

## **MOTION BY COMMISSIONERS KATHLEEN AUSTRIA AND REBA STEVENS**

### **Expanding Diversion-Related Services**

**April 28, 2022**

There are currently 12,859 people in the Los Angeles County jail system. It is essential that the Mental Health Commission do what it reasonably can to care for the forty-three percent of the jail's population who have serious mental health needs -- a 21% increase since 2020. Consistent with national trends, incarcerated women have a particularly high rate of mental health needs. Moreover, there are significant racial disparities in who is incarcerated—with Black Angelenos and Latinx/Hispanics hit the hardest. The RAND Corporation did a study in 2020 which found at least 61% of the individuals with serious mental health needs could safely be served in community-based settings.

Many experts have recommended further expansion of community-based mental health treatment options to increase diversion for people with mental health conditions. The Los Angeles County Department of Health Services' Office of Diversion and Re-entry (ODR) has demonstrated success in addressing this crisis, but it has not been able to expand services beyond its 2,200-bed capacity because of financial constraints.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created ODR in 2015 to reduce the number of people incarcerated in Los Angeles County jails with mental health and/or substance use disorders who are at risk of homelessness, to reduce recidivism, and to improve the health outcomes of justice-involved populations who have the most serious underlying health needs. Since its creation, the courts have released 7,414 persons from jail and into ODR's care where they receive community-based treatment and various types of supportive housing programs. (See Attachment A). Numerous studies have confirmed that ODR's programming is successful at stabilizing persons with serious mental illness so they can safely live in the community. Another Rand Corporation study of ODR's Supportive Housing Program found 91% of its clients had stable housing after six months; 74% had stable housing after twelve months; and 86% had no new felony convictions after a year. Ninety percent of its clients successfully remained housed after six months, and only 15% had a felony conviction within the next year.

Preliminary results of a study by UCLA of 962 ODR clients is showing that their medical and mental health hospitalization and emergency department visit rates dramatically dropped after they enrolled in ODR programs. (See below).

**Table 2. Medical Health Utilization Rate (per 100,000 clients) in pre and post 12 Months of Enrollment**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>In pre 12 months</i>	<i>In post 12 months</i>
<b>Number of hospitalizations (per 100,000 clients)</b>	156,128	63,454
<b>Number of ED visits (per 100,000 clients)</b>	313,092	116,896
<b>Number of primary care visits (per 100,000 clients)</b>	92,200	199,249
<b>Number of specialty visits (per 100,000 clients)</b>	59,888	92,490

**Table 3. Mental Health Utilization Rate (per 100,000 clients) in pre and post 12 Months of Enrollment**

<i>Variable</i>	<i>In pre 12 months</i>	<i>In post 12 months</i>
<b>Number of hospitalizations (per 100,000 clients)</b>	71,587	20,775
<b>Number of ED visits (per 100,000 clients)</b>	56,546	17,271

Despite the demonstrated efficacy of the ODR model, sufficient funding has not been identified to sustain its current operations, much less scale up diversion efforts to keep pace with the growing need. It is time for the MHSA Commission to confirm its support for this program and the dignity it restores to its persons with serious mental illness.

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**WE THEREFORE MOVE THAT THE MENTAL HEALTH COMMISSION:**

1. Proclaim that Jail-Based Diversion is a strong priority of the Mental Health Services Act Commission.
2. Strongly recommend that the Department of Mental Health allocate \$25M a year in ongoing Mental Health Service Act (MHSA) funds, beginning FY 2022-2023, to support the Office of Diversion & Reentry's services to MHSA eligible clients and that the fiscal year MHSA plan be amended to reflect these recommendations.



**Health Services**  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**OFFICE OF DIVERSION  
AND REENTRY**



**ODR Housing**

- Began August 2016
- Permanent supportive housing, intensive case management, formal probation



**MIST-CBR & Diversion**

- Began October 2015
- Misdemeanor Incompetent to Stand Trial Community-Based Restoration



**FIST-CBR & Off-Ramp**

- Began July 2018
- Felony Incompetent to Stand Trial Community-Based Restoration
- Off-Ramp, competency findings & services under PC 1370 (a)(1)(g)



**Maternal Health**

- Began March 2018
- Diversion of pregnant women from custody



**DSH Diversion**

- Began March 2019
- Specialized use of PC 1001.36



February, 2022