



# Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails

# NEWSLETTER

ISSUE NO 17 ~ March 2026

a committee of  
[Faith in Action East Bay](http://Faith in Action East Bay)  
[www.icjjalamedacounty.org](http://www.icjjalamedacounty.org)

**Contact:**  
Terry Dunn, ICJJ Outreach  
Email: [tdunn4peace@gmail.com](mailto:tdunn4peace@gmail.com)



## 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 Jazz & Justice UCC, Oakland  
St. Columba Catholic Church, Oakland  
Skyline Community Church, UCC, Oakland  
Starr King Unitarian Universalist Church, Hayward

## Table of Contents:

- 1 County Jail Analysis
- 3 Why Jail Data Matters
- 4 County ICE Cooperation
- 5 2025 Accomplishments/  
2026 Goals

**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.

## Extending Reimagine Adult Justice: What's next for Wendy Ware's work?

Last November, Wendy Ware, a national expert in corrections data analysis, authored "[Alameda County Jail Analysis & Population Projections](#)". The report details current trends in crime, arrests, jail population, and recidivism.

She submitted her report and presented a summary, "[County Jail Population Analysis](#)," to the Board of Supervisors Public Protection Committee as she ended her one-year consulting contract with the County. (Click titles for links to the full reports.)

The information in these reports is of central importance not only for adjustments of practice and policy among criminal justice agencies, but for other County agencies with responsibilities for health, behavioral health, and housing.



*Wendy Ware presenting her data findings to the BOS Public Protection Committee.*

**What's Needed:** Rigorous research such as this is central to sustaining improvements in jail conditions and driving policy-relevant criminal justice decisions. ICJJ wants to see Wendy Ware's jail reports continued and expanded to incorporate behavioral health data and Care First, Jails Last metrics.

Continued - and fuller - benefit from the work of Ms. Ware requires both multi-year trend analyses and expansion of her mandate to include study of the populations at the jail who experience significant mental illness and substance use disorders.

*(See page 3, "Findings: Why This Work Matters.")*

With fuller access to existing data, Ms. Ware or her successor would be able to assess treatment needs and treatment utilization, and identify obstacles to diverting more defendants into appropriate treatment in a non-jail setting.

Strong analyses will permit smarter allocation of funding, staff, and programs. In turn, this will reduce the speed of the revolving door of jail entry and reduce the number of our community members held in the jail population.

The analysis of these important data is necessary to indicate where services are needed to both reimagine and implement adult justice.

**But three crucial steps must be taken:**

1. As of our publication date, to our knowledge, no contract has been awarded for Ms. Ware (or anyone) to continue this important work of data analysis and interpretation. The Board must do so.
2. Access to behavioral health data is needed for



*ICJJ chair Richard Speiglmán addressing the BOS Public Protection Committee*



*Supervisor Elisa Marquez during the jail analysis presentation.*

a comprehensive project extension. The Board of Supervisors must stipulate that the County's Behavioral Health Department cooperates with this project.

3. New roles are needed if the Care First, Jails Last initiative is to survive into the future and promote system improvement, and if Wendy Ware or her successor is to secure cooperation from Health, Housing, Alameda County Sheriff's Office, and other agencies. The work will need an independent "czar" and a high-level collaborative body outside and above the Sheriff's Office (similar to the group that Wendy Still originally formed; see Recent History section for more information). Overseeing this effort should be part of the responsibility of a future Director for CFJL Policy, appointed by and reporting to the Board of Supervisors.

**What You Can Do:**

- Contact members of the Board of Supervisors to insist that the Reimagine Adult Justice work move forward.
  - Encourage Board members to submit a priority "budget letter" to the County Administrator's Office, requesting a new contract to continue Ms. Ware's work.
  - Board members should assert it is County policy that relevant behavioral health and other data be released to researchers.
  - Demand that supervision of this contract be outside and above the Sheriff's Office.
- We need a Public Dashboard! Call for the Sheriff's Office and other County entities to report real-time jail data, plus data on current jail operations and residents, and pre-release and re-entry planning.
- Watch for the next Care First, Jails Last presentation to the Board's Public Protection Committee, expected this month.

## REIMAGINE ADULT JUSTICE: RECENT HISTORY

In 2023 and 2024, several important reports were released under the leadership of **Wendy Still**, the former Chief Probation Officer turned Project Manager for Alameda County’s “Reimagine Adult Justice” (RAJ) effort.

Following Ms. Still’s retirement, her colleague Wendy Ware continued a portion of their work under contract from the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office. That contract expired last November.

