



Alameda County Sheriff's Office Community Engagement Report

Report Prepared and Presented by



ABOUT BRIGHT RESEARCH GROUP AND CITATIONS

This report was prepared by Bright Research Group (BRG) on behalf of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office. Founded in 2010 by Brightstar Ohlson, BRG is a women and minority-owned community-centered design, research, and capacity-building firm based in Oakland, California. This report was written by Brightstar Ohlson, Peter Kim, Alice Hu-Nguyen, and Moira DeNike.

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INTRODUCTION

The Alameda County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office) engaged Bright Research Group (BRG) to facilitate a community engagement process to hear from priority populations that had direct experience with the Sheriff's Office, as well as Alameda County residents. The goal of this process was to provide the newly elected sheriff, Yesenia Sanchez, with a baseline assessment of community perceptions of and experiences with the agency and to hear about residents' priorities for public safety. From February through April 2023, BRG coordinated a comprehensive series of community input meetings that drew 145 community residents representing people who had been incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail, their family members, and community-based providers and advocates who serve reentry, unhoused, and behavioral health clients. BRG also conducted a community survey that reached nearly 500 residents. The residents and key stakeholders shared their priorities for public safety, their level of support for proposed priorities of the Sheriff's Office, their perceptions of and experiences with the Sheriff's Office, and their recommendations for strengthened community partnership and public safety going forward. This report summarizes key findings from this community engagement process and is meant to support the Sheriff's Office in nurturing authentic community partnership, refining its public safety priorities, and strengthening relationships with Alameda County's diverse residents and stakeholders.

Background and Recent History

Since 1853, the Sheriff's Office has strived to ensure public safety by protecting the county's residents and community members, and treat those in its custody fairly and humanely. The Sheriff's Office is a full-service law enforcement agency whose duties include providing and operating:

- Security for the Alameda County Superior Court
- Patrol and investigative services for the county's unincorporated areas
- Alameda County Coroner's Bureau
- Alameda County Office of Emergency Services

Proposed Priorities of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office

- **Staff Health and Working Conditions:** Improve working conditions for the Sheriff's Office staff and the overall health of the agency.
- **Transparency:** Improve communication and clarity when it comes to letting the community know about Sheriff's Office processes, procedures, and information.
- **Jail Conditions and Reentry Services:** Improve conditions at Santa Rita Jail, and expand the resources and programs for those who are in jail and those who are returning to the community.
- **Community Partnership:** Improve how the Sheriff's Office interacts and engages with the community, including gathering feedback, hosting community events, and offering resources.
- **Racial Disparities:** Address racial disparities and unfair practices inside the Sheriff's Office, and make sure all policies, processes, and programs are fair and equitable.

- Santa Rita Jail
- Training academy and a full-service Criminalistics Laboratory

The agency experienced considerable growth over the past 20 years, with over 1,700 authorized staff positions (of which over 1,000 are sworn personnel) and an approximate annual operating budget of \$600 million, and it has received a number of certifications. The agency's principal role has been to oversee and operate the county's primary custody and detention institution, Santa Rita Jail. The Sheriff's Office received the "Triple Crown" of accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA), the American Correctional Association (ACA), and a dual accreditation from the agency's health care provider, California Forensic Medical Group, through the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (NCCHC) and the California Medical Association (CMA). Additionally, the Sheriff's Office Criminalistic Laboratory is nationally accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD).¹

Recent History of Community Partnership

Expansion of Law Enforcement Response beyond Unincorporated Areas: In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the Sheriff's Office broadened its role in delivering community patrol and investigative services beyond Alameda County's unincorporated areas, formalizing agreements to provide these services with numerous contract agencies including the City of Dublin, the Oakland International Airport, the Port of Oakland, Alameda County's Highland Hospital and Social Services Agency, the Peralta Community College District, and the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit Police Services. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office has become a national provider of law enforcement training through the operation of its Regional Training Center for recruits from the Sheriff's Office as well as other local law enforcement agencies.

Expansion of Services and Programming to Youth, Families, and Community: In 2005, the Sheriff's Office established the Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League (DSAL) to deliver recreation and community building activities primarily in Alameda County's unincorporated areas, such as the Ashland and Cherryland communities. The Sheriff's Office has since partnered with community members to create a soccer park and youth soccer league, a boxing gym, and a sports facility. The DSAL created Dig Deep Farms, a social enterprise program that grows and distributes locally grown food to residents and families in the Eden Area.² The Sheriff's Office also established a Youth and Family Services Bureau (YFSB) to deliver behavioral health counseling and support services to youth, adults, and families who come into contact with law enforcement. This includes Operation My Home Town (OMHT), YFSB's reentry pre- and post-release clinical case management model for people reentering the community from Santa Rita Jail.³

¹ <https://www.alamedacountysheriff.org/about-us>

² <https://www.acdsal.org/>;
http://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_1_10_19/GENERAL%20ADMINISTRATI%20ON/Regular%20Calendar/Community_capitals_policing_1_10_19.pdf

³ <https://www.fmhac.org/uploads/1/2/3/9/123913996/omht-miocr-overview-11-1-17.pdf>

Community Advocacy Highlights

Over the past two decades, the Sheriff's Office has been the subject of several advocacy campaigns to improve conditions at the jail, decrease militarization of law enforcement, and expand resources to community agencies.

