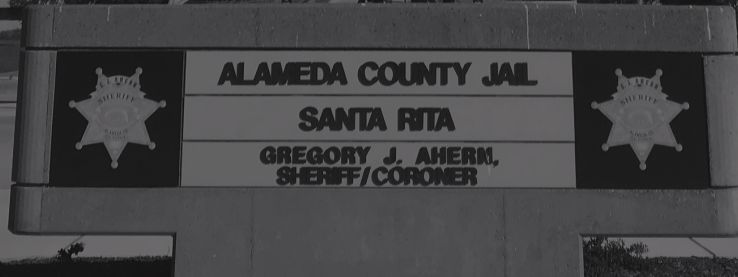


SANTA RITA JAIL WEEKLY UPDATE

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2020



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

2078

JAIL POPULATION

264

TOTAL NUMBER
OF POSITIVE
COVID-19 TESTS
SINCE APRIL

1

TOTAL NUMBER
OF NEW POSITIVE
COVID-19 TESTS
IN PAST WEEK

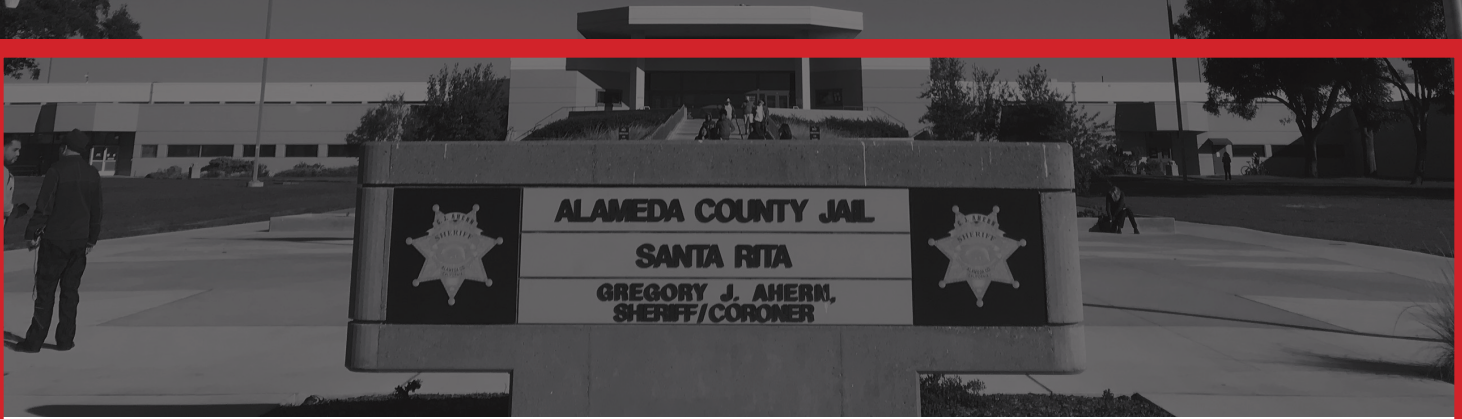
10%

OF JAIL
POPULATION
TESTED IN PAST
WEEK

9

PEOPLE WITH
COVID-19
SYMPTOMS
TODAY

“WE ALL WANT TO BELIEVE THAT THE SHERIFF HAS THIS VIRUS UNDER CONTROL,” SAYS LEGAL WORKER DARBY AONO. “BUT NO ONE – NOT THE SHERIFF, NOT OUR COUNTY GOVERNMENT, NOT THE PUBLIC – NO ONE KNOWS IF THE VIRUS IS UNDER CONTROL, BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS WHERE THE VIRUS IS... THE SHERIFF HAS FIGURED OUT THAT IF YOU CUT OFF ACCESS TO TESTING IN THE MIDDLE OF AN OUTBREAK, YOU CAN MAKE THE OUTBREAK DISAPPEAR.”