## FINDINGS: WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

Rigorous research like that performed by Wendy Ware is central to sustaining improvement in jail conditions and to driving policy-relevant criminal justice decisions.

For example, this table with data excerpted from one of Ms. Ware’s reports reveals that there may be distinct populations held at the jail based on individuals’ length of stay.

Almost two out of five people released from the jail in 2024 were released within 24 hours, and about three out of five were released within 72 hours. These individuals likely differ in many ways from the 11 percent who were released after 30 days or longer.

Other charts in Ms. Ware’s reports indicate that she has the data to distinguish the shorter-term detainees from the longer-term detainees for a variety of characteristics, including: charge (new arrest, warrant, violation of community supervision, or other); demographic indicators (gender, race, and age); arresting agency; bond amount; and release reason.

Although we know from ACSO reports that **25 percent of detainees are assessed as having moderate to severe functional mental health impairment “in a correctional setting,”**<sup>1</sup> and we know that others are diagnosed with substance use disorder and/or report being homeless at the time of arrest, Ms. Ware’s work to date does not examine the relationship among these behavioral health and housing problems and jail admission or release.

1 *Adult Forensic Behavioral Care assessed Level of Care (LOC) 2, 3, and 4* [www.alamedasheriff.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1094/639057117255530000](http://www.alamedasheriff.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1094/639057117255530000)

The RAJ Initiative and Ms. Ware’s contract work were developed following advocates’ demands that the County minimize reliance on jail detention for “social problems”. This effort coalesced into work by the [Care First Community Coalition](#), other advocates, and, subsequently, the “Care First Jails Last (CFJL) Initiative” now pursued by the renamed [Behavioral Health Advisory Board’s Care First](#) ad hoc committee. (For additional background, see [ICJJ newsletter Issues #9, 10, 11, 14, 15, and 16.](#))

Alameda County: Jail Releases by Length of Stay, 2024			
Average Length of Stay (Mean)	25.2 days		
Total Jail Release Events	26,124		
	Number	Percent	Percent, running total
Releases within 24 hours	10,200	39.0	39.0
Releases between 1 and 3 days	4,941	18.9	58.0
Releases between 3 and 10 days	6,344	24.3	82.2
Releases between 10 and 30 days	1,714	6.6	88.8
Releases between 30 and 90 days	1,562	6.0	94.8
Releases over 90 days	1,363	5.2	100.0

Extrapolated from Wendy Ware, Alameda County Jail Population Analysis, Nov 2025, p.13

We also have no information on the role that other health problems may play. Surely policies to implement - and programs to support - successful re-entry must be aligned with different individuals’ needs. To understand this fully, Ms. Ware’s important work must be continued and expanded.

## Hiding Behind HIPAA?

The confidentiality regulations known as HIPAA are designed to protect people’s privacy by limiting how some patient information can be shared and utilized. Unfortunately, this positive tool is often used by agencies as an excuse not to share information, even when it can be safely shared for research purposes. Across the country, confidentiality agreements with researchers routinely and successfully protect individual privacy while supporting data analysis for policy research purposes.

## County takes millions reporting foreign-born prisoners to ICE

Fortunately, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors recently voted unanimously to plan for defenses against the state terrorism of unconstitutional immigration enforcement (ICE). Unfortunately, the County, through the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO), continues to participate in a U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) program, known as SCAAP. **ACSO continues to report all foreign-born people** with at least one felony or two misdemeanor convictions on their record who have been incarcerated in our County jail for as few as four days.

**In 2024 alone, DOJ paid the Sheriff's Office \$1.27 million** for these reports that are shared with DHS/ICE.

ACSO does not ask prisoners for their immigration status, but instead reports all foreign-born individuals under this category, **including citizens, residents with documents, or others.** (See <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48441>)

Reporting all foreign-born individuals endangers everyone, whether they are undocumented or not. Those reported may even be naturalized citizens, with misdemeanor convictions that are decades old. Some could have had their current charges dismissed, and most would be in the "pre-trial" category, innocent until proven guilty.

DHS/ICE does not care whether those reported are undocumented. What is more important with today's "enforcement" tactics is the color of one's skin. It does not matter whether an individual has already served their sentence. People spending as few as four days in custody are reported along with their country of origin.

Reporting under SCAAP began long before Yesenia Sanchez became the Sheriff. As a daughter of immigrants, she says she wants to end participation in the program but needs the County to replace the SCAAP program funds. The latest monetary award amounts to



0.4% of the Detentions and Corrections budget, easily replaced with money the County is already saving from funded but unfilled ACSO positions.

