

Nehls has been sued multiple times for allegations of misconduct that occurred on his watch as sheriff, forcing costly lawsuits paid by taxpayers. Nehls was accused in a lawsuit of failing to provide help to a teenager in a juvenile center, who was allegedly sexually assaulted hundreds of times, including on video, and sued again after a county jail he oversaw was condemned for failing to prevent suicides.

Houston Chronicle: As Sheriff, Nehls Was Sued By The Father Of A Teen Who Said Officials Failed To Protect His Son From Being Sexual Assaulted “Hundreds Of Times” At Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center. “The father of a teen held at Fort Bend County Juvenile Detention Center says officials failed to protect his son from a volunteer who allegedly sexually assaulted the boy hundreds of times during one-on-one visits, including attacks captured on video by guards. Supervisors became aware of the situation between the mentor and the boy, then 17, after about a year. The staff cut off the visits after witnessing physical contact on video in May 2018, and Deborah Helen Sutter, 64, of Rosenberg, the volunteer mentor assigned to the boy, was arrested and charged with two counts of indecency with a child by sexual contact. Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls has called the case ‘disturbing and disgusting,’ and labeled Sutter, who had passed a background check, as ‘a predator’ who took advantage of a vulnerable child. Even in the wake of the arrest, however, Nehls did not take the boy’s needs into consideration, according to a civil rights lawsuit the father filed this week in Houston federal court.” [Houston Chronicle, [2/11/19](#)]

The Suit Sought Damages From Nehls, Among Others, Alleging They Knew About The Acts And Failed TO Provide Thomas Help. “The suit is seeking damages from Sutter for allegedly preying on Thomas, but also from Nehls, two sergeants, a sheriff’s deputy and a detective, the detention director, the Prison Rape Reform Act coordinator and a forensic interviewer, who all knew about the acts and failed to provide Thomas help, according to court documents. ‘They stood idly by and let it happen,’ Foley said. ‘They didn’t supervise this animal. They threw this meat to a lion.’” [Houston Chronicle, [2/11/19](#)]

2015: The Texas Commission On Jail Standards Condemned Fort Bend County Following Two Suicide Deaths In Custody. “State regulators have found that two county jails are violating Texas’ minimum jail standards after inmate suicides earlier this month. On Nov. 5, Texas Commission on Jail Standards officials sent a letter to authorities in Fort Bend County, following two deaths in custody since Sept. 30.” [Houston Chronicle, [11/11/15](#)]

Sept. 2015: Inmate Heriberto Correias Died By Hanging At The Fort Bend County Jail. “According to the lawsuit, Heriberto Correias died by hanging at the Fort Bend County Jail on Sept. 29, 2015. Following his death, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards sent a letter on Oct. 15, 2015, saying the Fort Bend lockup was ‘at-risk’ of being out of compliance for not completing face-to-face checks. The letter said the jail needed to take corrective action, said Brandon Wood, executive director of the Texas Commission on Jail Standards.” [Houston Chronicle, [9/20/17](#)]

Nov. 2015: Inmate Eugene Ethridge Jr. Died By Hanging At The Fort Bend County Jail. “Fort Bend County was already on official notice for what a lawyer called ‘an atrocious record’ of preventing jail suicides when Eugene Ethridge Jr. was found in November 2015 in his cell hanging from a bed sheet. [...] Now, Ethridge’s father, Eugene Ethridge Sr., is suing in federal court on behalf of himself and his son’s four minor children, contending the county, Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls and other officials associated with the jail are responsible for deliberate, unconstitutional acts that led to his son’s wrongful death.” [Houston Chronicle, [9/20/17](#)]

Nehls Was Named In The Lawsuit By The Family Of Eugene Ethridge, Who Had Committed Suicide In The Fort Bend County Jail. “Fort Bend County was already on official notice for what a lawyer called ‘an atrocious record’ of preventing jail suicides when Eugene Ethridge Jr. was found in November 2015 in his cell hanging from a bed sheet. [...] Now, Ethridge’s father, Eugene Ethridge Sr., is suing in federal court on behalf of himself and his son’s four minor children, contending the county, Fort Bend County Sheriff Troy Nehls and other officials associated with the jail are responsible for deliberate, unconstitutional acts that led to his son’s wrongful death.” [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Ethridge's Father Blamed Lax Cell Checks. "Ethridge Sr. said the jail's lax cell checks deprived his grandchildren of their father, who had been arrested on a charge of driving while intoxicated. 'I want to find out why they didn't check on my son,' he said. 'I hope this doesn't happen to any other family.'" [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Lawsuit Alleged Officials Showed Deliberate Indifference By Providing Inadequate Supervision To Ethridge Jr. "However, Randall Kallinen, the attorney representing Ethridge's family, said 'the jail has an atrocious record of failing to prevent suicides.' The lawsuit filed in Houston claims that officials showed deliberate indifference by depriving Ethridge Jr. of adequate supervision, observation and medical care after the jail was put on notice regarding the prior suicide." [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Lawsuit Alleged Jail Made No Effort To Inform Employees They Had To Do Regular Checks. "The lawsuit also says the jail didn't make any effort to tell employees they needed to do the checks. 'We did not see any remedial measures done in those 19 days - no memos going out, no supervisors talking to people,' Kallinen said. 'They failed to do rounds.'" [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Texas Commission On Jail Standards: Fort Bend County Was Already Non-Compliant When The Second Suicide Occurred. Wood said there have been four suicides at the jail in the past five years. Every time a death in custody happens the commission takes it very seriously, he said. 'It is very disconcerting. One is enough to cause concern,' he said. 'They were at risk and a second suicide occurred. They simply were not following minimum jail standard.'" [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Commission Found That Fort Bend County Jailers Were Not Completing Face-To-Face Checks On Inmates Every Hour, Which Was Required By Law. "The commission found that Fort Bend County jailers were not completing face-to-face checks on inmates every hour, as required by law." [Houston Chronicle, [11/11/15](#)]

According To The Houston Chronicle, A Lawyer Said The Fort Bend County Had An "Atrocious Record" Of Preventing Jail Suicides. "Fort Bend County was already on official notice for what a lawyer called 'an atrocious record' of preventing jail suicides when Eugene Ethridge Jr. was found in November 2015 in his cell hanging from a bed sheet. Less than three weeks before Ethridge died, the Texas Commission on Jail Standards had warned the sheriff that the jail was at risk for being out of compliance with state law because it failed to check cells at regular intervals on the day in September 2015 when another inmate committed suicide, officials said." [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]

Lawyer Called It One Of The Worst Failures Of A Jail System He'd Ever Seen. "To Kallinen, the county had a simple task: to keep track of its charges. The veteran civil rights lawyer called it one of the worst failures of a jail system he'd seen. 'You're told point blank by the agency to do the checks,' he said. 'What more warning do they need?'" [Houston Chronicle, [9/19/17](#)]