

There is No Ethical Care in a Mental Health Jail

LA County Jails are the largest psychiatric provider nationally and the County is currently trying to expand the reach of its jail by building a new Mental Health Jail to replace Men's Central and a new Women's Jail, adding 4,000 new jail beds. Community members have long opposed this plan and instead support user-led and self-determined care in communities. Below we offer a look at key ethical standards from national associations of counseling, psychology, and social work to summarize why these standards cannot be successfully met in a carceral setting.

Ethical Principles

Practices in Jails

do no harm



Strive to benefit others; Take care to do no harm

- Solitary confinement, lack of access to outdoor space, no freedom of movement
- Food insecurity and inadequate nutrition
- Culture of control and violence from guards as well as exposure to threats of rape, violence, and trauma without access to self-determined support
- Disconnection from loved ones

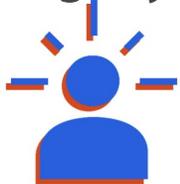
autonomy



Foster the right to control the direction of one's life

- Lack of personal control over space, safety, and interpersonal interaction
- Environment of consistent control, isolation, and domination leads to lack of access to self-growth opportunities
- Lack of self-growth
- Lack of access to basic needs
- Disproportionate ratio of resources to those in need
- Jail practices create high need situations which there will never be adequate resources to fill

dignity



Support the worth, dignity and potential of a person

- Loss of free will
- Lack of human interaction (solitary confinement)
- Practitioners in jail settings have a primary duty to uphold the jail's interest in maintaining confinement over the individual client's care

justice



Treat individuals equitably; Foster fairness and equality

- Under contract and control of the jail system, practitioners will be unable to equitably provide care and services
- Imprisonment, the courts, and policing criminalize poverty, homelessness, and mental illness

advocacy



Advocate for policy changes that improve conditions to meet basic human needs and promote social justice

How can you take action?

Conditions cannot be fundamentally improved for people with mental health needs in a jail setting. Demand that funds be diverted from jail construction to support community based programs offering life sustaining resources and care.