It is time to end ALL cooperation with ICE and Homeland Security.

**NOTE:** SCAAP (State Criminal Alien Assistance Program) is a euphemism designed to mislead.

- It's not a state program; it's federal.
- People with a criminal record are not necessarily criminals.
- And, it doesn't assist aliens.

### What You Can Do:

Contact the Board of Supervisors (call 510-208-9770 or email the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors at [CBS@acgov.org](mailto:CBS@acgov.org)).

Tell them they need to:

1. End cooperation with ICE and end our participation in SCAAP.
2. Tell the County Administrator, Susan Muranishi, to find the money to end our participation.



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN 2025

## Care First, Jails Last ( CFJL)

**BACKGROUND:** An Ad Hoc Committee was convened in December 2024 to monitor the implementation of the Care First, Jails Last (CFJL) recommendations, which had been issued by a special task force. (Visit [carefirstcoalition.org](https://carefirstcoalition.org) for the recommendation details.) The Ad Hoc committee was created by the County's Mental Health Advisory Board, now called the Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB), under a directive of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors (BOS).

The Committee's members are volunteers with personal, professional, or advocacy experience in CFJL spaces. ICJJ is represented on the Ad Hoc Committee, as are allies including Restore Oakland Inc., AFSC, FASMI, and East Bay Supported Housing Collaborative.

To monitor how CFJL recommendations are being implemented, Committee members are having ongoing informational meetings with representatives from County departments, the courts, and Community-Based Organizations.

### 2025 Actions

In May, CFJL forwarded an initial set of findings to a joint meeting of the BOS Health and Public Protection Committees (Supervisors Tam, Miley, and Marquez). For each of the nine recommendations, we itemized progress, obstacles, and steps the BOS could take to move things forward.

In a follow-up meeting in October, Supervisors Miley, Marquez, and Tam directed questions to

selected department heads, Court officials, the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (ACSO), and Ad Hoc Committee members on the issues we raised. Some highlights:

- Staffing needs of Mental Health Diversion Court (MHD): MHD Court diverts more people with mental illness and/or substance use disorders from jail to treatment than any other court-based program in Alameda County, including the better-known Behavioral Health Court. Yet, whereas Behavioral Health Court is supported by a team of assigned clinicians employed by the Behavioral Health Department, MHD operates without the benefit of assigned clinicians. Defendants in MHD receive support from social workers in the Public Defenders' Office (PDO), but PDO lacks the staffing capacity to perform the full range of clinical functions needed to meet the needs of this all-important court.
- After hearing from the relevant parties, the Supervisors directed County officials to return with a funding plan to adequately staff the MHD Court.
- Forensic Access Point at Santa Rita Jail: People who are justice-involved and unhoused have few opportunities to enroll in the County's housing queue.
- Addressing this issue, the Director of Homeless Services announced that a new "forensic access point" will soon be operative at Santa Rita Jail, staffed by Bay Area Community Services (BACS). However long waitlists for suitable housing will remain a serious problem.

### 2026 Objectives:

The CFJL Ad Hoc Committee is scheduled to present its next Progress Report to the Board of Supervisors this month. Stay tuned!

---

## Care First Community Coalition (CFCC)

**BACKGROUND:** The Care First Community Coalition (CFCC) includes key community organizations in Alameda County, including ICJJ, working together on implementation of the Care First, Jails Last (CFJL) plan, which was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2024.

The CFJL plan aims to prevent incarceration of community members with behavioral health needs,

including mental health and substance use issues, and other people involved with the judicial system who, if provided needed services, might avoid incarceration. (*For additional background, see the CFJL post above.*)

### 2025 Actions

The CFCC group started the year off with a major campaign to advocate for a new, interim

District Attorney who would give priority to the implementation of the Care First, Jails Last recommendations. We held a Candidates Forum attracting about 100 attendees.

We also delivered public comments during the selection hearing by the Alameda County Board of Supervisors (BOS). Unfortunately, the District Attorney selected by the Board, Ursula Jones Dickson, does not appear to be fully aligned with CFJL priorities.

In May, CFCC organized a virtual budget training for the community prior to the Board of Supervisors' June Budget meeting. CFCC has been advocating for:

- transparency about the budget and the budget decisions
- more community input
- greater priority for permanent supportive housing and rental subsidies.

In 2020, the voters in Alameda County voted for Measure W, a 0.5% sales tax to raise \$ 150 million annually for 10 years to fund housing and services for reducing homelessness and helping vulnerable populations.

