

ALAMEDA COUNTY, JOHN GEORGE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL, AND SANTA RITA JAIL INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

On April 22, 2021, following an extensive investigation, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice notified Alameda County that it had reasonable cause to believe that Alameda County violates the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by failing to serve individuals with disabilities in the most integrated setting appropriate to their needs and has engaged in a pattern or practice of constitutional violations regarding prisoners with disabilities at the Santa Rita jail.

In summary, the Department of Justice identified the following:

- **Alameda County fails to provide adults with mental health disabilities services in the most integrated, community-based, settings appropriate to their needs. The lack of community-based services leaves persons with mental illness little choice but to receive care at John George Psychiatric Hospital and other psychiatric facilities and contributes to their risk of incarceration.**
- **Alameda County can expand its current community-based services, including full service partnerships, crisis services, permanent supported housing, peer support services, and supported housing, to effectively serve people with disabilities who are institutionalized repeatedly at John George and other psychiatric facilities. These services are alternatives to institutional care and are cost effective.**
- **Santa Rita Jail fails to provide constitutionally adequate mental health treatment, resulting in worsening mental health conditions for prisoners with serious mental health needs, repeated stays at John George, and, at times, serious physical harm and death.**
- **Santa Rita Jail subjects prisoners with serious mental illness to prolonged periods of restrictive housing under conditions that place them at a substantial risk of serious harm. The Jail also denies prisoners with mental health disabilities equal access to programming and transition services.**
- **As a result, many adults who rely on Alameda County for mental health services are without access to services that would allow them to recover, and instead end up cycling in and out of psychiatric institutions or incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail.**

Now that the investigation is complete, our goal is to work with Alameda County to resolve the identified ADA and Constitutional violations and implement remedial measures.

If you have any questions, comments, or ideas for reform, please feel free to contact the DOJ team:

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