In-Custody Deaths at Santa Rita Jail and Consent Decree: Santa Rita Jail has been the subject of criticism from community members and advocates for its mistreatment of jail residents and the number of in-custody deaths. As of March 2023, 66 people have died in the jail since 2014, with one-third of those deaths categorized as suicides.⁴ In February 2022, a federal court issued a consent decree requiring fundamental and transformational changes at Santa Rita Jail, including the provision of adequate mental health care and treatment and suicide prevention support, as well as a cessation of the overuse of isolation or force when deputy sheriffs interact with persons with psychiatric disabilities.⁵

Urban Shield: The Sheriff's Office's hosted Urban Shield, the world's largest tactical SWAT training and weapons expo, annually from 2007 to 2018 before the program was defunded. Community members and advocates organized a statewide mobilization in 2016 against what they described as an event to train law enforcement on "new forms of surveillance, repression, and state violence." In response, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors officially ended the program in 2018.⁶

Allocation of Realignment Funding: In 2011, California passed the Public Safety Realignment Act, better known as AB 109, which transferred responsibility for the incarceration and supervision of many low-level jail residents and parolees from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) to the county level. Counties received new state funding for programs targeting reentry and alternatives to incarceration. Community advocates and reentry service providers in Alameda County organized against the County of Alameda, claiming that AB 109 funds were disproportionately invested in the Sheriff's Office and Santa Rita Jail. The Sheriff's Office received 77% of the funds in 2011–2012 and 69% in 2012–2013.⁷ In response, the Board of Supervisors approved a 50% split of AB 109 funds in 2015—half for county implemented services, primarily at Santa Rita Jail, and half for community-based organizations.⁸

METHODS

The community engagement process consisted of: 1) priority population community input meetings; and 2) a community survey. One limitation of the research is related to the sample size of the qualitative priority population input and survey. The perspectives of the subset engaged through the research may not

⁴ <https://www.ktvu.com/news/4th-person-to-die-at-santa-rita-jail-in-6-weeks>

⁵ <https://rbgg.com/court-approves-consent-decree-in-federal-class-action-regarding-mental-health-care-at-santa-rita-jail/>

⁶ <https://criticalresistance.org/stop-urban-sheild/>

⁷ <https://eastbayexpress.com/county-to-spend-more-money-on-jails-not-services-1/>

⁸ <https://www.jrcofac.org/copy-of-district-attorney>

be generalizable to the population of Alameda County residents as a whole, nor the priority populations engaged here. The community engagement was guided by the following key research questions:

- What are the community expectations for and perceptions of the Sheriff's Office? How do community members, incarcerated individuals, and providers experience the Sheriff's Office?
- What are the community's most pressing public safety priorities for the Sheriff's Office to know and address?
- What feedback and recommendations does the community have for the five proposed priorities of the Sheriff's Office, including staff health and working conditions; transparency and oversight; jail conditions and reentry services; community partnership; and racial disparities?

The Sheriff's Office sought to hear from:

- Those who were formerly incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail and their family members
- Alameda County providers: reentry and jail community-based providers, faith-based organizations, and behavioral health providers
- Residents and business owners in unincorporated areas and other priority jurisdictions

Priority Population Community Input Meetings

The priority population community input meetings aimed to gather insights from those who had interacted with Sheriff's Office services and Santa Rita Jail, as well as community-based providers that serve and advocate for their clients. BRG facilitated outreach to these groups through the community-based organizations that work in the jail and those that serve the reentry, unhoused, or behavioral health clients. BRG conducted five virtual community input sessions and spoke with 145 individuals. The community input meetings ran for 60–90 minutes. Meetings facilitated in Spanish were also offered for community input meetings for the Santa Rita Jail experience and general community members. The participants in the Santa Rita Jail input meetings received an Amazon gift card of \$50.

Table 1. Community Input Meetings	Number of Participants
Community Providers	38
Interfaith Coalition for Justice in our Jails	3
Behavioral Health Collaborative of Alameda County	27
Santa Rita Jail Experience	32
Family Members	15
Formerly Incarcerated	21
Community Members	9
Total Stakeholders	145

BRG conducted a thematic analysis of data from the community input meetings by research question. Residents and business owners in unincorporated areas were invited to attend the community member

meeting; however, the event had low attendance, and these results are not generalizable to this group. The themes uncovered are documented in this report as findings and recommendations and are intended to inform the transition plan of the Sheriff's Office and upcoming changes in the next six years.

See [the Appendix](#) for a list of the community providers represented and memos on key themes from each community meeting.

Community Survey

The Sheriff's Office distributed the community survey to Alameda County residents and business owners, prioritizing those in unincorporated areas, through their social media platforms, partners, and existing community forums. BRG also disseminated the survey at priority population community input meetings, through community-based organizations, and on social media. The survey was developed in line with the key research questions for the community engagement process. All outreach materials and opportunities for input were available in Spanish and English. A total of 497 survey responses were collected between March 20 and April 19, 2023.

