

# Coalition For Prisoners' Rights Newsletter

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## BAD AND WORSE

The Albuquerque New Mexico jail (or MDC) since 2005, has allowed people entering it while already on methadone, to continue their treatment with it. In 2017, the jail began allowing people with street drug addictions not already on medication, to enroll while locked up. Medication for addiction treatment (MAT) is recognized as the standard for care. A specific example is "Severe opioid use disorder (OUD)", is one example. As a chronic relapsing brain disease, it requires medical intervention for years, or even a lifetime. The New Mexico Corrections Department (NMCD) does not allow the use of methadone, or any other medication treatment for OUD.

NMCD's refusal to provide MAT puts people at risk for relapse and reentry into prison. A 2018 NM legislative report found that one-half of the recidivism rate in New Mexico was attributed to parole revocations for technical violations related to street drug use, and that about one-third of the people admitted to NMCD prisons were there as the result of failed drug tests and missed appointments.

In addition, formerly incarcerated people have been found to be at an increased risk for a fatal overdose once they leave prison. A 2007 study found that during the two weeks following their release from prison, formerly incarcerated people are 12,900% (those 5 digits are not a typo) as likely as non-incarcerated people to die of an overdose. In contrast, a 2017 study found that people who receive MAT while imprisoned are 85% less likely to die of a drug overdose within a month of release.

In general, the mortality rate for state prisoners rose from 242 per 100,000 in 2001 to 344 per 100,000 in 2018. In 2018, the mortality rate due to drug/alcohol intoxication rose to 21 per 100,000 in 2018. The states with the highest prisoner mortality rates were: Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama, West Virginia, Mississippi and South Carolina. The number of prisoners who died in local jails in 2000 was reported as 1,120. In 2018, the mortality rate in jails was 154 per 100,000.

Going from the general to the specific, we now consider some aspects of the tragic and apparently ongoing situation in the Santa Fe New Mexico County Jail.

In 2002 and 2003, the U.S. Department of Justice conducted an investigation into conditions at the Santa Fe County Adult Correctional Facility (SFCACF). In short, they found that: "...persons confined suffer harm or the risk of serious harm from deficiencies in the facility's provision of medical and mental health care..." and that "at least 20% of those imprisoned did not have any initial health screening, even when staff identify inmates with serious medical needs during the intake process, they fail to refer them for appropriate care."

The report's conclusion was that the jail's failings constituted a violation of sentenced inmates' Eighth Amendment right to freedom from cruel and unusual punishment and pre-trial detainees' Fourteenth Amendment right to freedom from conditions or practices not reasonably related to the legitimate governmental objectives of safety, order, and security."

Nevertheless, from 2015 through August 2021. The following nine people all died from medical neglect at the SFCACF: Thomas Pedersen, Stacy Lynn Gambler, Ricardo Ortiz, John DeLaura, Carmela DeVargas, Rex Corcoran, Dickie Ortega, Thomas Wayne Ferguson and Adrian Hern.

An internal medicine physician wrote in the Santa Fe NM paper this month about the attempt to find out what treatment—if any—is available in New Mexico's prisons for people with substance use disorders. No information was forthcoming from 5 of the 11 NM prisons. Only three had buprenorphine and none had methadone available. No matter that "...requiring all prisons to have available buprenorphine and methadone for opioid use disorder; naltrexone (in a pill or shot) and acamprosate for alcohol use disorder; and bupropion and naltrexone (as a shot) would save lives as well as money. Overdose deaths are increasing throughout the country. s

## COVID-19 AUMENTAN EN EE.UU.

Los contagio y las hospitalizaciones por coronavirus continúan aumentando en Estados Unidos, incluso cuando la pandemia de COVID sigue cobrándose más de 1.000 vidas por día en el país. Los casos entre menores de edad aumentaron hasta un 32% con respecto a las cifras de hace dos semanas, lo que representa alrededor de una cuarta parte de todos los contagios en el país.

