

Care First Community Coalition's 2022-23 Budget Agenda for Alameda County

The [Care First Community Coalition](#) is composed of Alameda County organizations and community members who are committed to reducing the number of individuals in Santa Rita jail with behavioral health concerns, and preventing the future criminalization and incarceration of individuals with mental illness or substance use disorders with wrap-around care and housing. Our members authored the [Care First, Jails Last resolution in Alameda County](#) and we are committed to advocating for a county budget that prioritizes and enables these goals.

Alameda County faces a serious crisis. Countless residents are in hard times — especially in communities of color. For low-income individuals of color with behavioral health conditions, coming into contact with the criminal-legal system is all too common. Whether by arrest or involuntary psychiatric hold (5150), this contact often leads to incarceration, which is acutely destabilizing, putting people at risk of losing their housing, employment, public benefits, and other financial and social safety nets. This set of experiences creates the conditions for future crises and deteriorating behavioral health.

- Despite Black residents making up just 11% of Alameda County's population, **nearly half of the homeless and jail populations are Black.**
- In 2021, more than 60% of people incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail had a behavioral health issue of some type, according to County data. In addition, **more than 30% of people incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail had a documented serious and persistent mental illness**, compared to only 5.6% of the general population nationally.
- **More than 90% of people held in Santa Rita Jail are unsentenced**, and experience unconstitutionally unsafe conditions in jail as a result of their low-income status and court delays.
- The number of unhoused people in Alameda County, many of whom are criminalized or experience behavioral health concerns, continues to grow. The need for supportive housing requires a large financial commitment from the County, which also must aggressively seek support from the state and federal governments.

The County has taken some steps to meet these crises, but has not dedicated anywhere near the resources needed. In fact, the current proposed budget for FY 2022-2023 would apparently add \$20 million to increase the County's already large financial reserves, instead of investing in community-based services that address people's acute health and housing needs and prevent more costly incarceration and hospitalization.

This situation is compounded by litigation that resulted in the County putting more than \$100 million in new annual expenditures for over 450 new staff in Santa Rita Jail - with more than 160 sheriff positions in the jail remaining vacant and absorbing budget commitments. Yet the County has found ways to fund this dramatic increase in jail staff with allocations from the General Fund - suggesting that it could invest much more from the General Fund in needs for behavioral health and housing.

Rebuilding a behavioral health care system that serves everyone must include an immediate increase in financing for new community-based programs, while increasing support for existing ones to stem the County's staffing crisis. Our county can permanently end our reliance on jail and policing as solutions to our social and health needs by fully funding scalable and intentional projects that prioritize stability, housing, and community-based mental health care.

Budget Transparency Demands

1. **Create public accounting of unspent funds in Santa Rita Jail.**
 - a. An accounting how much is being spent on overtime in the jail
 - b. An accounting of funded vacant positions in Santa Rita Jail of ACSO and ACBH staff , as of June 2022.
2. **Create transparency around the County's reserves.**
 - a. The County's [Budget web page](#) and [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report](#) should include consolidated sections that state clearly the amount of reserves, source, liabilities on those funds, changes since previous year, and conditions for use for each reserve fund that the County controls.
3. **Increase Alameda County advocacy to the California and federal governments for legislation that expands funds**, especially for flexible funds that can be used to serve multiple populations, and for types of supportive housing and services that have been difficult to fund.
4. **Create a budget report on how the funds mandated by the Babu settlement have been allocated and spent**, and the **status of implementation** of the settlement's terms.
5. **Create transparency of Alameda County's unspent state realignment funds designated for Medi-Cal services.** Unspent state realignment funds lose the federal match when services are not provided but the state has already paid the county. What happens to the funds when service providers do not maximize their contracts, which occurs with most contracts every year?