Table 2. Community Survey Respondents	N	%
Residence		
Unincorporated Areas	247	55%
Incorporated Jurisdictions	199	45%
Race and Ethnicity		
Black	69	13.9%
Native American	9	1.8%
Asian American	42	8.5%
Latin	66	13.3%
Pacific Islander	7	1.4%
White	198	39.8%
Other	24	4.8%
Declined to State	82	16.5%

The questionnaire includes questions pertaining to the respondents' characteristics and demographics, community perceptions of communication from the Sheriff's Office, the types of interactions the respondents have had with the Sheriff's Office and their satisfaction with those interactions, community priorities for public safety, and overall satisfaction with the office in the form of a Net Promoter Score (NPS). Statistical analysis of the survey responses include: 1) unweighted frequencies for each question; 2) composite measures on key areas of inquiry; 3) comparisons of race/ethnicity of respondents for specific

variables of interests; (4) and comparisons of where respondents live, either city/town or unincorporated areas for specific variables of interest; and 5) an NPS calculation.

See the [Appendix](#) for the survey instrument, detailed methodology, a sample profile, and results.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COMMUNITY INPUT

This section of the report provides a summary of key findings from the community input process administered by BRG between March and April 2023 in two parts:

1. [Key Findings from the Priority Population Input Events](#)
2. [General Resident Perceptions and Satisfaction on the Basis of Survey Responses](#)

Part 1. Key findings from the priority population input meetings

Except where noted, the following findings reflect the perspectives of the following priority populations:

- Individuals who were formerly incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail and their family members
- Alameda County services providers: reentry and jail community-based providers, faith-based organizations, and behavioral health providers who serve individuals who have interacted with the Sheriff's Office

The key themes are captured below:

Community Perceptions of and Actual Experiences with the Sheriff's Office at Santa Rita Jail and in the Community

1. Those who participated in the priority population input sessions expressed concern and outrage about the agency's failure to protect the health, safety, and lives of individuals who reside at Santa Rita Jail.
2. The participants agreed that the historical legacy of the institution, racially biased policing practices, abuse at Santa Rita Jail, and police response to people who are unhoused or experiencing behavioral health concerns all contribute to a negative perception of the Sheriff's Office within their community.
3. The participants see an opportunity for the new Sheriff to repair the agency's relationships at an institutional and community level by showing up as a collaborative partner, sharing power and resources with community organizations that care for county's most vulnerable, and building a positive presence in the community, especially in unincorporated areas.

Community Priorities for Public Safety

1. The priority populations urged Sheriff Sanchez to work to transform the organizational culture of Santa Rita Jail toward one that is humane, professional, and in alignment with its mission, and to also support alternatives to incarceration for the county's most vulnerable.
2. The participants expressed strong support for the five proposed priorities of the Sheriff's Office and urged the office to take concrete action to transform the organizational culture of the agency toward human-centered care for the county's most marginalized residents and to also strengthen communication and collaboration with the community. They offered a number of recommendations toward this goal.

Perceptions of and Actual Experiences with the Sheriff's Office at Santa Rita Jail and in the Community

Finding 1: Those who participated in the priority population input sessions expressed concern and outrage about the agency's failure to protect the health, safety, and lives of individuals who reside at Santa Rita Jail.

The primary concern that drew many participants to the community engagement events was the conditions and inhumane treatment of individuals who reside at Santa Rita Jail. The providers who serve the reentry, behavioral health, and unhoused communities, as well as people who had been incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail and their family members, highlighted as their key concerns an abuse of power; unsanitary conditions; an absence of adequate medical care; an absence of fair, transparent policy and procedure; and a desire for increased access to community-based services.

Abuse of Power and Unsanitary Conditions at Santa Rita Jail

Formerly incarcerated individuals, their family members, and service providers described the jail as an institution rife with abuse and mistreatment and as a source of significant trauma. Time at Santa Rita Jail is particularly harmful to Black residents, people with mental health conditions, undocumented people, women, and individuals who are unhoused. The participants who spent time in Santa Rita Jail provided detailed accounts of the ways in which deputy sheriffs and other staff at Santa Rita Jail abused them, dehumanized them, and harmed their physical and psychological well-being. The participants characterized the deputy sheriffs as demeaning, petty, and lacking in care for people who reside within Santa Rita Jail. Instances of abuse and mistreatment include: physical abuse; misuse of isolation; strip-searching residents; verbal abuse and disrespect; removing people's personal belongings, such as family photos, books, and educational materials; and harassment. Women who were incarcerated described being stripped of their clothing, given dirty underwear, and being placed in a cold isolation cell with no clothing, menstrual supplies, or blankets. Men, particularly Black men, described being beaten and physically abused. They explained that the deputy sheriffs highly value compliance and that many punish people who reside within Santa Rita Jail for any perceived threat to their authority. The participants felt that the jail staff lacked sufficient maturity and preparation to work with vulnerable populations; lacked awareness of jail processes, procedures, and rules; and were quick to escalate interactions with residents

toward confrontation. While several participants described instances in which the deputy sheriffs displayed compassion, humanity, and respect, those were the exception, not the rule.

