



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

CENTRAL STATE HOSPITAL  
P. O. Box 4030  
Petersburg, Virginia 23803

DEPARTMENT OF  
MENTAL HEALTH, MENTAL RETARDATION  
AND  
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES

Telephone (804) 524-7000  
(Voice/TDD)  
FAX (804) 524-7165  
FAX (804) 524-7069  
(Forensic Unit)

October 15, 1997

The Honorable C. H. Whitehurst, Judge  
Chesapeake General District Court  
Civic Center  
308 Shea Drive  
Chesapeake, VA 23320-0225

CHESAPEAKE GENERAL  
DISTRICT COURT  
97 OCT 30 PM 3:35

RE: KEY, Natasha T.  
Reg. No. 221660.9

Dear Judge Whitehurst:

Pursuant to an order for psychological evaluation, Natasha T. Key, a 25-year-old, single, African American female, charged with malicious wounding, was evaluated to determine her Competency To Stand Trial.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

The defendant was interviewed by Lynda Stein, M.A., of the Forensic Unit at Central State Hospital on September 8 and 11, 1997. In addition to the interview, other sources of information were utilized. These included the Central State Hospital current medical and legal records, including the Competency to Stand Trial evaluation by D. H. Keenan, Ed.D., dated December 1996. The Interviewer also consulted with the defendant's therapist, Ms. Eve Sugar, MSW, of the Forensic Unit of Central State Hospital.

STATEMENT OF NON-CONFIDENTIALITY:

Immediately prior to the interviews, the defendant was informed as to the nature and purpose of the present evaluation and the attendant limitations on confidentiality. Although the defendant had difficulty verbalizing these limits on confidentiality, she was able to repeat them after several prompts and reminders. She did appear to understand the limits to confidentiality and the purpose of this report.

COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL REPORT (continued):

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The defendant was raised by her grandmother and has an eight-year-old daughter. Both her grandmother and mother were described as very supportive of the defendant.

The defendant reported that she dropped out of high school after the 11th grade due to drug and alcohol problems. She is currently in treatment for her drug and alcohol abuse. She is currently on SSI and has never been married. Ms. Key has an extensive psychiatric history including inpatient treatment at Eastern State Hospital and Central State Hospital. The defendant has a well-documented history of Schizophrenia and she said that her first contact with the mental health system was at about nine years old because she was "paranoid." During her current treatment at Central State Hospital, the defendant has been described as having adequate self-care skills, as being active, pleasant, cooperative, alert and appropriate in groups. Alternatively, her comments are also at times inappropriate, tangential and incongruent with conversation. She continues to have hallucinations (though they are now less intrusive and derogatory) and she is sometimes delusional, thinking that others do not like her and that others control her thoughts. She has not required seclusion or the use of restraints since February, 1997, although her behavior continues to be occasionally impulsive. She reportedly admitted that she slapped another patient approximately six weeks ago and could not state why. Generally, she is described as cooperative and very pleasant. Her estimated intelligence is average to low average. Her current medications include Prolixin, Artane, Hydrochlorothiazide, Valproic Acid, Vistaril and Olanzapine. Although she is currently on antipsychotic medications, the defendant stated that she is not on such medication. She appears to be very open and willing to receive treatment. She reported no significant medical history, although she is diagnosed with Hypertension and Diabetes. The defendant reported various prior legal charges, beginning at about age 13 years old. The defendant also reported an assault and battery charge from an altercation involving her mother a few years ago, as well as charges of trespassing.

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MENTAL STATUS EVALUATION:

The defendant was well groomed except for wearing a very soiled shirt. She appeared her stated age. She is of average height and is somewhat overweight. She was oriented to the correct date and her current location. She knew the attorney who had been originally assigned to her. Ms. Key also knew her charges and said that her most recent court date had been last April. During her first interview, she appeared rather unresponsive, slow and tired. Her affect appeared to be restricted, although at times she laughed inappropriately. She did not appear to be anxious, however, she described herself as "moody." When asked why she was moody, she indicated that the voices were "bugging" her and that she was "tired of hearing them all of the time." There has been no reported change in her appetite or her sleep. Her speech was tangential and she perseverated at times. Her speech can also be described as at times nonsensical. For example, she said that she was "sex happy" and when asked to clarify this term, she said: "It depends on how you grow with it. You can think about it. You know. It makes you laugh. You think about it. You grow with it. It's funny to me, like a sex joke." Although the defendant frequently took tangents, she was usually easily redirected. She denies any current suicidal or homicidal thoughts. Her hallucinations are currently predominantly auditory and she said that they are commanding her to "do something," but she could not articulate well what it was. She only stated that this had something to do with her family. She reported that the voices "get on [her] nerves and hurt [her] feelings." The defendant's attention was adequate, although her comprehension of the questions she was asked during the interview was poor. On questions assessing the defendant's general fund of knowledge and long-term memory, her performance was highly variable. For example, when asked to name three presidents, she responded "Clinton, Dukakis, I don't know." Although she knew who Louis Armstrong was and that the sun sets in the west, she responded that the sun "rises in the light." Her short-term memory was adequate as evidenced by her ability to repeat to the examiner four sets of unrelated numbers which varied in length from two to five digits, and by her ability to report to the examiner a set of three unrelated words after an elapsed time of approximately 25 minutes. She adequately performed simple mathematical calculations. However, on questions assessing her abstract thought and social judgement, her performance was again variable.

