

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR HILDA L. SOLIS

June 27, 2023

**Supporting the Expansion of FIP Stepdown and HOH Dorm Units the Los Angeles County Jails**

To address the complexity of mental health needs of those who are incarcerated in the Los Angeles County (County) jails, the County has adopted and expanded the Forensic In-Patient (FIP) Stepdown and High Observation Housing (HOH) Dorm housing modules for HOH at Twin Towers Correctional Facility (TTCF) and Central Regional Detention Facility (CRDF).

These units are examples of Therapeutic Housing Units employed in many correctional systems to provide treatment to the mentally ill in the least restrictive setting. Although specific characteristics can vary, these units typically include key therapeutic features including (1) significant enhanced, unrestrained out-of-cell time in which patients can informally socialize with one another and more easily engage in therapeutic, educational, or other programming activities; (2) a therapeutic physical space; (3) consistent and specially trained custody and clinical staff; and (4) clinically-driven mental health treatment plans and programming. The FIP Stepdown Units in the

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Los Angeles County Jails have also employed volunteer, specially-trained, Mental Health Assistants who are incarcerated and live in the modules and care for and mentor patients and assist them in acclimating to the less restrictive environment in the modules. These Mental Health Assistants are compelling ambassadors for the expansion of these units, act as mentors and “big-siblings” to patients in the units, assist patients with life skills, and encouraging patients to take medication and participate in programming. They are actively involved in recruiting and training other inmate Mental Health Assistants, and two have written a book titled *The Solution: Mental Health Assistants – Bridging the Gap to Effective Treatment*. They have also participated in a panel webinar discussing their work with the FIP Stepdown at the National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement (NACOLE).

The therapeutic FIP Stepdown/HOH Dorm units provide a supportive environment that includes increased unrestrained out-of-cell time, and they address mental health and behavioral health by promoting and incentivizing pro-social behavior. This increased socialization can also prepare patients in HOH housing for placement in even less restrictive settings, including community diversion or other conditional release programs, furthering the County’s Care First, Jails Last efforts. FIP Stepdown/HOH Dorm units are also important to the County’s efforts to comply with the Settlement Agreement with the United States Department of Justice in *United States v. County of Los Angeles*, including compliance with provisions that require specialty mental health housing for those who need it, out-of-cell programming, and individualized mental health treatment plans.

Presently, there are six FIP Stepdown Pods and three new HOH Dorm Pods in HOH housing modules at TTCF, and there is a total of three FIP Stepdown Pods at CRDF. Correctional Health Services (CHS) and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) are working to expand these units rapidly. To do so, the Sheriff will need to purchase or otherwise rapidly allocate key therapeutic elements to create a therapeutic physical space, which may include colorful paint, murals, aquariums, soft furniture, plants, and activity tables. The Sheriff and CHS may also need to contract rapidly for additional services to provide therapeutic programming or to make additional therapeutic spaces available to patients in FIP Stepdown/HOH Dorm units. The Sheriff and CHS should also continue and make consistent efforts to recruit and train additional Mental Health Assistants through the Merit Masters program.

It is critical that the Board supports the expansion of FIP Stepdown/HOH Dorms, including by further streamlining County processes that could delay expansion.

**I, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

1. Request that the Sheriff and direct the Department of Health Services (DHS) – Correctional Health Services (CHS) continue to expand rapidly the number of FIP Stepdown and HOH Dorm pods at TTCF and CRDF to a total of 20 pods by March 30, 2024; a total of 28 pods by March 30, 2025; and 30 pods by June 30, 2025 and provide to the Board, bi-annual report backs, in writing, on the status and progress of the expansion.
2. Request that the Sheriff and Direct the Department of Health Services (DHS) – Correctional Health Services (CHS) continue to recruit volunteer Mental Health

Assistants, including through recruitment and training initiatives, such as the Merit Masters program, at least two times per year, more if needed.

3. For purchases of goods, including supplies, equipment, and services necessary to expand FIP Stepdown and HOH Dorm pods within the Los Angeles County Jails, increase the delegated purchasing authority of the Sheriff and the Director of DHS, or their designees, to \$50,000, and to the extent legally permitted, authorize the Sheriff and the Director of DHS to enter into, amend, or terminate agreements, including work or purchase orders, and other services or commodities, without adhering to the requirements of the County's Sole Source Policy, or any other competitive procurement requirements, provided that the Department has a good cause justification in that the action implements or is in support of the expansion of FIP Stepdown/HOH Dorm units. This increased delegated purchasing authority are intended to supplement, not replace, Departments' existing streamlined and delegated authority and shall remain in place until June 30, 2025 or until rescinded by the Board.

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