The participants in the community meetings who had been incarcerated, as well as their family members, remarked on the reputation of Santa Rita Jail as an unsanitary facility with deplorable conditions. They provided detailed descriptions of filth; rotting food; feces and urine on surfaces; and rats crawling over food, plates, and food-preparation equipment. For many, the intake process and holding cell were the most dehumanizing aspect of being incarcerated, as people are forced to wait in an unsanitary cell for hours, either with dirty clothing or no clothing at all. People are strip-searched and forced to use communal bathrooms that lack toilet paper and privacy. The participants also mentioned poor sanitation, inadequate medical facilities, and a lack of nutritious meals.

“They have deputies walking back and forth. People call for help, and they will act like they don’t even hear people. That is just speaking from my experience and [the] loved ones I have known. I have seen women that have severe mental health issues walk into a holding cell with 20 women, covered in menstrual cycle, and no one helps.”

“You might be in there with 15 people and one toilet. Dirty, food on the floor, sandwiches, mustard packs, used toilet paper. It was horrific; [the] smell was terrible. You would be in there for hours. You might be there for a couple of days.”

Inadequate Medical Care and Mental Health Supports at Santa Rita Jail

There was consensus among the participants that incarceration at Santa Rita Jail produces PTSD, worsened mental health conditions, and even death. The participants decried the lack of medical care and mental health supports at the jail, citing multiple examples of medical malpractice, such as residents’ medical needs being ignored, failure to diagnose serious disease or illness, and failure to treat a preexisting condition. The providers and family members expressed frustration that they could not communicate and coordinate with the jail staff to ensure the continuation of physical and mental health care of clients and loved ones. Several participants had a family member who died in the jail due to a lack of medical attention. Several people contracted COVID-19 while in Santa Rita Jail, citing a failure to adhere to safety protocols and a delay in rapid testing after exposure.

There was consensus among the providers and people who were formally incarcerated that mental health illness and behavioral health concerns go undiagnosed or untreated. They explained that those with serious mental illness are particularly vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse from other residents. They also experience worsening conditions that include defecating and urinating on themselves, self-harm, and erratic behaviors. The providers of mental health and reentry services expressed outrage over the fact that Santa Rita Jail is the county’s largest provider of mental health services and called for alternatives.

“ They don’t monitor or notice people with mental health issues... Sometimes people have mental health issues when they get in, and they’re worse when they get out.”

“ I have a cousin who died in Santa Rita. She was pregnant. She had a heart condition. She passed alone. For people who have severe health issues or health risks, there should be another unit or pod.”

Absence of Transparent Communication, Procedure, and Accountability at Santa Rita Jail

A key theme among all input meetings was that Santa Rita Jail needs to increase oversight; increase communication with residents of the jail, family members, and community-based providers; and implement more stringent discipline practices. They felt that the jail staff’s failure to adhere to policy and procedure and the absence of oversight create the conditions for the deputy sheriffs to abuse their power. From intake to discharge, the participants condemned the lack of transparency, clear communication, and due process. Overall, the participants agreed that at each point of interaction, there is a sense of chaotic operation, inability to get information from jail staff, and a lack of order. In particular:

- *Intake:* During intake, people who reside within Santa Rita Jail cannot get accurate and timely information about where they are in the process and when they will be transferred to a cell. They explained that being incarcerated is incredibly stressful and traumatizing and that the unwillingness of the staff to share information about their status or the process adds to the stress.
- *Visitation:* Family members said it was hard to get information about their loved ones in a timely fashion and that the visitation policy lacks transparency.
- *Discharge:* Communication around the timing and the plan for discharge is lacking and unclear. Women, in particular, feel unsafe when they are released in the middle of the night and need to get to BART. Families and those picking up those who are discharged are often left waiting for hours without any communication or updates.
- *Grievance:* The jail’s grievance system lacks transparency and is broken. Those who were formally incarcerated concurred that filing a grievance produces neither an administrative response nor an investigation of unacceptable staff behaviors; instead, the jail staff often punish residents of the jail for inquiring about or filing a grievance.
- *Criminal Legal Process:* Individuals who were eventually found innocent, had their charges dropped, and were released expressed confusion about the next steps in the criminal legal process. They explained that the Sheriff’s Office did not provide information about what would happen next, and they did not understand what their status was until they consulted with a lawyer. Furthermore, several participants who were wrongfully accused would have appreciated some acknowledgement from the Sheriff’s Office about the mistake.

The advocates and providers confirmed these accounts and felt that the Sheriff’s Office had failed to conduct adequate vetting of the staff at the jail during its hiring process and that the agency was unwilling to discipline, fire, and hold accountable those who abused residents of the jail. They believe that the

Sheriff's Office cannot be trusted to police itself. Many urged the Sheriff's Office to establish an external oversight body; improve performance standards, hiring, and discipline policies and practices; and adopt technology to hold staff of the jail accountable. They agreed with the accounts of people who had been incarcerated about the lack of communication and transparency, not only regarding the status of individuals who were incarcerated there but also regarding overall agency decisions, in-custody deaths, and organizational policies and practices. Several recommended that the Coroner's Office be extracted from the Sheriff's Office.

Some wanted to see Sheriff Sanchez follow through on her campaign promise to establish a civilian oversight commission. They explained that establishing such a commission would offer numerous benefits, including strengthening checks and balances, supporting the Sheriff on reform efforts, rebuilding community trust, and increasing accountability. They maintained that Alameda County Counsel possesses a conflict of interest when it comes to legally investigating complaints against the Sheriff's Office and expressed concern that the Sheriff has backed away from this campaign promise. The participants noted that powerful law enforcement agencies cannot be expected to produce transparency and accountability without external pressure to do so.