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COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL REPORT (continued):

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For example, she stated: "Strike while the iron is hot means lift it up; If I find a sealed, stamped envelope, I should mail it; If I see smoke in the movies, I'll just leave, that's it." Her insight appears to be limited as well.

COMPETENCE TO STAND TRIAL:

The defendant knew who the attorney was who had originally been assigned to her case. When asked if she thought whether or not he was doing a good job, she stated that she thought he was, but that she never sees him. When asked if she had any problems working with her attorney, she stated that she did not. The defendant also seems to have an appreciation of the charges against her and of some possible legal strategies. She knew she was charged with malicious wounding. When asked if there were other pleas she could submit, she stated that there were not. The examiner then asked her if she knew what NGRI means. The defendant subsequently stated that she "could plead NGRI" due to her illness and stay in Central State Hospital. The defendant also appears to have an awareness of the consequences and penalties of these charges. She stated that she thought the Commonwealth Attorney had evidence and a strong case against her, including her "[victim's] hospital records and the knife" that was used. When asked what could happen to her if she were convicted, the defendant stated she might "serve jail time" or she might "serve time at Central State Hospital" if she were found NGRI. When asked what it might take to get her released from the hospital should she be found NGRI, the defendant stated that she was simply scared of the voices and did "not want to be a menace to society." Upon further probing, the defendant stated that she could be "released with the approval of medical staff." The defendant appeared to have a rudimentary understanding of the court procedures as well. When asked what the role of the judge was, the defendant indicated that "the judge decides what is best in your case." Upon further probing, the defendant conceded that in general, the judge serves as the "authority figure in the court building." The defendant also stated that the jury "decides your guilt or innocence." She also stated that the Commonwealth Attorney was the "offender's attorney, not mine. He's against me. He's the state attorney." When asked who the defense counsel was, she stated, "He's my attorney." When the defendant was asked what the prosecutor is attempting to do by asking questions, she stated "He tries to offend me or cross judge me. No, he cross examines me. He is trying to see what I will say."

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COMPETENCY TO STAND TRIAL REPORT (continued):

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With further probing, the defendant stated that the prosecuting attorney tries to show the court "what I did in my words, my story." The defendant appears to have the capacity to disclose facts and testify relevantly. When asked to explain what happened the night of the incident, the defendant was able to do so without effort. Although she appears to have some problems remembering dates and times, she does appear to remember the events of the incident well. Although her intelligence has been estimated to be average to low average, she does evidence some thought disorder and takes many tangents during her conversations. However, it should be noted that she is easily redirected during these tangents. The defendant does not show overt signs of depression, although she did indicate that she does feel "a little blue" because she misses her home. When asked if she thought anyone might lie about her in court and what she should do, she said that no one would lie, but if they did, she would tell her attorney. By her medical records, the defendant has been relatively stable. She stated that she does not feel very angry, although she does feel much stress. She said she feels like "flipping out at times." The way she copes with this is by "ignoring it so that it will go away." She does still report hearing the voices of her family members at times and that they "get on my nerves."

SUMMARY OF OPINION:

The defendant appears to have a rudimentary understanding the charges, strategies, possible consequences and court procedures in relation to her defense. This is congruent with reports from her therapist, Ms. Eve Sugar, MSW, and prior Competency to Stand Trial evaluation, dated December 1996. In addition, these sources have noted that this defendant is at times erratic in her behavior and tangential in her thinking. However, since admission to Central State Hospital, although her condition has not remitted entirely, it has improved greatly.

Therefore, it is my opinion, to a reasonable degree of professional certainty, that the defendant does have the present ability to understand the legal proceedings against her and has the capacity to assist in her own defense. However, this finding is presented with caution. Even with redirection of her tangential thinking, medications and breaks during court proceedings, her competency status may decline with increasing stress. Should this occur, please consider another Competency to Stand Trial evaluation.

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