

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS JANICE HAHN AND  
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**Mental Health Treatment Center**

Men's Central Jail is a decrepit, outdated facility—inconsistent with human values and basic decency. It must be torn down. There has been much debate about what to replace it with, and how to better serve those who are mentally ill and medically fragile within the justice system, and the Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility is not the answer.

Study after study has demonstrated that punitive environments are not only inhumane for those suffering from mental illness; they also create an impediment to recovery and healthy re-integration into society. The challenge has been in balancing the need to incarcerate those who are not eligible for diversion and must be in custody with the individual needs of those whose mental illness has entangled them in a criminal justice system unable to help them recover and lead healthy lives. The proposal before the Board today to build the “Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility” is obsolete, given all that Los Angeles County (County) now knows about how best to serve justice-involved individuals as well as the changes in legislation and County infrastructure like

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the Office of Diversion and Reentry. The name itself implies that the facility would be a correctional facility, with mental health programmatic components second. However, the experts clearly tell us that we should be focused on exactly the opposite approach. It is true that all those to be housed in this proposed “CCTF” would have been arrested for crimes, but that does not take into account their mental health status. While well intended, trying to fit mental health treatment into a jail remains mainly a punitive paradigm, not rehabilitative.

Any facility that is constructed to replace Men’s Central Jail should reflect the current research supporting mental health care and rehabilitation of mentally-ill individuals, and restrike the balance between concerns about public safety and concerns for human dignity. By necessity, this replacement facility cannot be conceived of as a jail because jails have been shown to exacerbate mental illnesses instead of treating them.

In recent years, the Board and the District Attorney have recognized the value of shifting investment dollars into diversion and rehabilitation efforts; however, the inventory of diversion options remains insufficient to meet these needs. While we continue to scale up diversion to the level that is necessary, the facility that takes the place of Men’s Central Jail should be a mental health treatment facility, operated by our Department of Health Services and staffed by our Department of Mental Health.

The County has the opportunity to create something better than what has been proposed, and it is not necessary to go back to square one to do so. Rather, during the 12-month validation period, the County’s leading health and mental health experts can ensure that the design and eventual operation of the facility truly serves both our public safety and humanitarian objectives.

**WE, THEREFORE MOVE** that the Board of Supervisors take the following

actions:

1. Approve the award of the design-build contract to McCarthy, and authorize the Director of Public Works to execute the contract upon completion of negotiations; however, rename the “Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility” the “Mental Health Treatment Center.”
2. Instruct the Directors of Mental Health and Health Services, in coordination with the Chief Executive Officer to report back to the Board within 180 days, and periodically thereafter, on how to staff and operate the Mental Health Treatment Center.
3. Instruct the Directors of Mental Health and Health Services, in coordination with the Chief Executive Officer and in consultation with the Sheriff, to work with the design-build team within the first 90 days of the 12-month validation period and develop a design for the Mental Health Treatment Center that is informed by all of the leading research and information on mental health challenges experienced by those that come most often into contact with law enforcement. The design must support a treatment-first approach, with appropriate security measures in place, with the ultimate goal of diversion to community based mental health treatment wherever possible. The design process should also be done in coordination with other efforts moving in Los Angeles County to understand the needs of those incarcerated and expand diversion and alternatives to custody, particularly for those with clinical needs.

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