

Take Action Against Medical Neglect in Santa Rita Jail

PHONE ZAPS: Thursday, August 13; Friday, August 14

Contact

Phone Zap Reportbacks: iwoc.oakland@gmail.com or @OaklandAboSol
Questions: Santa Rita Jail Hotline srjhotline@nlgsf.org



Context

After a major outbreak of Covid-19 in early July which infected at least 106 prisoners, conditions in Santa Rita Jail remain unsafe and unsanitary. The Sheriff's classification of many prisoners as "asymptomatic" has led to a suspiciously rapid "recovery" rate, and as of August 10 the jail claims only 10 active cases. However, conditions are only worsening for prisoners with disabilities and chronic health issues, many of whom are suffering extreme medical neglect and abuse due to the jail's lack of real medical services and its refusal to provide essential care, medication and disability accommodations. Prisoners with serious medical conditions report that Wellpath nurses simply tell them that their conditions are "not a priority" at this time due to the pressures of Covid-19. Yet the jail's method of treating Covid-19 amounts to merely cough drops, Tylenol, and a twice-daily symptoms check.

Prisoners, family members, and advocates continue to ask – what *is* the jail actually doing for the health of people in custody?

Less than two months ago, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted to increase the jail's budget by over \$100 million annually – nearly equal to the entire budget of County Public Health. Yet medical care inside the jail is almost nonexistent for some of the most vulnerable people inside. Medical provider Wellpath refuses to shoulder the cost of hospitalizing people who are in desperate need of care that can't be met by the jail's rudimentary infirmary. This is leading to horrific abuse.

Prisoners in Santa Rita are part of our community. And in a pandemic, their health is closely intertwined with the health of each and every one of us. The neglect and abuse they are experiencing is unacceptable. Please help us to put the jail on notice by calling on Thursday, August 13 and Friday, August 14 in support of Phillip Gipson and Robert Abeyta.

[Content warning: graphic description of injuries and abuse]

Phillip Gipson

Phillip Gipson is 28 years old and suffering from a kidney infection. He is paralyzed, cannot walk, and has used a wheelchair for several years. **Phillip was arrested and injured by police on August 3.** During the arrest, Phillip's hip was popped out of its socket, he suffered bruises and two open wounds, and he was briefly hospitalized at Highland Hospital. Since his arrival to Santa Rita, his wife reports that his wounds have not been sufficiently cleaned to prevent infection. Phillip cannot clean himself due to his disability.

On August 4, Phillip was booked and placed in a dirty isolation cell with feces on the floor. He initially refused to be placed in the cell because it was so dirty. Deputies responded by pinning his arm behind his back and throwing him out of his wheelchair into the cell.

Prior to his arrest, Phillip was depending on the daily care of his mother, Stephanie, and his wife, Tyetiana. He has had a kidney infection for two months now, which causes him to urinate blood. Prior to his incarceration, Phillip was prescribed antibiotics for the kidney infection in addition to his usual pain medication. Medical staff have not provided Phillip with any of his medications.

Phillip has been repeatedly harassed and bullied by deputies, whom he feels are “playing games” with him by denying him money on his property and mocking his disability. He wears a diaper which must be changed but despite his many requests for assistance, his wife says, deputies have simply laughed at him and walked away. Phillip's bedsores have become infected due to the blood and urine, but no one will clean the wounds.

On Saturday, August 8, Phillip began vomiting blood. A nurse who checked his vital signs reported that his blood pressure was high and he had a 101-degree fever. The nurse informed him that the jail could send him to a hospital until Monday, August 10. Phillip called on Monday to report that he was never sent to the hospital because his fever went down, but he is still having chills and is in pain due to his open wounds and bedsores.

Santa Rita Jail Hotline workers called the medical emergency line on Sunday, August 9 to express concern about Phillip's worsening condition. One deputy on the line implied that Phillip was lying for attention because he's "probably not a happy camper already about being here." The deputy denied that Phillip was placed in a dirty cell and said he did not know anything more about Phillip's condition. Hotline workers also spoke with the medical department, who claimed they had no knowledge that Phillip has already been diagnosed with a kidney infection and would be required to test him again.

Phillip's treatment by the jail is cruel and unacceptable. In the middle of a pandemic, it could be deadly.

Please call Santa Rita Jail and Supervisor Richard Valle

Santa Rita medical emergency line: (925) 551-6500, extension 3-2-2.