The Measure got stuck in a lawsuit by a county resident, but in 2025, a judge dismissed the lawsuit, and the funds, by then close to \$ 800 million, became available. With strong input from the community, the BOS decided in July 2025 to direct 80% of the funds to address homelessness and 20% for safety-net services. The Care First Community Coalition, together with ICJJ and many other organizations, conducted a focused campaign to use all the funds for addressing homelessness, as intended. The final outcome is satisfying.



### 2026 Objectives:

- Continued push for more transparency of the budget and a more democratic process for budget decisions
- Creating one-page educational handouts to provide the community with support materials for the BOS hearing in March 2026, when the Ad Hoc Committee will make further recommendations for CFJL implementation to increase treatment beds and diversion.

### What you can do:

- Find out in what district you live, and who the supervisor is for your district
- Contact them to get regular information about the hearings and meetings of the Board of Supervisors
- Attend those meetings, in-person or online
- Call or email your supervisor to submit a public comment. This is especially important for the robust implementation of the Care First, Jails Last plan.

---

## Stop Deaths and Harm Group

Wellpath's contract for medical services at Santa Rita Jail (SRJ) expires in Sept 2027. Over the past year, we have often raised concerns with the Board of Supervisors about Wellpath's performance, which has not met acceptable standards. We have highlighted Wellpath's failure to improve in areas that directly impact the well-being of detainees - including mortality.

- We advocated for the County to identify a not-for-profit provider or public entity to take over the provision of medical services at the jail.
- We insisted that the RFP (Request for Proposals) be written to disqualify any provider (not just Wellpath) that has failed to meet the minimum

standards of care as set by the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCCHC).

- We provided expert advice on how to construct such an RFP.

### 2026 Objectives:

The April 23rd meeting of the Joint Public Protection/Health Committees will hear a report from the County's General Services Administration and ACSO on the progress in developing the RFP.

It is vitally important that there is adequate time to finalize the RFP, respond to and vet bids, and allow

a new provider to prepare to administer one of the County's largest contracts.

Many Supervisors on the Board have publicly agreed that Wellpath's record of egregious misconduct in Alameda County Jail should not be rewarded.

We will organize for the expected April 23rd meet-

ing to ensure that any RFP disqualifies providers whose record does not meet the NCCHC minimum standard of care.

### What You Can Do:

- Check the Board of Supervisors website to confirm meeting dates and agenda items.
- Attend the meetings and speak up!

---

## Alternatives to Incarceration Work Group

In 2025, we continued to focus on improving pathways for system-impacted people to access community resources as alternatives to incarceration. In addition to supporting the work of the Care First, Jails Last Initiative, we focused on;

- Assuring that housing for justice-involved individuals is accessible through Measure W funds.
- Advocating for a collaborative pretrial services program for individuals who are charged and released from jail on bail or their own recognizance.

As described in [this Oaklandside article](#), 80% of Measure W money is slated to address housing issues. It's not clear, however, how much the investment will directly benefit people in reentry.

### 2026 Objectives:

The County's increasing recognition of the importance of pretrial services has already led to a new collaboration this year among the Superior Court, Probation, and BOS to address the needs of people released while facing charges.

It remains to be seen whether this effort, presented in another recent [Oaklandside article](#), will provide all the elements we believe to be essential as described in our September, 2025 [position paper](#).

Stay tuned for the next edition of the ICJJ newsletter to learn what is happening in housing and pretrial services, and how the Alternatives to Incarceration working group is continuing to influence County priorities on behalf of our justice-involved neighbors.

---

## Outreach Committee

We provided public education and civic engagement on the Care First, Jails Last initiative and the importance of releasing Measure W funds.

We encouraged members to attend BOS meetings, rallies, and sign petitions. We communicated with the Interfaith Council of Alameda County. We partnered with All of Us or None (Freedom Center) Friendsgiving Action. Together, seven of our member congregations sent 575 handwritten notes on cards to state prison inmates for the holidays.

### 2026 Objectives:

- Strengthen connections with our twelve member congregations and faith communities
- Share ICJJ newsletters at Faith In Action East Bay actions, research meetings, and Local Organizing Committee meetings
- Invite new members!

## Congratulations, Meg!



ICJJ member Meg Bowerman recently received the Diocesan Order of Merit award for her decades of selfless service for those in need. Meg is a member of St. Columba Catholic Church in Oakland.

### COUNTY CHANGES AGENCY NAMES

- What was formerly Alameda County Behavioral Health (ACBH) is now the **Behavioral Health Department** (BHD).
- What was the Mental Health Advisory Board (MHAB) is now the **Behavioral Health Advisory Board** (BHAB).