

# Ashley Smith's family wants drugging tapes shown

By Dave Seglins [CBC News](#)

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The family of Ashley Smith says it will appeal a ruling by Ontario's deputy chief coroner, rejecting the admission of videotapes which show the teen being subjected to forced drug injections at Joliette Prison in Quebec.

The injections happened just 90 days before the troubled Moncton, N.B., teen died in October 2007 from self-strangulation. She was transferred between federal prisons 17 times in the final 11 months of her life without access to mental health services.

Coroner Dr. Bonita Porter ruled on Monday that the July 2007 videos of prison staff at Joliette forcibly giving the girl needles are not [relevant](#) to Smith's death three months later in her cell at Grand Valley Institution in Kitchener, Ont.

Porter is heading an inquest that is scheduled to begin in early April in Toronto.

Porter said in her ruling: "I am not aware of any information ... that suggests a nexus between [the forced injections in July 2007] ... and the pattern of ligature use which eventually led to her death."

But the Smith family, along with the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and Ontario's Public Advocate for Children and Youth, argued the videos [document abuse](#) by prison officials and are key to understanding the girl's downward spiral into self-destruction.

On Tuesday the Smith family, the Elizabeth Fry Society and the Ontario Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, served notice they intend to appeal Porter's earlier ruling.

"The jury will not hear the full story and that's why we have to go to court. My daughter deserves no less," said Coralee Smith, Ashley's mother, in a prepared statement.

The family says the teen gave up hope after a series of abuses, including undergoing forced injections of tranquillizing drugs administered by staff at Joliette in July 2007.

"It is impossible to think forcing a youth to take medication and restraining her for endless hours are not related to her death which occurred 90 days later," said Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, in a news release.

## Exclusive footage

*The Fifth Estate* has obtained exclusive prison footage of Ashley Smith's final months in a federal prison in Kitchener, Ont. The footage is part of a documentary called *Behind the Wall*, which can be watched online on [The Fifth Estate](#) website.

One psychiatrist hired by Canada's correctional investigator determined the injections were illegal.

Smith was 19 when she choked herself to death on a piece of cloth. Guards looked on, ordered by Corrections Canada managers not to intervene until she had stopped breathing.

Prison officials originally declared the death a suicide.

However, one of Corrections Canada's own psychologists, Dr. Margo Rivera, and the Smith family say it was an accident. They argue that Smith's self-strangulation behaviour was a desperate bid for attention to provoke guards to intervene and give her some stimulation in her isolation cell.

Smith was originally jailed in New Brunswick at age 15, caught for throwing a crab apple at a postal carrier. However, bad behaviour inside juvenile detention escalated and led to her lengthy incarceration. She was often in restraints and in isolation until her ultimate transfer into the adult federal prison system.

The court appeal will likely delay the start of the inquest which was scheduled to begin on April 4.