“ Guards do not appear to know the procedures—maybe they are short staffed. There is no order or accountability; they were winging it. Some are really mean and degrading. Some would talk to you as a human being.”

“ Intake processing is the most dehumanizing part of being incarcerated.”

Lack of Access to Community-Based Providers and Services

A key theme that echoed across the community input meetings was the need to increase prerelease programming at Santa Rita Jail, including mental health services, education and employment supports, rehabilitative programs, and discharge and reentry planning. Many expressed the need for more-comprehensive and more-consistent assessment of mental health, medical, and education needs, especially at intake. There was consensus among the providers, community-based partners, and those who had been incarcerated that supportive services should be provided by community-based organizations whose staff possess expertise in addressing complex trauma, dual diagnoses, and other client needs. Many agreed that while supportive services should be expanded within the jail, community-based providers, instead of deputy sheriffs, should be responsible for delivering these services. Many service providers and advocates mentioned the history of being denied access to the jail and urged the Sheriff's Office to change its policies and allow more community-based staff and services in the jail to conduct need assessments, establish relationships, and offer prerelease planning and support.

“ We need to be careful about not legitimizing the jail as a school or service provider. We want to make sure those services are provided in the community and that the jail is a last resort. ”

Finding 2: The participants agreed that the historical legacy of the institution, racially biased policing practices, abuse at Santa Rita Jail, and police response to people who are unhoused or experiencing behavioral health concerns all contribute to a negative perception of the Sheriff's Office within their community.

Historical Legacy of the Sheriff's Office with Marginalized Communities

Most of the participants in the priority population community input meetings expressed a negative perception of the Sheriff's Office, citing the institution's historical legacy of mistreatment of marginalized populations, especially Black and Latino residents. They emphasized that the agency has a legacy and reputation of practicing racially biased policing both in and out of the jail. They explained that the tone of the relationship between the Sheriff's Office and Black, brown, and other marginalized communities is established within Santa Rita Jail and permeates its law enforcement response to these same communities. The participants named a number of contributing events and patterns of behavior that produced the negative reputation of the Sheriff's Office's in their community, including personnel practices, absence of top leadership in the community, a lack of transparency, and a legacy of abuse and mistreatment of Black and brown residents.

“ They're known for that unfair treatment to Black men in Rita. ”

“You need to get serious about discipline. Some people cannot be trained out. If you think it is funny to watch people in pain, there is no training for that.”

Racially Biased and Harmful Law Enforcement Response

While some participants from unincorporated areas were satisfied with the provision of law enforcement response by the Sheriff's Office in their community, the majority of the participants felt that the agency is not capable of practicing racially equitable policing or providing an effective response to people who are mentally ill or unhoused. Many spoke of being racially profiled or targeted by deputies for being Black or brown or for presenting as being “from the hood.” Several explained that deputies have wrongfully insinuated that they were selling drugs or were gang affiliated when searching their person or vehicle. Others were on the receiving end of intimidating and disrespectful behavior by deputies during traffic stops or in public spaces; several had been physically abused, beaten, or aggressively handled by deputies when they were stopped in the community. The participants explained that some deputies take requests

for information or questions about criminal legal processes and Sheriff's Office procedures as an affront to their authority and respond to residents in a disrespectful way.

Similarly, behavioral health providers and advocates for people with serious mental illness and those who are unhoused shared a common perception that the agency fails to respond competently to unhoused residents and those experiencing mental health crises (i.e., 5150s). They cited instances in which the Sheriff's Office response escalated in ways that could have been avoided had deputies been properly trained or partnered with community providers who shared this expertise. They highlighted the need for alternatives to incarceration for this population and urged the agency to release data on contacts with law enforcement by race, to partner with community-based providers with expertise in serving vulnerable populations, and to train deputies in mental health first aid and de-escalation techniques.

“I live in Dublin. I see deputies all the time, and they look at me crazy, size me up, and eye me down—just because of who I am. I got a good job, so I have nice clothes and a nice car, but they assume I'm up to no good, asking if I'm selling, what I'm up to, if I got a gun.”

“Instead of taking them to jail, let's take them to an alternative spot funded by Behavioral Health. If we did better on the front end, then less people would end up in jail.”

Finding 3: The participants see an opportunity for the new Sheriff to repair the agency's relationships at an institutional and community level by showing up as a collaborative partner, sharing power and resources with community organizations that care for the county's most vulnerable, and building a positive presence in the community, especially in unincorporated areas.

Partnership with the Ecosystem of Community Providers

Across the input sessions with the providers, the providers explained that the Sheriff's Office is a powerful agency within the continuum of care for vulnerable populations. They urged the agency to show up as a more collaborative partner when it comes to caring for individuals with behavioral health concerns and those who are unhoused. They urged the new Sheriff to disrupt the agency's legacy and history of operating in silos, controlling resources, and ignoring community expertise and assets. Instead, the agency should try to see itself as one partner in a very large ecosystem of providers who tend to the needs of the county's most vulnerable before, during, and after incarceration. The providers and advocates would like to see the Sheriff's Office collaborate with and learn from community-based organizations and other agencies with expertise in providing youth- and community-based services.

