March 2002 – April 2003: 14-year-old Ashley receives criminal charges for a number of incidents, including public disturbance, trespassing and assault. In response to these charges, Ashley receives a one-year probation order, and is enrolled in the Intensive Support Program (a community based strategy for youth deemed ‘high risk’). She is eventually remanded to the New Brunswick Youth Centre after breaching her probationary order; Ashley receives similar charges.

October 2003 – October 2006: Six months following her first remand, Ashley is again remanded to the NBYC after violating her probationary conditions by leaving her parent’s property and throwing crab apples at a mailman. While originally receiving a one-month custodial sentence, this quickly extended to three years in the NBYC largely in response to institutional infractions she accumulated while imprisoned. The majority of these infractions were due to Ashley’s resistant behaviour toward staff efforts to subdue her at times when she was or was attempting to self-injure, behaviour she developed in prison. Due to Smith’s extended custodial confinement, efforts to engage community-based intervention were discontinued.

September 2006 – October 2006: Despite the rapid deterioration of her mental and physical health, the request to transfer 18-year-old Ashley to an even more restrictive environment in the adult correctional system was granted. Smith was incarcerated in the provincial system for nineteen days before being transferred to the federal system; this occurred after 348 days were added to her 1,455 day custodial sentence in response to the institutional charges she accumulated while at the NBYC.

October 2006 – October 2007: Over the 11.5 months Ashley remained in the adult correctional system, she endured perpetual segregation; 17 institutional transfers to nine separate institutions across five provinces; forced therapeutic injections; and was at times denied familial visits. These correctional responses were in light of the 150 institutional infractions she committed over the course of her federal imprisonment (primarily for her self-injurious behaviour). While Ashley attempted to raise attention to her unjust treatment by submitting seven written complaints, her grievances were deemed a low priority by the Correctional Service and were ultimately rejected. The last grievance was opened two months posthumously.

October 19, 2007: After enduring over four years of imprisonment under highly restrictive conditions, 19-year-old Ashley strangled herself to death by tying a ligature around her neck in her segregation cell. Despite her clear distress, Correctional staff abided orders to not intervene until she fell unconscious. After 30 minutes of inaction, correctional staff was unable to revive her.

Facts retrieved from:

1 This fact sheet was created by Nicole LeBlanc, Jennifer M. Kilty and Sylvie Frigon, Department of Criminology, University of Ottawa.