



# Santa Cruz County Commission on Justice and Gender

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## Minutes - Notice of Public Meeting and Agenda

### Release and Reentry Subcommittee

**Date:** Tuesday, August 27, 2024  
**Time:** 12:00pm – 1:30pm  
**Location:** Monarch Services  
550 Water Street  
Suite J3

1. Roll Call – 12:03
  - 1.1. Present
    - Donia Merkel, Esmerelda Torres, Stacey Palau, Polly Schulze Elser, Jesse Silva, Kristie Clemens, , Alicia Gaytan, Susan Greene, Tara George, Jullianna DeNike, Sarah Fletcher, Hannah Taylor
2. Agenda Review
3. Announcements
  - 3.1. Jail population 31 women in custody: 10 in Blaine Street; 21 in Main Jail - 13 in G Unit and 8 in H.
    - 3.1. H is new unit for women with behavioral health concerns – administration separation, restricted to cell.
    - 3.1. 4 in WRRP and actively participating. One just got HS diploma! Variety of reasons other women in Blaine are not participating: Most have mental health issues and can be challenging to participate in program because their cognitive skills; some are not able to engage in trauma conversations, triggering.
    - 3.1. Of 31 women in custody 12 are in on Bench Warrants.
    - 3.1. Average length of stay for women in custody is 35 days.
  - 3.2. Contact Visits beginning Sept 7<sup>th</sup> at Blaine Street. Once per month to begin, children visits only, will include activities, books. Can provide flyer with information about Parents Center support.
  - 3.3. Safe Release numbers for June – July: 7 safe releasees total of 12 nights.

- 3.4. Library – Opened library space in juvenile hall in collaboration with Probation and COE. Now delivering books integrated into school day no longer during free time which competed with phone calls and TV.
- 3.5. Gemma/New Life – Having staffing issues, not yet been able to replace WRRP coordinator. Also turnover at New Life. Challenges with cost of living in SC. Personnel problem in keeping New Life and Gemma staffed. New Life is “bursting at the seams.” Currently have wait list – within a few weeks (in past wait list was a couple months). Children currently at New Life, always a good thing as provides opportunity to do family therapy as well as therapy for kids individually.
  - 3.5. New Life has the ability to serve more people if had more space/property.
  - 3.5. When people are ready to graduate, housing issue is biggest barrier, people struggle for weeks just to get into an SLE. Hardest is when people exit program and have no place to go.
- 3.6. CalAIM –
  - 3.6. Erika and Talley will be coordinating discharge support with MAT. Able to discharge w medication now!
  - 3.6. SCSO hired two new reentry coordinators Julianna and Donia.
  - 3.6. Reentry Coordinators will be trying to fill gaps, help generate reentry plan 90 days pre-release and ensure client feels ownership over their plan.
  - 3.6. Warm handoff is a requirement 2 weeks before release *if* release date is known. Big push with CalAIM is that they’re connected with managed care plan and team.
  - 3.6. Data sharing system across county departments to be created. CalAIM requires implementation plan and assessment.
  - 3.6. Collect data re how many people need housing, are put on waiting lists and if so, for how long, and if released from custody with no place to go.
  - 3.6. Have until 2026 to roll out, County targeting 2025.
- 3.7. Probation report on CAFES grant:
  - 3.7. Have funding for treatment and housing, but shortage of treatment and housing.
  - 3.7. Women often report don’t feel comfortable in co-ed treatment environments.
  - 3.7. Getting better at connecting people with mental health services through Janus and HOPE programs. Lower lever offenses eligible for CAFES (non-strike offense) and have mental health or substance use disorder (SUD). Rarely are people not eligible.
  - 3.7. No waitlist for mental services currently. Also funding to continue therapy after SUD treatment.
  - 3.7. Reconciliation services through Center for Nonviolence.
- 3.8. Prop 36
  - 3.8. If passes would reverse progress in the state and locally for programs: it would compromise CAFES funding; return some drug offenses to felonies; potentially

increase rates of incarceration (after Sheriff Hart recently stated crime and incarceration rates going down locally).

- 3.8. Note difference between the old Prop 36 which offered treatment and was the opposite and the new prop 36.
4. Public Comment – No public comment  
*Any person may address the Commission for a period not to exceed 3 minutes on matters within the jurisdiction of the Commission.*
5. Approval of Minutes – Motion Kristie Clemens, Second Esmeralda Torres
6. Discussion: Bench Warrants
  - 6.1. Bench Warrant numbers are for failure to appear in court.
  - 6.2. How many of these are still in custody from the previous times reported?
  - 6.3. Are these women on formal or informal probation supervision? (This would influence if pre-trial or probation gets involved. )
  - 6.4. How long are they held in custody?
  - 6.5. Felony vs. misdemeanor offenses? Often misdemeanor cases but women may be considered higher risk per risk assessments for history of failing to appear.
  - 6.6. Previous snapshots have shown many are unhoused and high rates of SMI
  - 6.7. How to stop the cycle?

Polly Schultze and Sarah Fletcher will compile this information and report back at next meeting.

Next Meeting: October 8, 12-1:30 at Monarch Services.

7. Adjournment – 1:30 pm

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