



SAN MATEO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
A TRADITION OF SERVICE SINCE 1856

NEWS RELEASE

On Wednesday, April 22, 2020, community members participated in a protest outside the Maguire Correctional Facility. They asked San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos G. Bolanos to release more inmates from jail and stop all notifications and transfers to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Various groups also made similar demands on social media platforms, even demanding that the Sheriff release ALL inmates currently incarcerated in San Mateo County jails.

The following is the statement of San Mateo County Sheriff Carlos G. Bolanos in response:

Working with the District Attorney's Office, Probation, and the Private Defender, the San Mateo County Sheriff's Office has critically looked at those in our custody to determine which individuals may be suitable for early release. In so doing, the Sheriff's Office has strived to comply with the law, while balancing any risk of continued incarceration against the risk to public safety when making its decisions regarding releases. Consistent with that goal, the Sheriff's Office has continued to follow California law (Values Act) and comply with requests from the Federal Government for notification of the release of those found to have committed serious felonies. Pursuant to that law, two inmates were picked up from San Mateo County correctional facilities by ICE in the last two months, one in March and one in April. Of the more than 135 inmates released due to the order of the Judicial Council of California, no information was passed on to ICE due to the fact that their sentences were not finished with San Mateo County.

In Corrections, recent changes in booking priorities in combination with inmate releases permitted under the law, including pursuant to changes to bail rules made by the Judicial Council of California, have significantly reduced the in-custody population. New bookings are down 74% from February. And, as of today, our population has been reduced by over 450 inmates (47%) since the end of February. There are currently 257 inmates in the Maguire Correctional Facility and 266 inmates in the Maple Street Correctional Center. We are fortunate that our correctional system is now operating at 34% of our rated capacity. As a result, should we have a need to quarantine individuals, we have an entire floor that we can dedicate for that purpose.

As we release inmates, our Program Services Unit is working fulltime on finding resources for these individuals as many of them suffer from addiction and mental health issues. This is difficult as service providers and non-profits who support our released inmates are also struggling with issues associated with the pandemic.



For those inmates who are not appropriate to release, our staff in Corrections have been working closely with Correctional Health since January 31st to provide the safest possible environment, and we are continually evaluating and adjusting our procedures. For example, the CDC issued guidelines for correctional facilities last month; however, we had already exceeded its recommendations. Anyone entering our correctional facilities must pass a medical screening that includes a temperature check. Every inmate must be medically cleared prior to moving to any other part of a facility outside their housing unit. Inmates currently have access to electronic tablets. These tablets have information regarding COVID-19. In addition, members of San Mateo County Correctional Health Services provide information in person. And, all inmates have been provided hand sanitizer. Following CDC recommendations, the most hygienic way to combat the virus is to wash hands with warm water and soap. All inmates have 24-hour access to warm water and free soap.

To date we have had no inmates, Deputies, or Correctional Officers test positive for COVID-19. Two of our professional support staff that work in the correctional facilities did test positive for COVID-19. These cases do not appear to be related to one another. Any inmate that has exhibited signs of COVID-19 is closely monitored by Correctional Health Services and has been tested when warranted.

Released by: Lt. Stephanie Josephson, Professional Standards Bureau

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