Care First Investment Platform

Totalling to \$176.3 million in new investments

(red italicized text) = source of funding

Investment that Multiplies Revenue

1. **\$500,000 for Alameda County Housing and Community Development to augment existing staff capacity** and ensure that Alameda County can apply for available state and federal affordable and permanent supportive housing funding. *(general fund)*

Investments to Maintain Current Level of Care

2. **\$17 million (\$17M) to complete a 15% increase in behavioral health, community-based organization staff compensation** to stop the bleeding of staff in order to maintain existing programs and services run by community behavioral health service providers. *(general fund)*

Investments to Strategically Expand Care

3. **\$200,000 dedicated to Alameda County Behavioral Health to fund staff time and/or a consultant to conduct gap analysis** to understand mental health need *(reserves)*

Care First Investment Platform (continued)

4. **\$43M to fully fund Alameda County Behavioral Health Department's countywide Forensic Plan¹**, which includes funds for:

- a. \$6.6M for six CATT mobile crisis teams (*general fund*)
- b. \$2.2M for crisis 24-hour dispatch service (*general fund*)
- c. \$16.5M to expand voluntary residential treatment beds countywide (reserves)
- d. \$2.2M for new board & care facilities (*reserves*)
- e. \$1.05M for facility for co-occurring mental illness/substance treatment (*reserves*)
- f. \$9.5M for hospital beds (25-bed subacute facility, 16-bed acute facility) (*reserves*)
- g. \$2M to expand satellite urgent care clinic services (*general fund*)
- h. \$1.08M for re-entry support teams (*general fund*)
- i. \$1M for peer respite for persons from Santa Rita Jail, on probation, at risk (*general fund*)

The County to date has funded \$9.4M of ACBH's \$52M proposal, including \$3.745M for wraparound services for transitional age and African American youth; and \$1.2M for substance use mobile outreach teams.

5. **\$80M of county funds towards supportive housing programs and services** for those who are unhoused, suffering from mental illness or substance use disorders, and/or are formerly incarcerated. (*blend of reserves + general fund*)

- a. The Office of Homeless Care and Coordination has identified a need for 4,195 units of supportive housing, beyond the current inventory of 3,215, which must be met over at least five years with County, State and other funds³.
- b. \$80 million would represent an increase from the approximately \$46 million from the County's General Fund allocated in FY2021-2022, which accounted for about one quarter of all funds dedicated to the Home Together plan.

6. **\$2M to ensure fair compensation for mobile crisis team staff and 24/7 city and county crisis response teams** to all parts of Alameda county; and to address the full range of mental health crises, substance use, and other nonviolent disputes that otherwise would only be addressed by law enforcement. (*general fund*)

- a. This complements \$6.6M proposed in ACBH Forensic Plan to expand crisis response teams.

¹ Similar to what was done for the Home Together Plan, so that a plan may be developed to address the countywide mental health crisis.

² Data is from [ACBH April 25th presentation to Joint Health & Public Protection Committee](#).

³ This would represent an increase from previous year commitments of County funds, though it still falls short of the need identified in Alameda County's [Home Together 2026 report](#). This plan aims to eliminate homelessness in the County by 2026. However, the investment needed in FY2022-2023, according to that Plan, is greater than in later years, as we invest in permanent housing, not just temporary solutions or band-aids to a pervasive and systemic problem that is causing widespread suffering.

Care First Investment Platform (continued)

7. \$25.5M to double the number of people served by Full Service Partnerships, which are wrap-around services for people with severe mental illness (general fund)

- a. The US Department of Justice, in its April 2021 lawsuit against Alameda County, cited a need for Full Service Partnerships (FSPs) of 4,000 to 6,000 people in Alameda County, with a funded capacity for only 850. Since then, the County has added capacity, up to 1,005 FSP slots, but this falls far short of the need.
- b. Our recommended investment would only meet half the number of FSP slots recommended by the Behavioral Health Collaborative⁴ and the need identified in the US Dept of Justice's litigation, but it would represent a start.
- c. These services will save inpatient beds for gravely disabled individuals, quickly pay for themselves, generate significant savings in the high cost of locked facilities, and improve consumers' quality of life.

8. \$3.1M to implement a pilot Living Room Model in South County⁵, to divert people who otherwise would have been arrested or hospitalized or those who are at risk of arrest or hospitalization, where they can be in a supportive environment. (general fund)

- a. Will serve approximately five guests at a time in a 24-hour period and approximately 1,800 guests over the course of a year.

