



Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails

NEWSLETTER

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a committee of
Faith in Action East Bay
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.

- ### Member 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

Accomplishments in 2024

Public Education / Civil Engagement

- ICJJ Cosponsored a Sheriff Oversight town hall meeting with the ACLU, the League of Women Voters, and others at Glad Tidings Church in Hayward.
- We provided a wonderful training on writing effective letters to the editor resulting in an increase in letters submitted. In 2024 one active ICJJ member had 8 LTEs published in the East Bay Times/Mercury News, SF Chronicle & the Castro Valley Forum. Other members' letters were published, as well.
- We sponsored a voter forum with Alameda County District 4 Board of Supervisors (BOS) candidates Nate Miley & Jennifer Esteen as well as a District 5 forum featuring Nikki Bas and John Bauters that focused on the problems of the seriously mentally ill in our jail and on the streets. Our cohosts included the East Bay Supportive Housing Collaborative (EBSHC) and Families Advocating for the Seriously Mentally Ill (FASMI)

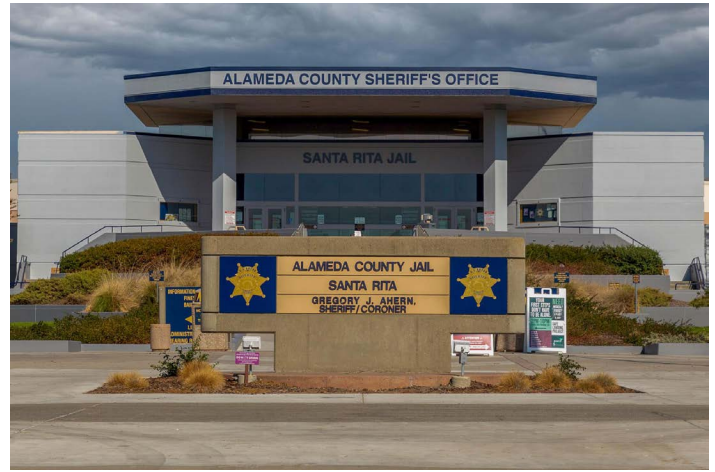


- We organized a forum at Montclair Presbyterian Church with Chesa Boudin speaking about the role of a progressive district attorney. The forum was co-sponsored by Kehilla Community Synagogue, Montclair Presbyterian Church, and ICJJ. As well, ICJJ cosponsored a night with former DA Chesa Boudin at Temple Sinai. Dozens attended in person. 270 people registered and 160 logged on.

2025 Objectives:
Continue civic engagement and public education.

Stop Deaths and Harm in the Jail

- ICJJ called for an independent investigation into the jail death of Yuri Brand and called for an independent Sheriff Oversight Commission (see middle page 3) in our letter to the BOS signed by over 40 religious leaders and People of Faith.
- We met with Supervisor Márquez to express our concerns about the ongoing deaths and negative conditions in Santa Rita Jail and alerted Supervisor Márquez to Mazars Group reports with findings of substandard performance by jail for-profit healthcare provider Wellpath. We met with Assistant Sheriff Daniel McNaughton to discuss deaths and improving family notification when detainees are sent to medical facilities outside the jail.
- We created a fact sheet on Deaths in the Jail and an overview of inadequate service by Wellpath.
- We wrote a letter to Juan Taizan, Director of Alameda County Adult Forensic Behavioral Health, with questions about quality of collaboration among Wellpath, Alameda County Sheriff's Office and the Forensic Behavioral Health Department. We posed questions to the BOS Public Protection Committee about issues



called out in the County Health Officer's annual jail inspection report. We asked what has been concluded from death reviews to minimize the likelihood of future jail deaths.

2025 Objectives:

- Monitor the quality of jail healthcare provided by for-profit contractor Wellpath.
- Demand quality jail healthcare. Advocate at the BOS for more accountability about medical conditions in the jail and BOS intervention as necessary.

