

Press Release

For Immediate Release

November 7, 2023

Settlement Reached Between Disability Rights California, the County of Alameda, and the United States Department of Justice to Strengthen the County's Behavioral Health System

(Alameda County, CA) Disability Rights California (DRC), the County of Alameda, California, and the United States Department of Justice have entered into a comprehensive settlement agreement addressing the provision of community-based behavioral health services in the County. The settlement strengthens and expands services available to people with serious mental health disabilities with the goal of preventing unnecessary psychiatric institutionalization and incarceration.

“Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (ACBH) is committed to advancing expanded and enhanced community-based services that will benefit Alameda County’s clients, patients, and families as they are impacted by serious behavioral health challenges. We view this settlement as an opportunity to move forward with this commitment and our ongoing efforts,” said Dr. Karyn Tribble, PsyD, LCSW, Director of ACBH.

“We are pleased to have reached this settlement with Alameda County and we look forward to the improvements the County has promised,” said Andy Imperato, Executive Director of DRC.

Highlights of the settlement include:

- Conducting assessments of needs and gaps in mobile crisis coverage and an intensive mental-health and case-management program called “Full-Service Partnership” (FSP) within one year, which will be informed by data and community/stakeholder input. The County has committed to expand mobile crisis teams and FSP service capacity based on the assessments, as reasonable and

appropriate;

- Expanding and deepening linkages to services and outreach, including meaningful efforts to create a system to provide real-time appointment scheduling, timely in-the-field assessments, and authorization of services;
- Enhancing discharge planning and/or County coordination with community-based organizations and facility-based discharge planning processes and connections to services for eligible individuals in the John George Psychiatric Hospital, Santa Rita Jail, Villa Fairmont Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, Gladman Mental Health Rehabilitation Center, and Morton Bakar Center;
- Making efforts to contract with one or more community-based providers to add 25 peer respite and/or crisis residential beds;
- Continuing to expand culturally responsive and affirming behavioral health services, including through community-based and peer-run organizations, to help reduce behavioral health disparities across racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic groups;
- Hosting a stakeholder and community input meeting within fifteen months to seek community feedback on culturally responsive services. Within one month of the meeting, the County will post a data dashboard on the Office of Health Equity's website showing the populations served by ACBH and their various service needs (including diverse community needs for FSP, Service Team, and In-Home Outreach Teams services in geographic areas within the County);
- Continuing operation of nine mobile crises teams to provide in-person response to behavioral health crises, with the purpose of reducing interactions with law enforcement, reducing emergency involuntary commitment rates at John George, and increasing use of voluntary community-based services.

Under the agreement, Dr. Karen Baylor, who has experience reviewing mental health programs through stakeholder engagement, data, and policy analysis and has worked in behavioral health agencies at the state and

county level, will report on the County's implementation of the settlement terms over the next three years as a designated Independent Reviewer.

The settlement agreement is the result of over two years of negotiations between the County, the U.S. Department of Justice, and DRC, as well as its co-counsel, Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho, the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, and the Law Office of Aaron J. Fischer. The parties identified mutually desirable commitments to community-based behavioral health services. The County is seeking to further improve and deepen community-based services in an effort to best serve the residents of the County of Alameda.

Additional details of the final settlement agreement can be found here:
[insert link]

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Disability Rights California (DRC) – Is the agency designated under federal law to protect and advocate for the rights of Californians with disabilities. The mission of DRC is to defend, advance, and strengthen the rights and opportunities of people with disabilities. For more information visit: <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org>.

The Judge David L. Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law has advocated for the civil rights, full inclusion and equality of adults and children with mental disabilities. We were pivotal in expanding the civil

rights movement to include fighting discrimination against, and segregation of, people with mental disabilities. The Bazelon Center uses a unique combination of litigation, public policy advocacy, coalition building and leadership, public education, media outreach and technical assistance—a comprehensive approach that ensures we achieve the greatest impact.

<http://www.bazelon.org/>

Goldstein, Borgen, Dardarian & Ho is one of the oldest and most successful plaintiffs' public interest class action law firms in the country. GBDH represents individuals in complex class and collective action lawsuits relating to employment discrimination, wage and hour violations, and disability access, among other civil rights issues.

<https://gbdhlegal.com/>

Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund, founded in 1979, is a leading national civil rights law and policy center directed by individuals with disabilities and parents who have children with disabilities.

<https://dredf.org/>

Law Office of Aaron J. Fischer represents clients on issues related to civil rights, disability rights, and complex litigation, with experience monitoring public and private entities to ensure legal compliance. The firm is founded upon a commitment to justice and to practical problem-solving.

<https://www.aaronfischerlaw.com/>

Alameda County Behavioral Health Care Services (ACBH) – Is the County Department that oversees and manages mental health and substance use disorder services that are provided to eligible County residents. ACBH's Mission is to support and empower individuals experiencing mental health and substance use conditions along their path towards wellness, recovery, and resiliency. For more information, visit:

<https://www.acbhcs.org/>. ACBH was represented by Hooper, Lundy & Bookman, P.C. <https://hooperlundy.com/>.