They noted that the Sheriff's Office has historically monopolized funding and decision-making as opposed to pushing resources to community-based providers who are better trained and situated to provide youth,

family, and community services. Many would like the agency to focus on improving its law enforcement role and how it delivers policing and jail services; partner with community-based providers; and over time decrease both the agency's overall budget and the jail population. Others suggested that the Sheriff's Office play an active role in galvanizing and convening other county and local system partners to produce alternatives to the jail and increase mental health and education supports.

“ There’s a lot of money funded by the Sheriff’s Office. If they come with a bad idea or an unrealistic intention, I should feel comfortable in telling them it’s a bad idea. But the dynamic doesn’t allow for those open conversations.”

“ There needs to be more coordination, collaboration, and investment in those caring for those who end up in Santa Rita to prevent incarceration.”

Mixed Support for the Sheriff’s Role in Providing Youth and Community Services in Unincorporated Areas

The research surfaced mixed opinions about the DSAL and mixed opinions about the role of the agency in providing youth and community services in unincorporated areas. The residents of unincorporated areas who participated in the community input meetings expressed appreciation for the DSAL, noting that the programming and resources are valuable, engaging, and should be sustained. At the same time, community-based providers in particular felt that the programs should be delivered by a community-based partner or non-law-enforcement agency. Those participants who had been incarcerated explained that the image of the Sheriff's Office as a community-based provider was dissonant with the abusive treatment they had experienced while incarcerated, and some described these activities as “window dressing.” Some argued that people with guns should not be around children and recommended that the Sheriff's Office release a competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) process in order to select and engage a community-based provider, as opposed to solely sourcing the contract to the DSAL.

“ Stick to your lane. Armed people should not be involved in relocating unhoused community members or be in spaces where children gather.”

Build a Positive Community Presence

The participants in the community meetings expressed mixed views on the presence of the agency in the community. A subset of participants, residents of unincorporated areas in particular, and some community-based providers were unfamiliar with all the functions that the Sheriff's Office performs and/or had little familiarity or firsthand experience with the agency. These participants tended to hold more neutral or positive views about the Sheriff's Office. A few residents were appreciative of the agency's

response and presence at community meetings and its efforts to increase Spanish-language translation in unincorporated areas, and they felt that developing authentic relationships with residents is important. They urged the agency to expand outreach and engagement efforts in their community and/or increase its capacity to build relationships with Spanish-speaking residents in unincorporated areas in particular. They were encouraged by the election of Sheriff Sanchez and felt that the changing of the guard was an opportunity to continue building a positive presence.

Other participants, particularly the providers, advocates, and Black and brown residents, held a more critical view. They felt that the Sheriff's Office was not present enough at community events and had historically had a practice of skipping important community or provider convenings. This group of participants wanted the Sheriff to be more present, develop more authentic relationships with providers and residents, and/or create a community advisory board to work more deeply on organizational reform. For this group, it was important for the Sheriff's Office to acknowledge historical harm to Black and brown residents in particular, then take concrete and sustained action to repair that harm and restore trust.

"[The] relationship with Ashland and Cherryland has been very good, and they have tried to get involved more. Most recently, [they] had a fair, and for the first time, the flyer was in English and Spanish, which is minor but so significant. It shows they understand and [that] there is a connection there."

Community Public Safety Priorities

Finding 4: The priority populations urged Sheriff Sanchez to work to transform the organizational culture of Santa Rita Jail toward one that is humane, professional, and in alignment with its mission, and to also support alternatives to incarceration for the county's most vulnerable.

Transform Organizational Culture Beginning at Santa Rita Jail

The providers, advocates, and community members offered additional recommendations beyond those identified by Sheriff Sanchez that are centered on transforming the organizational culture of the agency. They emphasized the need for the culture of the office to shift from one that is violent and inhumane toward one that utilizes a service-oriented and human-centered approach. They explained that the Sheriff's Office is most known for its role in operating Santa Rita Jail. The most intensive interactions where deputy sheriffs learn about community and residents occur at Santa Rita Jail. It is most often the place where community members and jail residents learn about the culture of the agency and where new deputies and staff become indoctrinated in the culture of the agency. The participants in the community input meetings emphasized that both residents of the jail and the staff who work there share a common goal to "get out of Santa Rita." The way deputies and staff learn to engage jail residents and their loved ones, and how to navigate the power dynamics that exist between them, ultimately shows up in how they interact with community members outside of Santa Rita Jail, particularly during patrol and enforcement interactions in Black, brown, and poor communities.

In order to repair and build trust in the Sheriff's Office among priority populations and the organizations that serve them, the office must focus on transforming the conditions, culture, and practices at Santa Rita Jail. For some participants, the historical legacy of the office, coupled with their own personal experiences of abuse at the jail, outweighed any hope for change. Others were encouraged by the election of Sheriff Sanchez and urged her to take brave action to interrupt this legacy. This group offered a number of additional recommendations:

- *Community Partnership*: Create opportunities for residents, community leaders, and community providers to lend their expertise to transforming the agency culture and strengthening public safety; move up the ladder of participation with the community toward shared program and service design and decision-making.
- *Workforce*: Build a workforce that reflects the community, has relationships with the community, and is held accountable for interacting with residents in humane and respectful ways. Create conditions and opportunities that make the jail a valued and sought-after staff assignment.
- *Mindset Shift*: Initiate a culture and mindset shift regarding the role of the Sheriff's Office from warrior to guardian; focus on acknowledging and repairing historical institutional harm.

