

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR SHEILA KUEHL

June 23, 2020

Extending Recovery from COVID-19 to the County’s Custody and Detention

Facilities

As the County enters into the recovery phase of COVID-19, businesses are starting to open up, people are going back to work, and life in general is moving toward increased normalcy—albeit with necessary precautions to reduce potential exposure and spread. As we take steps to safely and responsibly ease restrictions, it is important that this response is likewise extended to the youth and adults who are in our custody settings—as they too are part of our community.

The individuals in our jails, camps, and halls have been deprived of in-person visitation for the past several months, exacerbating feelings of isolation and disconnection from loved ones. The absence of this contact with friends and family has placed an additional burden on a population that is already experiencing disproportionate rates of mental health challenges, medical issues, economic hardship, and systemic racism. The value of visitation cannot be stressed enough. We know that in-person contact with loved ones supports personal wellbeing and reduces the risk of recidivism.

Likewise, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the County’s custody and detention facilities to close their doors to community-based service providers. Although this was

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done to protect incarcerated individuals and detained young people, as well as the service-providers themselves, there are significant harmful effects from depriving those in custody of the services they need for rehabilitation and healing.

As all County residents look forward to a sense of normalcy and recovery, we must examine ways to safely extend recovery to those in custody and detention facilities as well. All of the youth in County facilities have been tested for COVID-19 and largely, they have tested negative. On the adult side, the number of cases is higher, though testing has ramped up and best practices protocols for mitigating associated risks have been implemented. In recent weeks, the number of individuals in isolation and/or receiving medical treatment have gradually decreased and the number of individuals housed in quarantine has also shown slow, but promising, decreases.

We are decidedly in the recovery stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, as public health guidance shifts and allows for the deliberate and careful re-opening of society. We must include our residents who are currently detained or incarcerated in these conversations and consider the needs that they have to visit with those they rely on most for support and allow to re-engage in the services that are essential to their healing and rehabilitation.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors:

1. Direct the Chief of Probation Officer, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, to report back to the Board in 15 days with a plan to resume in-person visitation and service-provider engagement at juvenile halls and camps, as soon as the Department of Public Health deems it can be done safely; and
2. Request that the Sheriff, in consultation with the Department of Public Health, report back to the Board in 15 days with a plan to resume in-person visitation and service-provider engagement at the County's jails, as soon as

the Department of Public Health deems it can be done safely. Further, because facility structure and size, as well as population numbers and quarantine status must be taken into consideration, LASD may consider initiating a pilot program at one of its smaller and more manageable facilities, such as CRDF. After testing protocols and other guidelines are established at the pilot facility, it can serve as a model for other facilities.