



COUNTY OF YOLO

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Yolo County Launches Jail-Based Competency Treatment Program

(Woodland, CA) – The Yolo County Sheriff's Office and the Yolo County Health & Human Services Agency (HHSA) have launched a Jail-Based Competency Treatment Program (JBCT) to provide mental health services to incompetent to stand trial (IST) individuals. The program's primary focus is to restore individuals served in this program to competency, playing an essential effort in reducing recidivism and increasing stabilization in our community. Once competency is restored, they can continue their criminal proceedings while receiving mental health services and re-entry support.

"Our new Jail Based Competency Treatment program will allow inmates who have been determined to be incompetent to stand trial to begin receiving treatment soon after it is ordered by the court, rather than having to wait many months in our jail for a bed to become available in the State Hospital system. This program will reduce custody time and positively impact both the inmate and my staff," said Yolo County Sheriff Tom Lopez.

The genesis for the Yolo County JBCT occurred when several county departments recognized significant placement delays for IST individuals in the Department of State Hospital (DSH) competency program. The waitlist had doubled, with some individuals waiting six months to one year. As part of the County's work on the Stepping Up Initiative*, Yolo County criminal justice partners and HHSA began meeting to address this growing concern.

Over the last four years, the Public Defender's Office, the Sheriff's Office, the Probation Department, the District Attorney's Office, the Courts, HHSA, and County Counsel have implemented several programs, new practices, toured other communities' JBCT programs and engaged in several meetings with DSH leadership to investigate various solutions. DSH has worked to meet the needs of the increasing waitlists by expanding JBCT programs throughout California, and Yolo County is excited to be part of that expansion.

"All partners agreed that once the appropriate pieces of the jail construction project were completed, this program would be implemented here in Yolo. Like many other things, COVID delayed this implementation longer than any of us had hoped," said Ian Evans, Adult and Aging Branch Director at Yolo County Health & Human Services, who also serves as the County's Alcohol and Drug Administrator. "We are incredibly excited to have this new program in Yolo, adding another local component to our array of services for those with significant mental health needs that find themselves involved in the criminal justice system.

As key parts of the jail construction concluded in late 2021, partners from the Sheriff's Office, County Counsel, HHSA, DSH, and WellPath – who is contracted with HHSA to provide behavioral health and medical services in-custody – began meeting regularly to finalize contract details, budgeting, staffing plans, and implementation date.

Using data to decide capacity and funding, Yolo and DSH landed on a Yolo County 7-bed JBCT program. It officially launched on Wednesday, June 6, when the first two individuals were admitted into the program, and as of today, the program is at capacity. HHSA has entered into a funding agreement with DSH to bring in the revenue to fully fund the program, providing funding to the Sheriff's Office for a full-time correctional officer solely dedicated to the JBCT program, and has entered into an agreement with WellPath to provide four staff to support the service needs of the program.

While Yolo County partners continue to work to increase avenues to address the community's mental health needs, the launch of the Yolo JBCT program offers an outstanding addition to the service delivery for some of our most vulnerable individuals in Yolo County.

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*[The Stepping Up Initiative](#) aims to reduce the number of individuals with serious mental illness involved in the criminal justice system.