IN THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 21-27:

- A new prisoner was tested 2 days after his arrival and placed in Housing Unit 1 before his test results came back. Prisoners in HU1 were concerned to see that the prisoner was allowed out in the common areas rather than being quarantined. The prisoner was then moved out of the unit a few days later, but prisoners were not told whether or not he tested positive.
- A prisoner who experienced seizures, high blood pressure, and vomiting was given a disciplinary report that claimed he “interfered with jail operations” by reporting his symptoms to a deputy.
- 3 prisoners reported that their grievances about medical issues were lost and/or summarily denied.

IN THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 28-OCTOBER 4:

- A prisoner was denied access to Suboxone treatment for his opiate addiction and had his wheelchair taken away by deputies.
- One prisoner reported losing access to sanitizing wipes.
- A prisoner reported that when she left the jail for 3 days to see a sick relative, she was immediately returned to her unit without quarantining.
- 3 prisoners reported the loss of their property: such as family photos, warm clothes, and legal paperwork.

IN THE WEEK OF OCTOBER 5-11:

- A prisoner reported that the allotted time prisoners are given to clean their cells was reduced from an hour and a half to only 15 minutes. Prisoners must share a single toilet brush, spray bottle, and dustpan.
- One prisoner reported loss of property, including a list of family members' phone numbers that was thrown away by a deputy.
- A prisoner who found metal in his food received an X-Ray, which confirmed he swallowed a razorblade that was mixed in with his food. His grievance was denied.
- At least 3 disabled prisoners were denied their bottom-bunk accommodations. 2 prisoners reported having to place their mattresses on the floor because they cannot physically access their top bunks.
- A new prisoner was booked on October 4 and placed in a high-risk unit, HU6, on October 7 with no quarantine period.
- A prisoner reported that he has seen deputies, medical staff, and prisoners without masks.



On Monday, October 12, Santa Rita Jail reported zero remaining COVID-19 cases after a new outbreak that began on September 17 and infected at least 18 people. Between September 18 and September 22, active cases increased by more than 450%, and at least six housing pods were quarantined. In the week since the outbreak was first discovered, ACSO tested less than 15% of the jail population.

Advocates and family members who spoke at the October 6 press conference expressed concern about the Sheriff's low testing rate and the jail's use of a "non-testing method" to determine recovery from COVID-19. A speaker whose relative is currently incarcerated in Santa Rita remarked that, when her son caught COVID-19 in August, he was placed in medical isolation for only 8 days. He was returned to general population while still experiencing symptoms. When he expressed concern that he might still be infectious, a nurse told him that his labored breathing and cough were symptoms of a panic attack, not COVID-19. The nurse offered him psychiatric medication rather than a test to confirm negativity. He went on to infect around 20 people in Housing Unit 33. Advocates fear that this situation is repeating itself, and have consistently sounded the alarm about large groups of prisoners being declared recovered, seemingly overnight: **in only 24 hours from September 29-30, the jail reported an 89% decrease in active cases.**

WHEN HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT HE MIGHT STILL BE INFECTIOUS, A NURSE TOLD HIM THAT HIS LABORED BREATHING AND COUGH WERE SYMPTOMS OF A PANIC ATTACK, NOT COVID-19. THE NURSE OFFERED HIM PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION RATHER THAN A TEST TO CONFIRM NEGATIVITY. HE WENT ON TO INFECT AROUND 20 PEOPLE IN HOUSING UNIT 33.

