

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER
AND JANICE HAHN

April 19, 2022

Enhancing Illegal Drug Detection in the Jails and Courts

Drug and opioid use in Los Angeles County has contributed to many illegal and illicit activities and numerous deaths from overdose or violent transactional exchange. The Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner’s office reports opioid overdose as the primary cause of deaths in the County.

Despite multiple preventative measures taken by the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) to establish tripwires and stopgaps to prevent narcotics from entering jails, inmate deaths due to drug overdose continue to rise. During the weekend of April 7th, LASD responded to four fentanyl-related overdoses in the jails, with two of those victims later passing away¹.

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¹ The official cause of death cannot be declared until the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner’s Office has completed its investigation.

MOTION

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| SOLIS | _____ |
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A [study](#) published by the Department of Justice in December 2021 reveals the impact of narcotics in jails and prisons has caused drug-related deaths to increase by 623%. The study further highlighted the increase in drug and alcohol-related deaths per year is now reaching the same number as suicides. Detecting and mitigating narcotics from entering the jails is critical to ensure proper compliance with our constitutional duty to protect the safety and health of our inmate population.

In order to address narcotics overdoses in the jails and upon recognizing an increase in medical calls for individuals found unresponsive, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department took steps in 2021 to make NARCAN readily available in several of its housing units. The department further reported an influx of NARCAN administrations, suggesting narcotics were likely brought into the jails undetected by LASD Deputies.

The current strategy used by the department for narcotics detection and prevention falls under the responsibility of personnel assigned to Operation Safe Jails (OSJ) through the gathering of intelligence. Other methods include Body Scanners, Drug Scent K9s, as well as traditional visual and physical searches conducted by custody personnel. Between 2018 – 2021, the referenced detection methods resulted in the successful recovery of 224.44 pounds of various narcotics.

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Ensuring preventative methods to keep narcotics out of jails also addresses any possible illicit market and drug trade occurring within the jails. Currently, the value of narcotics in Custody can exceed 10 to 20 times its street value, subsequently making it more lucrative and attractive for individuals to attempt to smuggle these substances. Over the past 4 years, Custody Service Division has recovered over 112 pounds of Methamphetamine (over 51000 grams) valued between \$1 million to \$3 million on the street. The rise in narcotic prices has also motivated criminal organizations to increase their flow of narcotics into the Jails by using various methods to smuggle them into our jail facilities.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors instruct the Chief Executive Office, in collaboration with the Sheriff's Department, to report back to the Board in writing in 60 days with recommendations to prevent the presence of drugs in the jails, including, but not limited to, the feasibility of increasing our proactive detection efforts through the presence of narcotics K9 handlers across the County's 7 jail facilities, the 20 patrol station jails housing inmates and 28 court lockups and intelligence gathering capability through Operation Safe Jails.

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