



COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO FACT SHEET  
JAIL / MEDICAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR INMATES  
Summer 2017

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The County of San Luis Obispo made the following systemwide changes after the tragic death of Andrew Holland at County Jail in January 2017 to prevent anything like that from ever happening again. At any given time, there are about 600 inmates at County Jail and a substantial number of them suffer from mental illness. At any one time, about 260 inmates are taking medication prescribed to treat mental illness. These are some of the important systemwide changes the County has made to address the treatment of inmates at County Jail in the months following Mr. Holland's death:

- ✓ **Discontinued use of restraint chair.** The Sheriff's Office now prohibits use of the restraint chair and has updated its restraint policies to reflect this.
- ✓ **Restricted amount of time in safety cells.** The Sheriff's Office has restricted the amount of time an inmate can spend in a safety cell to no more than 72 hours. Now, after 48 hours, only a Health Agency psychiatrist can extend the amount of time an inmate can spend in a safety cell, and only by 24 hours after an in-person assessment of the inmate. After 48 hours in a safety cell, an inmate must be either cleared for jail housing, cleared for an extended stay in a safety cell by a psychiatrist, admitted to the County Psychiatric Health Facility, or transported to the hospital.
- ✓ **A new place for inmates who are incompetent to stand trial.** County Jail typically has several inmates awaiting transfer to a treatment program or mental health facility. Mentally ill misdemeanor inmates have historically been transferred to the County's Psychiatric Health Facility if they are found incompetent to stand trial or if they are found to be a danger to themselves or others. However, mentally ill felony inmates usually wait for transfer to a state hospital, which sometimes cannot accommodate them. The County Health Agency has made changes to transfer such misdemeanor inmates to the Psychiatric Health Facility sooner. Likewise, if a felony inmate is found incompetent to stand trial, he or she can now be referred to the San Bernardino Regional Jail Bed Competency Program for treatment, rather than waiting in County Jail for a bed at a state hospital.
- ✓ **Changed Psychiatric Health Facility protocol to promptly accept inmates with declining mental health.** The County's Health Agency has now standardized its criteria and changed its protocols for accepting an inmate at its 16-bed Psychiatric Health Facility. This facility treats patients in psychiatric crisis. When jail staff sees that an inmate's mental health is declining, the on-duty sergeant notifies jail mental health staff and requests an immediate consultation. Mental Health staff will assess the inmate and, in an emergency, will administer emergency medications and/or work with the Psychiatric Health Facility to transfer the inmate for treatment. The Health Agency will make whatever arrangements are necessary to promptly accept the inmate at the facility.
- ✓ **Made medical forms easier for families to submit online.** An inmate's family member can now easily access the Inmate Medication Form online and electronically fill it out and submit it to County Jail mental health and medical staff. The form is also available in English and Spanish.



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- ✓ **Increased observation of medically and mentally ill inmates.** Jail, medical and mental health supervisors will visit jail cells and units weekly to observe the inmates with any known medical or mental health conditions. All safety cell inmates now also receive daily visits from the jail medical team, working in a collaborative approach.
- ✓ **Increased collaboration.** Jail, medical and mental health supervisors now meet at least weekly to discuss and address the needs of medically and mentally ill inmates. At the same time, there are now weekly meetings among the jail medical care and mental health care staff to address further improve procedural and policy changes. This collaboration allows staff to make better informed decisions about inmate care and custody.
- ✓ **Increased training for deputies, medical and mental health staff at County Jail.** Staff members received training in the spring related to procedures when the mental health of an inmate begins to decline, and will continue to receive training related to improving their response to the medical and mental health needs of inmates at County Jail.
- ✓ **Formed Sheriff's Mental Health Task Force.** The Sheriff's Office has formed a community oversight committee tasked with identifying problems and their solutions regarding to treatment for mentally ill inmates. This ad hoc committee is made up of physicians, mental health professionals, law enforcement professionals, and representatives of nonprofits and community groups that provide services to mentally ill populations in San Luis Obispo County.