Sergeant Frasier, head of Santa Rita Jail medical clinic: (925) 551-6657

Alameda County Board of Supervisors Chair Richard Valle: (510) 272-6692

Script: I am calling to express my concern for the wellbeing of Phillip Gipson (PFN BJD794), currently incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail. Phillip is not getting the care he needs for his kidney infection and his disability.

Why has Phillip been deprived of his medication?

What is Santa Rita doing to treat Phillip's diagnosed kidney infection?

Why is Santa Rita refusing to provide Phillip with care for his disability?

Why is Wellpath refusing to take Phillip to a hospital as his condition worsens?

I urge you to release Phillip to the care of his wife and mother.

Robert Abeyta

Robert is 38 years old and suffers from COPD and obstructive sleep apnea. He has been fully depending on a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device since 2014. On July 14, 2020, Robert was booked into Santa Rita Jail for a parole violation. Prior to his incarceration, Robert was meeting with a social worker to get accommodations for his disabilities. As a result, he does not own a CPAP machine, which can cost thousands of dollars. **Santa Rita and medical provider Wellpath refused to provide Robert with a CPAP when he was**

booked, putting him at grave risk of suffocating in his sleep. Rather than take this chance, Robert has kept himself awake for nearly thirty days.

Robert was also deprived of a wheelchair for nearly two weeks. In mid-July, Robert was assigned to a cell on the second tier, forcing him to crawl up and down the stairs. Robert's public defender obtained two orders from a judge stating that Robert should be provided with a CPAP and a wheelchair. **Santa Rita and Wellpath have ignored these orders.** Robert continues to file grievances and medical request forms every day, only to be told that Santa Rita's policy is that they can only provide batteries for CPAP machines but not the machines themselves.

Forced to choose between his mental health and sleep that could be life-threatening, Robert feels that he is being tortured by the jail due to their refusal to accommodate him or transfer him to a medical facility that could meet his needs. Sleep deprivation is lowering Robert's already-compromised immune system and, in this state, catching COVID-19 could be deadly.

As depriving himself of sleep becomes more difficult, Robert has suffered multiple respiratory events. On July 30, Robert passed out and hit his head on the floor. On August 7, Robert reports that he started to fall asleep and began choking. At the beginning of August, he was finally provided with a wheelchair, but it is old and has no footrest. He has still not received his hearing aids nor all of his medication. Deputies continue to dismiss his concerns and warned him, "you're just going to make things worse for yourself by bringing this up to us."

Please call Santa Rita Jail and Supervisor Richard Valle

Santa Rita medical emergency line: (925) 551-6500, extension 3-2-2.

Sergeant Frasier, head of Santa Rita Jail medical clinic: (925) 551-6657

Alameda County Board of Supervisors Chair Richard Valle: (510) 272-6692

Script: I am calling to express my concern for the health of Robert Abeyta (PFN BJJ176), currently incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail. Robert needs a CPAP machine to prevent him from suffocating in his sleep. He was told that Santa Rita can only provide him with a battery but not a CPAP. This is putting his life at risk.

Why is Santa Rita depriving Robert of his rescue inhaler?

Why is Santa Rita ignoring or delaying Robert's grievances and medical request forms, which he files daily?

Why is Santa Rita ignoring a judge's order to provide Robert with a CPAP machine?

Why is Wellpath refusing to transfer Robert to a hospital to get the care he needs?

Because Santa Rita cannot provide Robert with this life-sustaining device, we urge you to transfer Robert to a medical facility where he can be provided with a CPAP machine.

Letter from Phillip Gipson

To Whom It May Concern:

I would like for my medical condition to be brought to your attention. I haven't been treated properly by medical staff, while at the same the deputies lack the desire to help when I'm in need of help. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this unsafe and unsanitary environment, I could die here from the lack of help I need. The cells are dirty, and nobody has cleaned them out at all. The inmates are doing more for me than the staff is. I need care. And if my mom, wife, and family did not repeatedly call Santa Rita about how I haven't received the proper care more than half the time, I wouldn't have even gotten the little help they offer to me. Since I've been here the deputies have beaten me and treated me inhumanely. I've been pushed out of my wheelchair and have the bruises to prove it.

Phillip Gipson BJD794

Witnesses:

James Pace BBQ446

Prisoners of Housing Unit 1A, Rooms 1-8