“The arrival of a new sheriff is not going to change culture in the jail. Not clear if she is giving orders to change things...Culture indifference means folks don't get it; she must confront culture.”

“ Sheriff Sanchez needs to engage and represent the Sheriff's Office in public places. AB 109 is an obvious place. Participate in public discussions and hear public comment.”

Build Alternatives to Jail for People with Behavioral Health and Homeless Concerns

Finally, the participants in the community input events also urged the Sheriff's Office to participate in building alternatives to incarceration for people with behavioral health concerns and the unhoused and to use the power of their office to decrease the role of law enforcement agencies in responding to and serving these populations. They recommended that the Sheriff's Office develop cross-sector partnerships and relationships with other agencies, organizations, and community members who are part of the continuum of care for vulnerable populations. Several explained that the office could use its powerful voice in community conversations regarding building an alternative to incarceration for these communities. They recommended that the agency incorporate racial bias, de-escalation, and restorative justice into the training academy and performance management system.

“ The problems arise when [deputies] don't listen to you or follow your instructions! We see such variance in how different [deputies] show up. Some are wonderfully supportive, but some are aggressive and elevate the crisis.”

“ We also don’t need the Sheriff to be so heavily involved with community-based services. There needs to be agency and investment in the community rather than further investment in the jails/Sheriff.”

Finding 5: The participants expressed strong support for the five proposed priorities of the Sheriff’s Office and urged the office to take concrete action to transform the organizational culture of the agency toward human-centered care and service of the most marginalized residents, as well as communication and collaboration with community. They offered a number of recommendations toward this goal.

1. Jail Conditions and Reentry Services

Prioritize the health and safety of the residents of Santa Rita Jail

- a. Improve the conditions and treatment of the residents of Santa Rita Jail; treat people who reside there with care, respect, and dignity
- b. Improve mental health, physical health, and substance use assessment, treatment, and resources for those in Santa Rita Jail
- c. Increase mental health supports for those in maximum security, and match the service plan to people’s level of security classification and release schedule
- d. Decrease the jail population

Improve communication and procedures to support residents while they’re incarcerated and for reentry

- e. Improve visitation, grievance, and discharge processes and communication for residents of the jail and their families
- f. Offer more parking for visitors, address e-visit technical difficulties, and expand hours beyond 9:00–5:00 p.m.
- g. Partner with and exchange health information with providers and families to coordinate and continue care
- h. Provide family members with more timely information about discharge planning, release, and health/safety updates for loved ones who are incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail
- i. Formalize discharge planning and communicate the plan to providers and family members
- j. Expand prerelease planning for individuals who are unhoused, including expanding the availability of the CATT team

Expand community-based and culturally and linguistically competent services within Santa Rita Jail

- k. Expand reentry services, planning, and provision by community-based providers at Santa Rita Jail
- l. Move the Roots Community Health Center trailer inside the jail to provide services
- m. Allow people with lived experience and felony records to provide services at Santa Rita Jail
- n. Increase language capacity for Spanish-speaking residents who are incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail

Reallocate jail resources to community-based programs

- o. Decrease the agency budget
- p. Invest AB 109 resources in community-based programs for reentry and alternatives
- q. Invest in non-law-enforcement public systems to deliver medical, behavioral health, and education services

2. Transparency and Oversight

Create structures and practices for oversight

- a. Strengthen hiring and discipline practices; fire deputies and deputy sheriffs who do not adhere to performance standards
- b. Establish an external oversight commission with an inspector general and who has independent power to subpoena
- c. Convene a community advisory board or other body to support the implementation of reform efforts
- d. Extract the Coroner's Office from the Sheriff's Office

Publicize progress and data for accountability

- e. Close the feedback loop with advocates and community-based organizations regarding efforts to reform the jail
- f. Release data on those who are incarcerated or die in custody; disaggregate this data by race/ethnicity

3. Community Partnership

Establish a positive and inclusive presence

- a. Increase visibility and attend community and collaborative meetings
- b. Continue to hold community engagement events and forums, and make them accessible to and inclusive of different unincorporated communities, cultures, and languages
- c. Expand linguistic capacity to engage and serve non-English-speaking residents, particularly in unincorporated areas and at Santa Rita Jail

Communicate information, actions, and progress toward reform

- d. Develop SMART goals and concrete plans for action; publicly report on progress
- e. Acknowledge past institutional harm, repair harm, and take steps to restore trust
- f. Increase communication with residents, advocates, and community partners; educate residents and partners about the role of the office
- g. Provide information and progress updates about agency decisions, constraints, and rationale for efforts to improve services and conditions at Santa Rita Jail

Invest and collaborate with community

- h. Release an RFP for youth and community programming in unincorporated areas
- i. Partner with communities and people with lived experience with incarceration to support community-based public safety
- j. Expand the pilot program for mental health providers to have authority to place patients on 5150 holds

