



**MAYOR ROBERT GARCIA
CITY OF LONG BEACH**

October 21, 2014

Members of the City Council
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file report on the proposal of the Los Angeles County District Attorney to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to create and support programs for people with mental illness diverting them out of expensive jail treatment settings and into effective community-based treatment.

DISCUSSION

Staff report pending

FISCAL IMPACT

None

SUGGESTED ACTION

Approve recommendation

Respectfully Submitted,

Robert Garcia,
Mayor of Long Beach

Dated: October 10, 2014



Date: October 21, 2014
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *PW*
From: Kelly Colopy, Director of Health & Human Services *KC*
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council
Subject: Support for Mental Health Diversion

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors are taking steps toward diverting people with mental illness from the Los Angeles County Jail. The Mental Health facility in the LA County jail is one of the largest psychiatric institutions in the Country. Jackie Lacey has convened a summit of stakeholders including judges, law enforcement, advocates and providers of services for people with mental illness, prosecutors and public defenders to discuss and plan for alternative solutions for those who would otherwise reside at the LA County Jail. The City of Long Beach Police Department, Fire Department, Health and Human Services Department and the City Prosecutor are participating in this summit of stakeholders and planning for mental health diversion opportunities in the City.

Background¹:

- An estimated 17% of inmates housed at Los Angeles County's jails have a serious mental illness. However, there are only enough dedicated beds in the jail's mental health units to house 12% of the jail population.
- Inmates with diagnosed mental illness on average spend far longer in jail than those without mental illness—among misdemeanants, those receiving jail-based mental health treatment stayed three times as long as others (25 days compared to 7.5 days)
- The cost to house a person with mental illness is significantly higher than those without the need for treatment--\$133 per day compared to \$105 per day. Approximately 32% of those in the jail also require acute hospitalization which costs \$950 per night.
- Los Angeles County spends about \$10 million per year on psychiatric medication for inmates with mental illness.
- Federal law bans the use of Medicaid (Medi-Cal) dollars for treatment while in jail. The Affordable Care Act and Medicaid Expansion do not address this issue. Under Medi-Cal, the Federal Government covers treatment options at 100% for the next two years then at 50% moving forward. Without this, the full cost of providing within the jail treatment must be built into jail budgets. Treatment in the community is covered by these insurance options.
- Inmates with mental illness are far more likely to suffer sexual and physical assault in jail, and commit suicide at elevated rates while incarcerated.
- Ninety-five percent (95%) of inmates with mental illness in Los Angeles County jails have offended before, and many cycle in and out of the jails. Long Beach sees a similar pattern of people with mental illness cycling in and out of the City jail.

¹ A Way Forward: Diverting People with Mental Illness from Inhumane and Expensive Jails into Community-Based Treatment that Works. ACLU of Southern California, July 2014

- The estimated average cost per person arrested, jail time and court time is over \$2,000 per arrest².
- Evidence-based programs like supportive housing, ACT teams, and comprehensive community-based mental health treatment programs have shown drastic drops in recidivism and significant improvements in mental health. These programs would also be less expensive for the County and Long Beach than keeping people with mental illness in jails.

Outcomes from Mental Health Diversion Programs:

Other large cities have seen significant reductions in incarceration, shelter use, and hospitalizations due to mental health diversion programs that include ACT teams, supportive housing and supportive employment. This leads to improved quality of life for people with mental illness and reduced costs for government systems.

Examples include³:

- The Nathaniel Project in New York has seen a 70% reduction in average number of arrests in the two years after participating in the program compared to the two years before.
- In King County, Seattle, the program has resulted in a 45% reduction in jail and prison bookings.
- The Thresholds' Justice Program has seen an 89% reduction in arrests, 86% reduction in jail time and 76% reduction in hospitalizations for those in the program.

Los Angeles County has a number of providers who already provide these services. These existing providers and others will need the additional resources to expand capacity to support the shift.

The cost savings to provide the alternative community-based solutions for people with mental illness is estimated in hundreds of millions. The Legislative Analyst's Office estimated that expanding the Amity Program in San Diego Prison to LA County to serve 10,000 more inmates would save \$80 million in operating costs and \$210 million in capital expenses.⁴ These figures do not include the costs saved from the reduction in criminal activity.

Request:

That the Long Beach City Council support efforts by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to support funding for programs for people with mental illness, diverting them out expensive jail treatment settings and into effective community-based treatment.

² Bexar County, TX 2007

³ A Way Forward: Diverting People with Mental Illness from Inhumane and Expensive Jails into Community-Based Treatment that Works. ACLU of Southern California, July 2014

⁴ A Way Forward: Diverting People with Mental Illness from Inhumane and Expensive Jails into Community-Based Treatment that Works. ACLU of Southern California, July 2014