Reimagine Adult Justice (RAJ)

ICJJ made public comments at multiple meetings in the 3-year Board of Supervisors Public Protection Committee process on RAJ for "implementing progressive criminal justice reforms that *reduce crime and victimization through policies and practices that rely less on incarceration, and more on a strength-based service delivery model proven to reduce both victimization and recidivism*. The purpose of these reforms is to disrupt the revolving doors of the criminal justice system by identifying and diverting individuals to evidence-based treatment and supports in the community"

2025 Objective:

Demand appropriate follow-up.

DA and Diversion

- ICJJ discussed a pre-arraignment program to promote pre-trial release with the Superior Court Executive Officer and the Court's Pre-Trial Services Manager.
- We focused on the selection of a new District Attorney, encouraging the Supervisors to support an open and transparent process. It is essential for members of the public to pose questions to candidates and to hear their answers.

2025 Objectives:

With the new DA, we will actively support Reimagine Adult Justice and Care First, Jail Last (see top page 4) priority recommendations related to diversion and the provision of mental health services in the community.

What will Prop 36 do?

Proposition 36 reclassifies some misdemeanor theft and drug crimes as felonies.

The measure also creates a new category of crime – a “treatment-mandated felony.” People who don’t contest the charges could complete drug treatment instead of going to prison, but if they don’t finish treatment, they still face up to three years in prison.

In the face of challenges presented by Prop 36, ICJJ

- Advocates for limited or no prosecution of “treatment mandated” charges under Prop 36 unless there are adequate beds in the community for substance using clients.
- Demands that more people be diverted and/or released from Santa Rita within the first 48 hours of incarceration and more people with serious mental illness (SMI) and/or substance use disorder (SUD) be successfully diverted from jail through the collaborative court system.

Additional ICJJ comments about Prop 36:

- Local public safety programs that are working with law enforcement to prevent crime and stop people from cycling in and out of jails will LOSE funding because of the passage of Prop. 36.
- These include effective recidivism reduction programs that get people struggling with mental health and addiction off the streets and into treatment, as well as trauma recovery centers for crime victims and programs providing truancy and dropout prevention for at-risk youth. These programs have a proven track record of stopping crime. We need MORE of these programs, working hand-in-hand with law enforcement, not fewer.

Sheriff Oversight

- ICJJ and its allies advocated for strong, fully independent oversight of the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office which is defined in legislation, AB 1185, passed in January, 2021, but still not implemented in Alameda County.
- We co-sponsored a town hall with the Sheriff Oversight Coalition. Panelists from Oakland’s Coalition for Police Accountability, the League of Women Voters, ACLU, and Oakland Police Inspector General participated.
- We met with Supervisor Tam’s staff to educate her office and gain her support.
- We wrote to faith leaders on the importance of Sheriff Oversight and to seek their continued support in shaping the perspective of BOS members.



- We demonstrated strong public support by attending multiple BOS meetings on Oversight and others at which the topic was scheduled but postponed.

A strong version of a sheriff oversight ordinance championed by Supervisor Márquez, was approved by the BOS. Unfortunately, at the very last minute, after public comment and with dubious parliamentary authority, on Sept. 17, 2024 the supervisors voted to delete a key element of the document. The document with the deletion has moved forward for discussion with the Sheriff’s Deputies Association. It is expected to come back to BOS for a second reading and possible approval in the coming months.

2025 Objectives: Work towards enacting an oversight ordinance that provides for true independence, including the ability to investigate and report incidents involving Sheriff’s personnel.

Sheriff’s Office Dashboard

- Since before Sheriff Sanchez took office in 2023, ICJJ has petitioned Alameda County Sheriff’s Office (ACSO) to create a public-facing dashboard of essential information about Sheriff’s Office operations.
- We had many exchanges in 2024 about this important tool. Most recently we met with ACSO’s

Chief Policy and Strategic Officer and other senior Sheriff’s Office officials to push for a progress update on the development of the dashboard. (December 2024) In January 2025 ASCO began to post dashboard data elements on the ASCO website at <https://www.alamedacountysheriff.org/about-us/public-documents/-folder-96>.

2025 Objective: Continue these efforts.

Care First, Jails Last

The fundamental goal of the Care First, Jails Last (CFJL) policy is to “develop a continuum of care that includes a full spectrum of treatment and housing... to reduce the number of people with mental illness, substance use and co-occurring disorders in our jail.”

