather Ashton Miller, 28, who fell from her top bunk and died of her injuries.

The Utah Attorney General's Office determined her death was not the result of criminal conduct by jail employees.

The year Miller died, Utah had the highest rate of jail inmate deaths per capita in the nation, at 22, according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Five of those occurred at the Davis County Jail, the sheriff's office has said.

A hearing has not yet been scheduled.