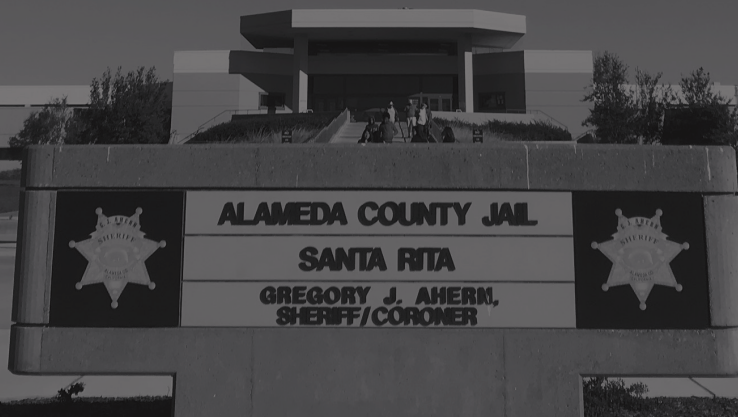


SANTA RITA JAIL WEEKLY UPDATE

TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2020



NOTE: GIVEN THE LOW TESTING RATE, ALL COVID-19 CASE NUMBERS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED UNDERESTIMATIONS

1974

JAIL POPULATION

244

**TOTAL NUMBER
OF POSITIVE
COVID-19 TESTS
SINCE APRIL**

181

**TOTAL
COVID-19 TESTS
ADMINISTERED
IN PAST WEEK**

9%

**OF JAIL
POPULATION
TESTED IN PAST
WEEK**

9

**PEOPLE WITH
COVID-19
SYMPTOMS IN
PAST WEEK**

IN THE FIRST WEEK OF SEPTEMBER:

- 2 hotline callers and 2 mail correspondents reported that they were **refused COVID-19 tests**
- 2 hotline callers reported being **refused the use of a rescue inhaler**
- 3 hotline callers reported being **refused medical care**
- 1 hotline caller reported two instances of **deputies failing to wear masks**, both in Housing Unit 6 and at the Dublin Courthouse on August 2

IN WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 7-13:

- 3 hotline callers reported being **refused medical care**
- 2 hotline callers reported that **grievances that they filed about a lack of care for their medical conditions** – including a tooth abscess and opiate withdrawal – **were summarily denied**
- 1 hotline caller reported **food contamination**



Since the beginning of September, the overall population at Santa Rita Jail has increased by 68, to nearly 2000 people. The jail has now seen a total of 244 COVID-19 infections since March. The Alameda County Sheriff Office's (ACSO) daily reporting of statistics including the number of COVID-19 tests administered and the number of "active" cases continue to be a source of concern for community members, advocates, and prisoners – many of whom have reported being denied a test despite experiencing symptoms of the virus.

Between August 25 and August 26, the jail reported a 60 percent decrease in active COVID-19 cases – from 25 to only 10. However, ACSO also discovered a new case that same day (8/26), and on the following day (8/27), they quarantined 4 housing pods (HU 9E and HU 31 A, B, C), because they believed that all of those pods had been exposed to a case – indicating not a decrease, but an increase in COVID-19 cases.

The fact that on multiple occasions, dozens of prisoners have been declared "recovered" seemingly overnight, is cause for serious concern. Santa Rita medical provider Wellpath

DESPITE THIS, MANY PRISONERS WHO ARE DECLARED "RECOVERED" REPORT THAT THEY ARE STILL EXPERIENCING LINGERING, UNCOMFORTABLE SYMPTOMS OF THE VIRUS.

RED PATIENTS INCLUDE BOTH PATIENTS WITH COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AWAITING TEST RESULTS AND PATIENTS WITH POSITIVE COVID-19 RESULTS. IT IS UNCLEAR HOW ACSO CAN CLAIM THAT THERE HAVE BEEN NO NEW CASES SINCE THE 5TH WHEN PATIENTS PRESENTED WITH SYMPTOMS ON THE 12TH AND 13TH, AND THE ENTIRE POD WAS EXPOSED TO COVID-19.

uses a "non-testing method" to determine recovery, despite the fact that the county has no shortage of tests. This method, which involves monitoring a prisoner's temperature and oxygen levels, has contributed to the lack of palliative care because basic comforts such as cough drops supposedly mask symptoms of COVID-19 and make it more difficult to determine whether someone has recovered. Despite this, many prisoners who are declared "recovered" report that they are still experiencing lingering, uncomfortable symptoms of the virus.