- ICJJ advocacy advanced Care First, Jails Last recommendations prioritizing: (1) jail diversion, including expanding pretrial release, strengthening Collaborative Courts for serious mental illness (SMI) and substance use disorder (SUD), co-occurring SMI and SUD, and improving supportive housing; (2) community-based mental health services; (3) expansion of supportive housing for individuals with severe mental illness and individuals re-entering the community from jail. treatment and early psychosis intervention.
- We followed the process to assure that the BOS authorized the Mental Health Advisory Board, through an Ad-hoc Committee, to complete the work of the Task Force, with county agencies to cooperate fully in the process and the Behavioral Health Department to analyze implementation costs and potential funding sources. (August 2024)



2025 Objective:

Continue work with representatives of county agencies, justice partners, and service providers, along with impacted community members and advocates, towards comprehensive, county-wide implementation of and funding for Care First, Jails Last.

Medi-Cal and Justice-Involved Reentry Initiative

Since its inception in 2019, ICJJ has demanded that Medi-Cal benefits be provided to eligible individuals departing county jail. The State of California has mandated county implementation of a Justice-Involved Reentry Initiative that relies on Medi-Cal reconnection “to align services to support the re-entry population with serious behavioral challenges and those experiencing homelessness.”

2025 Objective:

Continue to monitor and provide input into this program.



CARE Court Starts in Alameda County

ICJJ's commitment to justice in our jails compels our engagement with county- and state-wide efforts to address the destructive nexus between mental illness, homelessness, and incarceration. Alameda County's Care First, Jails Last is one such initiative. Here we discuss another – Care Court – designed and mandated by the State of California to each of its counties.

CARE Court, the Community Assistance, Recovery and Empowerment (CARE) Act Court, is a state initiative created by SB 1400. It began in Alameda County on December 2, 2024. It is a civil court process for individuals who are at least 18 years old and who are diagnosed with specific schizophrenia spectrum or certain other psychotic disorders that interfere with their ability to participate safely in daily life, who are not currently stabilized in an on-going voluntary treatment program.

The legislation is intended to serve as an intervention for individuals experiencing severe impairment to prevent their incarceration, psychiatric hospitalizations, and/or conservatorship. It is being implemented jointly with the Alameda County Superior Court and the Alameda County Behavioral Health Department (ACBHD).

Family members, health care providers, County mental health workers, first responders (including police) or social services providers can petition for a person to be considered for the CARE Act Court. A person may also petition for themselves for CARE Act Court. The court does not create a criminal record—it's a civil proceeding to provide resources to those in need. The Alameda County Public Defender will represent all qualifying CARE Court participants. CARE Court petitioners do not need an attorney to file a petition.

The Superior Court will decide if a person qualifies for the CARE Act Court. If the person qualifies, the judge will order ACBHD to work with the individual to create a CARE Agreement, which can include housing, treatment, and support services.

If an agreement cannot be made, the Court may order a CARE Plan. Once a plan/agreement is



created, the Court will hold status hearings to review the participant's progress.

The CARE Act Court is not a conservatorship. It is intended to enable the participant to work with mental health specialists, housing specialists, their petitioners, and the court to develop a CARE Act Plan to improve their long-term health, so that they can live successfully and independently. [ACBH Press Release 11-12-24](#).

Disappointing Results Elsewhere

Other counties that have enacted CARE Court provisions have seen disappointing results. The program in San Francisco had run for nearly a year and logged only 42 petitions. Roughly half the cases were dismissed, while only five were resolved with CARE agreements.

Alameda County Behavioral Health has identified about 800 people who have received mental health services over the years, and who would likely qualify for CARE court. Judge Sandra Bean, who will oversee the Alameda County program, said, "We don't expect petitions (for) all those folks," the judge said. But given that the CARE Act is now entering its second year, and more people have become familiar with it, "we're very hopeful." [SF Chronicle, Rachel Swan, 11-12-24](#)

We will continue to update you in future ICJJ newsletters regarding the impact of the Care Court.