



# OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

HALL OF JUSTICE

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF



July 20, 2020

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

## **EXTENDING RECOVERY FROM COVID-19 TO THE COUNTY'S CUSTODY AND DETENTION FACILITIES**

On June 23, 2020, the Board of Supervisors (Board) adopted a motion by Supervisor Sheila Kuehl, directing the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD), in consultation with the Department of Public Health (DPH), to develop a plan to resume in-person visitation and service-provider engagement at the County's jail facilities, and to consider initiating a pilot program at a smaller facility, such as Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF). In this report, LASD and DPH provide a progress report on activities to extend recovery from the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) to the County's adult custody population.

### **COVID-19 IMPACTS**

In mid-March, Los Angeles County issued "Safer at Home" orders to combat the spread of COVID-19. Among many of the directives to improve public safety, all County buildings were closed to the public. This resulted in the temporary suspension of the in-person visitation at all County custody facilities starting on Friday, March 13, 2020, with the exception of attorney and professional visits. It also halted most outside providers, such as our educational partners, from direct service provision in order to protect the health and wellbeing of all those who live, work, and visit County jails. In response to these changes, alternative methods to provide rehabilitative and reentry services were implemented, such as the correspondence-style education packets.

211 WEST TEMPLE STREET, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

*A Tradition of Service*  
— Since 1850 —

By early May, the numerous preventative measures taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 had stabilized cases and deaths, prompting the County to begin a five-phase reopening process. The approach called for safeguards to be in place before opening to ensure: healthcare system capacity, public health capacity, appropriate protocols to keep people safe, and protection of vulnerable populations. However, as the county, state, and nation has slowly reopened, COVID-19 infections, hospitalization, and death rates have trended up causing a re-consideration and potential for a return to the more stringent Safer at Home orders.

### **CONSIDERATION OF PHASED REOPENING IN COUNTY CUSTODY FACILITIES**

Given the increased community transmission rates of COVID-19 and the possible exposure to the justice involved population within LASD custody facilities, DPH does not recommend LASD reopen public visitation or in-person service-provider engagement at this time. In anticipation of eventual reopening, however, LASD and DPH are developing guidelines and plans to address protection and support of inmates, staff, and the public with appropriate physical distancing, infection control, communication, and equitable access measures.

#### **Guidelines and Plan Development**

LASD and DPH are in the process of identifying best practices for allowing the public into custody facilities for visitation and expanded direct service provision. To date, we have identified Cook County as the only adult jail system allowing limited outdoor visits at the time. Los Angeles County is planning to allow limited, structured juvenile visitation with parents in outdoor settings with appropriate protective and cleaning measures.

There is limited provision in LASD facilities of essential services with outside providers, such as delivery of commissary and religious support. Commissary staff and religious volunteers are screened before entering any jail, are required to wear personnel protective equipment (PPE), and have limited, socially distanced contact with inmates and staff while inside the jail. Most facilities throughout the county have adopted similar or more restrictive guidelines for service provision. Other services, such as education and reentry, are being directly facilitated by LASD or other county department staff in accordance with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), State of California, and DPH standards.

Reopening guidelines and plans being developed by LASD and DPH will address the following considerations:

- Development and/or modification of necessary protocols, policies, and training;



- Preventative practices, such as health screening, PPE, and cleaning;
- Adaptations to facility spaces to facilitate preventative practices;
- Operational changes to number, type, and duration of visits and/or services;
- Addressing and protecting vulnerable populations.

### **Barriers to Reopening**

LASD manages the largest and most complex county jail system in the nation with the largest general population as well as the largest serious mental health population. Before a phased reopening begins, there are numerous barriers and potential considerations to address:

Staffing: Adequate staffing levels will have to be in place to facilitate service provision and additional preventative practices. With COVID-19 infection rates increasing and staff cuts occurring due to budget concerns, there may be less staff available to support these operations requiring a reduction or significant modification in the type and amount of services offered.

Equipment and Supplies: Adequate types and amounts of supplies and equipment will have to be acquired and maintained. Currently, LASD has been able to obtain these necessary PPE and cleaning supplies, but supply chains have not been stable throughout the pandemic and may be limited in the future.

Space: Adaptations to space will need to occur to allow for social distancing and increased hygiene, such as hand washing. Notably, LASD custody facilities do not have the capacity to facilitate such outdoor visits like juvenile facilities; therefore, it is not a viable alternative at present.

Contracted Providers: Contractors function in various industries that have differing industrial standards for reopening. There may be resistance and/or additional requirements to resume contracted services, like bus services utilized to bring visitors to all of the facilities at the Pitchess Detention Center. This could generate additional cost, staffing, and supply/equipment needs.

Costs: Increased costs are expected to purchase necessary supplies and equipment; facilitate increased cleaning; and staff operations. With eminent budget cuts, a funding source will need to be identified to support all these functions before they begin.

### **Pilot Test at Century Regional Detention Facility**

While CRDF is the largest women's jail in the County, it is one of the smallest LASD custody facilities. Likewise, it is the only adult women's facility, therefore, it has had the

opportunity to implement additional preventative measures, such as the CDC recommended 14-day intake quarantine process, given its limited movement of inmates. CRDF has successfully maintained a low number of COVID-19 cases below community population rates with all the mentioned preventative measures. It also prepared for visitation reopening with alterations to the visitation areas to ensure social distancing, increased communication on preventive measures with multi-lingual posters, and operational guidelines drafted. It is also working with external rehabilitation services providers on alternative strategies, such as the use of technology for service delivery.

**NEXT STEPS**

Given the high-risk population housed in custody, it is prudent to be cautious with any reopening strategies. LASD and DPH will continue to move forward with guideline and plan development with a status report back to the Board in thirty (30) days.

Should you have any questions, please contact Chief Kelly M. Porowski, Custody Services Division Specialized Programs, [REDACTED].

Sincerely,

ALEX VILLANUEVA, SHERIFF

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Alex Villanueva', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

BRUCE D. CHASE  
ASSISTANT SHERIFF

AV:BC:KP:cm

(Custody Services Division Specialized Programs)

- c: Board of Supervisors, Justice Deputies  
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
Sheila Williams, Senior Manager, Chief Executive Office (CEO)  
Rene Phillips, Manager, CEO  
Jocelyn Ventilacion, Principal Analyst, CEO  
Anna Petrosyan, Analyst, CEO  
Mary C. Wickham, County Counsel  
Michele Jackson, Principal Deputy County Counsel  
Elizabeth D. Miller, Chief Legal Advisor, Legal Advisory Unit  
Timothy K. Murakami, Undersheriff  
Bruce D. Chase, Assistant Sheriff, Custody Operations  
Jorge A. Valdez, Chief of Staff  
Conrad Meredith, Division Director, Administrative Services Division (ASD)  
Kelly M. Porowski, Chief, Custody Services Division Specialized Programs  
Glen C. Joe, Assistant Division Director, ASD  
Hugo Macias, Captain, Jail Construction Unit  
Melissa M. Kelley, Assistant Director, Gender Responsive Services  
Vanessa C. Chow, Sergeant, ASD  
Erica M. Saavedra, Deputy ASD

(Report Back - Extending Recovery from Covid-19 to the County's Custody and Detention Facilities 07-14-20)