On September 14, the jail reported that Housing Unit 3D was quarantined until September 27, due to patients presenting with symptoms on September 12. The quarantine was extended until September 28 due to yet another patient presenting with symptoms on the following day. Yet – on September 15 – the jail reported zero active Covid-19 cases and 7 RED patients. Red patients include both patients with COVID-19 symptoms awaiting



test results and patients with positive COVID-19 results. It is unclear how ACSO can claim that there have been no new cases since the 5th when patients presented with symptoms on the 12th and 13th, and the entire pod was exposed to COVID-19.

Only 12% of the population has been tested since the last outbreak.

A prisoner who tested positive for COVID-19 on August 14 reported on September 1 that he was declared recovered on August 24 and removed from Housing Unit 8C (for known COVID-19 cases) after less than 10 days. During his time in quarantine, his fever reached 106 degrees, yet he was provided with no medical or palliative care – such as cough syrup or Tylenol – aside from the daily monitoring of his temperature and oxygen levels. He is still experiencing headaches, dizziness, and loss of smell and taste.

Another prisoner who tested positive for COVID-19 contacted the hotline on September 1 to report that he was declared recovered on July 20, but never received a test to confirm this. While he was acutely ill with COVID-19, he was transferred to the Outpatient Housing Unit (OPHU) with a fever of 104 degrees. While in the OPHU, he never received any clean clothes, nor treatment for his symptoms aside from a daily Tylenol. He believes that he is still sick, and is experiencing chills, nausea, and difficulty breathing.

On September 10, a prisoner called to report that he found pieces of metal, possibly razor

DURING HIS TIME IN QUARANTINE, HIS FEVER REACHED 106 DEGREES, YET HE WAS PROVIDED WITH NO MEDICAL OR PALLIATIVE CARE – SUCH AS COUGH SYRUP OR TYLENOL – ASIDE FROM THE DAILY MONITORING OF HIS TEMPERATURE AND OXYGEN LEVELS. HE IS STILL EXPERIENCING HEADACHES, DIZZINESS, AND LOSS OF SMELL AND TASTE.

blades, in his food. Food contamination is severe and frequent enough that in previous weeks, hotline callers have reported finding rodent feces, live moths, and dead mice in their food. Santa Rita's kitchen is run by Aramark, a third-party contractor which, along with the Alameda County Sheriff's Office, is a defendant in a class action lawsuit which alleges that prisoners are forced to work for no pay under threat of punishment. Kitchen workers prepare meals not only for Santa Rita Jail but for other Bay Area jails which contract with Aramark. Housing Unit 25, which housed kitchen workers, was also the site of the jail's largest outbreak of COVID-19 to date. On July 17 alone, 40 people tested positive. In the following days, the number of infected people increased to at least 106 people.

Prisoners have been reporting the appalling food, poor sanitation, and abusive labor conditions in the kitchen since well before the pandemic. The jail suppresses prisoner self-advocacy through the grievance system by summarily denying grievances related to



food. Rather than address the abysmal kitchen sanitation which is the root cause of the food contamination, deputies instruct prisoners to throw away contaminants such as moths and rodent droppings. Once the evidence is gone, the grievance is marked as “resolved.”

A kitchen worker who spoke with representatives from the CDC in early July reported cockroaches and birds in the kitchen, as well as a persistent rodent problem in both the kitchen and multiple housing units. She was subjected to intense retaliation for speaking out, including the loss of all of her phone and visiting privileges, being fired from her kitchen job, and the withholding of medication which was prescribed by an outside physician. Due to the retaliation, she was unable to contact the hotline again until September 1. She reported that she is now scared to file any further grievances about the kitchen.

The Santa Rita Jail Hotline works directly with prisoners to determine how they were exposed to COVID-19 and whether the care they are receiving is adequate. Hotline calls suggest a very different reality than what is being presented to the public. If you are interested to become a hotline worker, please fill out this form (https://nlgsf.ourpowerbase.net/SRJ_Hotline_Volunteer_Form).

A KITCHEN WORKER WHO SPOKE WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE CDC IN EARLY JULY REPORTED COCKROACHES AND BIRDS IN THE KITCHEN, AS WELL AS A PERSISTENT RODENT PROBLEM IN BOTH THE KITCHEN AND MULTIPLE HOUSING UNITS. SHE WAS SUBJECTED TO INTENSE RETALIATION FOR SPEAKING OUT, INCLUDING THE LOSS OF ALL OF HER PHONE AND VISITING PRIVILEGES, BEING FIRED FROM HER KITCHEN JOB, AND THE WITHHOLDING OF MEDICATION WHICH WAS PRESCRIBED BY AN OUTSIDE PHYSICIAN.