

INTERFAITH COALITION FOR JUSTICE IN OUR JAILS (ICJJ)

NEWSLETTER

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ICJJ Accomplishments and Challenges, Fall 2022



ICJJ

INTERFAITH COALITION
FOR JUSTICE IN OUR JAILS

a committee of [Faith in Action East Bay](#)

Visit our website at

www.icjjalamedacounty.org

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Who We Are:

Mission Statement

The ICJJ seeks to reduce incarceration as a response to social problems in Alameda County, California, and to decrease harmful conditions in the jail. We advocate to decrease the number of those imprisoned and close the revolving door to jail -- especially for those with mental health or housing needs. The jail must be safe, humane, and supportive of successful reentry into our communities.

Meet Our Congregations!

Congregation Netivot Shalom, Berkeley ~
First Church Berkeley, UCC ~
First Unitarian Church, Oakland ~ Interfaith
Council of Alameda County ~ Kehilla
Community Synagogue, Piedmont ~
Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland
~ Lighthouse Mosque, Oakland ~ Montclair
Presbyterian Church, Oakland ~ Plymouth
United Church of Christ, Oakland ~
St. Columba Catholic Church, Oakland ~
Skyline Community Church, United Church
of Christ, Oakland ~ Starr King Unitarian
Universalist Church, Hayward

Medi-Cal Enrollment Working Group

Contact Nancy Taylor: ngtaylor94619@yahoo.com



Our goal is to ensure that all persons, if eligible upon release from jail in Alameda County, be enrolled in Medi-Cal.

Accomplishments: In our last meeting with the Alameda County Social Services Agency (ACSSA), which has responsibility for Medi-Cal enrollment, we learned that:

- Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has amended its rule to allow for indefinite suspension of benefits for those incarcerated. Currently after a year in custody Medi-Cal benefits are terminated, much more difficult for an individual to address.
- ACSSA reports that it will meet a January 1, 2023, deadline to have a "pre-release process" in place for Medi-Cal enrollment, but perhaps many individuals booked into jail and released with little, or no notice will be missed. This problem extends also to those in the "cite and release" category.

ACSSA has given ICJJ credit for helping them reach our mutual goal of full enrollment!

According to the ACSSA, community-based organizations and people formerly incarcerated will continue to play an important role in convincing some people in custody to enroll in Medi-Cal.

Challenges: We intend to continue to identify roadblocks to our goal, and to find ways to overcome them in 2022-2023.

Mental Health Working Group

We welcome anyone interested to join us.

Contact Myrna Schwartz: myrna.schwartz@gmail.com



Accomplishments: Our workgroup spearheads ICJJ's efforts to reduce the number of individuals in Santa Rita Jail with serious mental health and substance use challenges. ICJJ and allied community groups have been pressuring Alameda County's Board of Supervisors to dedicate county dollars to behavioral health services for those at risk of (re-)incarceration. The advocacy is expected to bear fruit in January with a mid-term budget adjustment of \$43M to fully fund the Behavioral Health Department's 2020 Countywide Forensic Plan.

In October, Alameda County's Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) presented recommendations for advancing racially equitable care for people with serious mental illness. ICJJ mobilized support for the MHAB recommendations and a call for a public hearing before the full Board of Supervisors. We showed up at a committee hearing to make these demands in person. The campaign continues.

Challenges: None of the Alameda County Supervisors appears willing to champion bold action to end the reliance on incarceration for individuals with severe mental illness. If past is precedent, it will require sustained public outcry, negative press of the Board's inaction, and the threat of still more lawsuits to bring about meaningful change.

ICJJ-hosted October 13, 2022, Gathering of Clergy and People of Faith

For more information, contact Micky Duxbury: mickydux612@gmail.com



Accomplishment: The event was a follow-up to our May 24th Protest and Vigil at the Board of Supervisors about the 65 deaths in the jail since 2014. The gathering was an opportunity for people from faith communities across Alameda County to meet, share food, and hear the voices of two people impacted by a culture of cruelty in Alameda County Jail: Rosie Santiago, a former detainee at Santa Rita Jail and currently a Case Manager with the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention, and Norma Nelson, sister of Donald Nelson who was killed while in custody in Santa Rita

Jail. Additionally, Berkeley Law School Professor Jonathan Simon, an advocate for criminal justice system transformation, provided historical context to this struggle.

Challenges: Decreasing the number of deaths in Santa Rita Jail will require collaboration with many allies to reduce the number of those incarcerated, advocate for more adequate hospital-based treatment in the community and affect changes in how people are treated in the jail. If you are also appalled at the number of deaths in our county jail, please join us. Our next meeting will be February 6, 2023 at 6:00 PM.

New Sheriff for Alameda County: New policies and new practices?

For more information, contact
Richard Speigman: rspeigman@sbcglobal.net

Accomplishments: An October 25, 2022, virtual town hall with Sheriff-Elect Yesenia Sanchez was organized by ICJJ, FIAEB, ACLU of Northern California, and League of Women Voters Oakland. Webinar participants numbered 169. The abundance of questions and Sheriff-Elect Sanchez's answers, including her goals and visions, reveal substantial hope for what's to come under the new administration when the Sheriff takes office on January 3, 2023. The video is available at: tinyurl.com/SheriffTH



The session covered many issue areas, including the following:

1. Managing COVID/other quarantines in humane ways
2. Support for care and housing, not streets and jail, to reduce dramatically the number of seriously mentally ill people in Santa Rita Jail
3. Policy, procedural and other changes to minimize number of deaths at or resulting from jail incarceration
4. Progress in responding to reports of jail staff culture of cruelty
5. Increased resources and programs better to support release and re-entry
6. Breaking the jail's ties to ICE
7. A clear voice from the new Sheriff supporting strong civilian oversight of the Sheriff's Office.

Challenges: We look forward to regular meetings with Sheriff Sanchez, to her establishing improved communications with the community, and to a significant reduction in the jail population and major improvement to conditions at Santa Rita.

District 3 Supervisor Forum

Accomplishments: On October 12th, about 35 people attended our virtual forum featuring Rebecca Kaplan and Lena Tam, candidates for the D3 supervisor seat. Sponsors from Faith In Action East Bay and ICJJ, as well as the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority and the National Association of 100 Black Women, posed questions related to the diverse duties of this very important County office. Issues highlighted included:

- Improving community-based mental health services and reducing the number of people with substance use and mental health issues in Santa Rita Jail
- Supporting at-risk youth
- Strengthening Highland Hospital
- Mitigating the impact of environmental harms like poor air quality on our most vulnerable residents
- Providing long-term housing alternative for unhoused and housing insecure individuals
- Providing housing security for renters.

Challenges: As with all members of the Board of Supervisors we must secure interest in ICJJ concerns and assure access to community members engaged on the issues.