

Katherine Douglas

Public Comment - Gibbs

#6



**From:** Lynne Gibbs <gibbslyn2@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, September 6, 2024 1:17 PM  
**To:** sbcob  
**Subject:** Public Comment for BOS Agenda Item D-6  
**Attachments:** BOS Statement on Grand Jury Report 2024 09.docx

**Caution:** This email originated from a source outside of the County of Santa Barbara. Do not click links or open attachments unless you verify the sender and know the content is safe.

See attached. Thank you.  
Lynne Gibbs

September 6, 2024

Chair Steve Lavagnino and Honorable Supervisors,

I write in comment on the upcoming "Deaths in the Jail" agenda item. Thank you for your continuing, conscientious address of the Grand Jury report.

The simplest way to reduce the number of jail deaths of persons with the most serious mental illness and/or substance use disorders is to avoid arrest in the first place.

Here, I address the role of the Crisis Stabilization Unit (CSU) in helping to avoid arrest and incarceration of those whose mental illness is the precipitating factor in their perceived criminal behavior. The Sheriff Dept.'s response to the Grand Jury recommendations states it is not appropriate to bring someone recently arrested to the CSU.

But, it IS appropriate for law enforcement to place an involuntary hold (5150), and take that person to the CSU in lieu of arrest when the person meets 5150 criteria.

Every case is different. Someone who is violently out-of-control, while not unknown, is not the typical case. The CSU should be an option for avoiding arrest BEFORE the person is arrested. At the CSU, mental health professionals can initiate what stabilization is possible within a 24 hr. period. Then, it's a matter of triage. What level of care should the person move to (assuming that level is available), or is the person sufficiently stabilized within 24 hrs. to return to the community with a safety plan and a warm handoff to outpatient treatment, true for 74% of persons at CSUs nationally?

The new South County Crestwood CSU currently prohibits law enforcement from bringing persons directly to the CSU. This is a problem. At the most recent Behavioral Wellness Crisis Action Team meeting, the department stated this problem is being addressed. We were glad to hear this, because it is important LE have the option of taking someone to the CSU in lieu of arrest when appropriate, that they be willing to do so, and that the CSU admit and serve that person, and without excessive gatekeeping. There are cases when arrest can't be avoided, but in many cases it can. Once someone is arrested, it is a much more complicated process to get them to the appropriate level of treatment outside the jail, at huge overall cost to the county.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Lynne Gibbs, NAMI SBCO Public Policy Chair, and Families ACT! Advisor