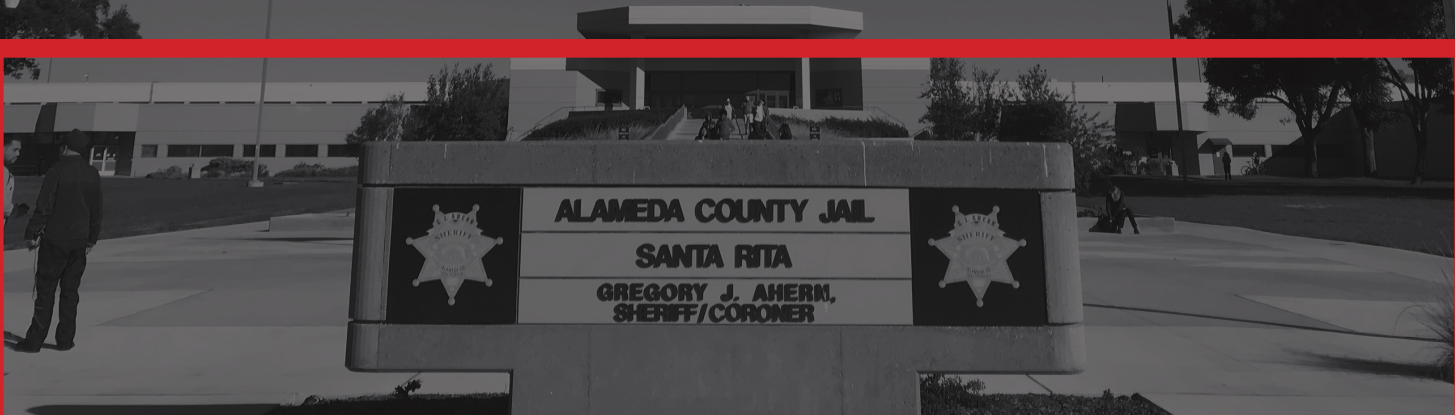
"We all want to believe that the sheriff has this virus under control," says legal worker Darby Aono. "But no one — not the sheriff, not our county government, not the public — no one knows if the virus is under control, because no one knows where the virus is... the sheriff has figured out that if you cut off access to testing in the middle of an outbreak, you can make the outbreak disappear."

Even as the number of COVID-19 cases has dropped to zero, the amount of quarantined housing units has actually *increased* since the outbreak in late September.

On October 1, only three housing units were quarantined.

By October 5, two additional Housing Units – 9D and 24D – were quarantined due to patients presenting with symptoms, yet the number of active cases remained unchanged.

On October 6, the jail reported that only one active case remained, yet the number of total COVID-19 cases increased, from 263 to 264. The



Sheriff does not maintain any public historical data about COVID infections and did not account for this discrepancy. On their COVID-19 dashboard, ACSO posts only a single day's worth of data which is erased and replaced with the next day's.

By October 8, Housing Unit 24D was released from quarantine after a patient presented with symptoms only three days earlier.

On October 11, Housing Units 24A-C were placed under quarantine, along with Housing Units 32D-F. The quarantine of these three units, not long after a short-lived quarantine of 24D, suggest that the virus was spread by deputies and pod workers moving between the units.

For months, prisoners have consistently reported that deputies move between quarantined and non-quarantined housing units without changing their gloves. A federal detainee who tested positive for COVID-19 around September 22 reports that he was

infected by deputies walking between the quarantine area and his Housing Unit.

On Monday, October 5, ACSO announced the creation of an internal COVID-19 compliance unit that will conduct spot checks in the jail. This new measure was ordered in response to an inspection by Mike Brady of Sabot Consulting, who reported mask compliance issues and improper cohorting of COVID-19 patients. The Sabot Consulting report described a "clean facility," something that has been consistently contradicted by prisoners who argue that the jail forced pod workers to clean only the visible areas of the jail in preparation for inspections. Pod workers are unpaid. Advocates, who have consistently demanded unannounced spot checks by the Alameda County Department of Public Health, are concerned that an internal auditing tool will not be accountable to the public regarding its findings, nor enforce compliance with safety and sanitation standards.

To view more testimonies from prisoners, please visit www.srjsolidarity.org.

ADVOCATES, WHO HAVE CONSISTENTLY DEMANDED UNANNOUNCED SPOT CHECKS BY THE ALAMEDA COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, ARE CONCERNED THAT AN INTERNAL AUDITING TOOL WILL NOT BE ACCOUNTABLE TO THE PUBLIC REGARDING ITS FINDINGS, NOR ENFORCE COMPLIANCE WITH SAFETY AND SANITATION STANDARDS.

The Santa Rita Jail Hotline works directly with prisoners who have concerns about COVID-19, medical care, and jail conditions. The content of hotline calls suggests a very different reality than what is being presented to the public by the Alameda County Sheriff's Office. If you are interested to become a hotline worker, please fill out this form: https://nlgsf.ourpowerbase.net/SRJ_Hotline_Volunteer_Form