El 22 de noviembre, el principal experto en enfermedades infecciosas de Estados Unidos, el doctor Anthony Fauci,, pidió que se vacunen todas las personas de cinco años de edad o mayores, ya que advirtió que las festividades de Acción de Gracias podrían desencadenar un peligroso aumento de casos en los meses de inviernos menos que la población tome medidas ahora para frenar la propagación del coronavirus.

Mientras tanto, la Casa Blanca anunció el lunes que el 95% de los empleados federales cumplieron con los requisitos de vacunación obligatoria, que se aplican a 3,5 millones de trabajadores del Gobierno de Estados Unidos. Además, los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades de Estados Unidos (CDC, por sus siglas en inglés) agregaron a Alemania y Dinamarca a su lista de destinos con el riesgo de contagio más alto, en medio de un aumento generalizado de casos de COVID-19 en la mayor parte de Europa.

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### **THE LEAST READ PART OF THE NEWSLETTER**

To receive the CPR Newsletter by postal mail monthly, send a self-addressed stamped envelope for each month's issue you are requesting, up to 12 at one time. Put the CPR return address in the upper left-hand corner of each envelope you send us.

Five pages (1 ounce), can be sent for one Forever stamp. Ten pages (2 ounces) can be sent for a twenty-cent stamp more.

Please continue to send us address changes, as soon as you can, including both your old and new addresses, to help us keep our mailing list up-to-date.

**NONE OF US ARE LAWYERS OR LEGAL WORKERS.** Letters sent us marked "Legal Mail" are NOT going to a lawyer, and could possibly result in our losing our access to the prisons they come from. **PLEASE** don't do it! No matter how desperately you need legal advice/assistance, we DO NOT have any.

Many, many thanks to the Real Cost of Prisons project, which posts our Newsletter on-line monthly for free downloading and distribution. All issues since 2009 are at its great site: [realcostofprisons.org](http://realcostofprisons.org)

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**Note:** Both SMU-1 and Florence Central have signed up for the "Million Book Project".

## QUICK: SEND US CALENDAR CARD DESIGNS

Last call to Imprisoned Readers: Please send us a black and white drawing to be considered for the 2022 New Year's card and calendar! All designs must be respectful of our diversity: We cannot use any with racist, sexist, or religious symbolism. The deadline has been extended, but the sooner we have your picture, the sooner we can get the calendars out – our biggest mailing of the year. Submission of a drawing serves as the artist's permission for our use, and will, of course, be credited. As circumstances allow, books of choice are the prize for our use of your drawing.

## Additional Details for HUX MA Program

As announced in the September 2021 Newsletter, CalState University Dominguez Hills is developing a correspondence MA program in the Humanities for incarcerated students. Matthew Lockett, Ph.D., the program coordinator, has let us know that to be eligible to enroll, all applicants must already have their bachelor's degree. However, the program will not begin to accept applications until late 2022, so there is still time to qualify for it. Classes will start in the fall of 2023. More information about the program will be available in the spring of 2022. If you would like to receive updates about the program, please send a letter addressed to: Dr. Matt Lockett, HUX Program Coordinator, P.O. Box 2731, Orangevale CA 95662.

## PROTECT PRISON MAIL!

*Just Detention International* Action Update

"Mail is a staple of prison life—a meaningful, and inexpensive, way to stay connected with loved ones and to remain hopeful amid the stress and chaos of incarceration..." Detention facilities nationwide are increasingly denying people their mail, and substituting mail scanning.

Pennsylvania has paid Smart Communications \$15 million for using MailGuard. Thousands of people have joined *Just Detention's* campaign to end the MailGuard scanning program of Smart Communications in Florida. *Just Detention* stresses not only the harm the program causes those incarcerated and their families, but also its "negligible impact on drug use in the states' prisons".

--*Just Detention International* is a health & human rights organization that seeks to end sexual abuse in all forms of detention. At: 3325 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 340, Los Angeles CA 90010; 213-384-1400. Also East Coast & South Africa offices.