9. \$2M to purchase 27 subacute beds available at Villa Fairmont that are currently leased out to neighboring counties or Kaiser. (general fund)

- a. While some Care First Coalition members share the Department of Justice's critique of Alameda County's dependence on institutional care for people with serious mental illness, most Coalition members support investment in additional hospital beds for acute and subacute care.

10. \$3M to fund CARES Navigation Center expansion in central and southern Alameda County and to fully fund the existing CARES Navigation Center in Oakland.

- a. CARES Navigation Center is a misdemeanor diversion program for people with mental illness and substance-use disorder that redirects individuals arrested for misdemeanors out of the criminal justice system and into services. The centers will operate Monday through Friday 12-hours per day.

For more information, contact Care First Community Coalition:

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⁴ The Behavioral Health Collaborative in March 2022 recommended a more than four-fold increase in Alameda County's FSP capacity to ensure the community is aware of the service, referrals are being appropriately made, and there are no wait lists, and to serve targeted priority populations, particularly transitional-age youth with a history of trauma or aggression, African American males, the LGBTQ population, the homeless population, and those struggling with substance use disorders.

⁵ This model has been used successfully in other states and was adopted by the Justice Involved Mental Health Task Force. Kate Jones of ACBH developed a [draft budget in 2019 of this model](#).

Free Our Kids Coalition Recommendations for Probation

Probation Recommendations

Amidst widespread calls to meaningfully address rampant racial injustice, Alameda County has the potential and opportunity to transition away from punitive models of juvenile justice. Punitive approaches only result in worsened outcomes, which runs counter to the rehabilitative goals of the juvenile justice system and also fail to make communities safer. **Systems centered on healing and growth are essential for improving the well-being of young people.** The time is now for Alameda County to reimagine its juvenile justice system.

1. Probation must **increase staff training to diffuse situations and learn alternatives to using force.** Eliminating chemical agents and prone restraints from juvenile facilities is also a matter of racial justice.
2. Probation must **strengthen partnerships and prioritize contracting with community-based organizations** to provide programming and other support such as counseling, mental health services, housing, coaching, and mentorship.
3. Probation must prioritize its budget to **provide adequate transition services** for young people returning to their schools and communities.
4. Probation must prioritize **increasing youth programs across its facility**, including programming for girls and gender-expansive youth.
5. Probation must prioritize staff time to **improve communication and coordination among the three agencies** (Probation, Alameda County Office of Education, Alameda County Behavioral Health) comprising JJC.
6. **Probation must increase its investment in transition services for TAY youth**, primarily related to job training, postsecondary education guidance.
7. **Probation must share timely information with the public** and prioritize staff to share updates regarding programming, facility numbers, and covid outbreaks.

For more information, contact Free Our Kid's Coalition:

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DA Accountability Table Recommendations **for District Attorney's Office**

Investment in District Attorney's Fiscal Budget

The increase in policing and tough-on-crime policies have failed to keep communities safe. The Alameda District Attorney has the opportunity to work with community leaders to reimagine community safety and address the root causes of violence. **The District Attorney must maximize state reforms to bring incarcerated loved ones home who have fully rehabilitated.**

1. The Alameda District Attorney **must partner with community based groups to support the refunding of community services**, including access to mental health, affordable housing, and free meal programs.
2. The Alameda District Attorney must **increase diversion programs** by 1) Establishing pre-plea diversion programs 2) Eliminate fees and charges as barriers to participating in diversion programs
3. The Alameda District Attorney must **establish and implement a decline to charge policy that diverts misdemeanor and low-level felony offenses** and ensures that people completely stay out of the system.
4. The Alameda District Attorney must establish and implement a policy to **eliminate sentence enhancements and three strikes cases**.
5. The Alameda District Attorney must establish and implement a policy to **end transfers to adult court**.
6. The Alameda District Attorney must increase staff reviewing resentencing and prioritize; 1) Those serving indeterminate life sentences and Life Without Parole (LWOP) 2) three strikes convictions 3) People who are serving additional time due to sentence enhancements, and those with mitigating factors that were not reviewed during initial sentencing.
7. The Alameda District Attorney must **increase department transparency and accountability efforts regarding police brutality, extra-judicial killings and police corruption**.
8. The Alameda District Attorney must prioritize staff time to **publish timely data and information through the department website**.

For more information, contact DA Accountability Table:

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