4. Racial Disparities

Promote a culture and practices for racial equity and care

- a. Train deputies in racial and implicit bias, substance use, mental health, and de-escalation techniques, and bring in community partners and experts as trainers and co-designers of the curriculum
- b. Discipline and fire staff who practice racially biased policing
- c. Invest in technological solutions, such as an early-warning system, to flag the deputy sheriffs who practice racially biased policing
- d. Hire from Black and brown communities

Share data to be accountable for advancing racial equity

- a. Release data on the demographics of those who are incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail, deaths in custody, traffic stops, and other interactions between residents and the Sheriff's Office

5. Staff Health and Working Conditions

- a. Reduce overtime to prevent burnout
- b. General support for strengthening staff health and working conditions

Part 2. General Resident Perception and Satisfaction on the Basis of Survey Responses

About the Community Survey Sample

A total of 497 people responded to the community survey. About half of the respondents are residents of unincorporated areas, and a quarter of the respondents live in the 94546 zip code (Castro Valley). In comparison to the Alameda County population, those who identify as female (53%) and White (40%) are overly represented in the survey sample. The survey respondents represent a broader, general population of the county who tend to not have had intensive interactions with the Sheriff's Office. Few of the respondents had direct interaction with the Sheriff's Office through incarceration at Santa Rita Jail as a resident (3%) or a loved one of a resident (12%).

Characteristics of Community Survey Sample

The respondents who indicated that they are female (53%) are overrepresented in the sample. A comparison of the race and ethnicity of the respondents as compared with the Alameda County population shows that White respondents (40%) are significantly overrepresented in the sample. Black (14%) respondents are very slightly overrepresented, while Asian American (9%) and Latin (13%) respondents are significantly underrepresented in the sample. More than half of the respondents live in unincorporated areas of Alameda County (55%), with Castro Valley residents being the most represented.

Figure 1. Race and Ethnicity of the Respondents

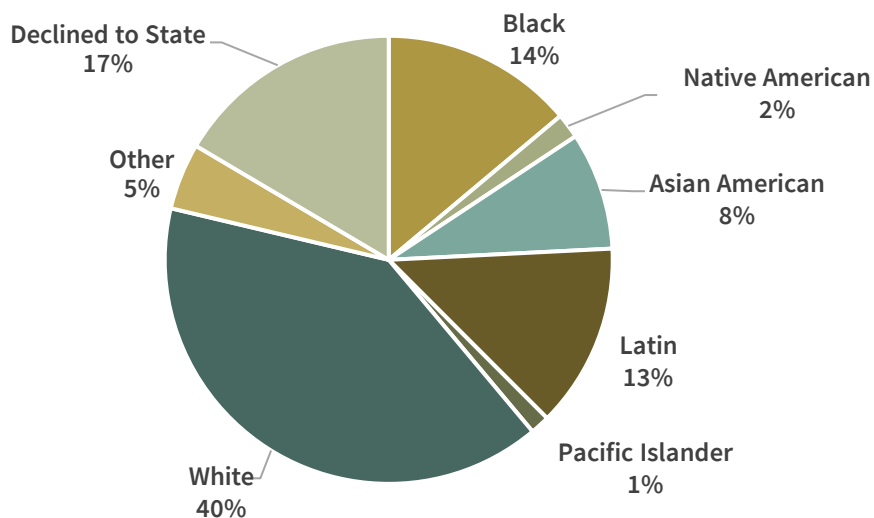


Table 3. Where Respondents Live (N = 497)		%
Residence		
Unincorporated Areas		55%
Incorporated jurisdictions		45%
Top-Three Zip Codes		
94546		25%
94541		8%
94552		13%

More details about the methodologies and sample can be found in the [Appendix](#).

The following are the key findings from the community survey:

1. A moderate majority of the respondents generally feel safe in their community.
2. Less than half of the respondents are satisfied with the competence of the Sheriff's Office, and a substantial proportion of the respondents are unfamiliar with the Sheriff's Office.
3. Small majorities of the respondents agree that the Sheriff's Office promotes and contributes to their own safety and their community's safety; Black respondents, Native American respondents, and those respondents who live in cities and towns tend to not agree that the Sheriff's Office promotes safety.
4. Less than half of the respondents agree that the Sheriff's Office treats people with respect and fairness. Black and Native American respondents have a tendency to perceive the Sheriff's Office as not treating people with respect and fairness.
5. When the respondents were asked about how they receive information from the Sheriff's Office, they indicated social media and word of mouth as the top-two channels.
6. A majority of the respondents were satisfied when they received help from a deputy from the Sheriff's Office in the community, called the Sheriff's Office nonemergency number, or called 911.
7. When asked about the level of Sheriff's Office involvement in different areas of work, the majority of the respondents favor maintaining or increasing involvement of the Sheriff's Office in human-trafficking responses, neighborhood watch groups, community outreach events, and DSAL youth/community engagement.
8. The majority of the respondents expressed support for the draft priorities of the Sheriff's Office, with transparency and oversight ranking as the most important. A larger proportion of those who are personally connected to Santa Rita Jail are Black or live in cities and towns and indicated that improving jail conditions is important compared to other groups.

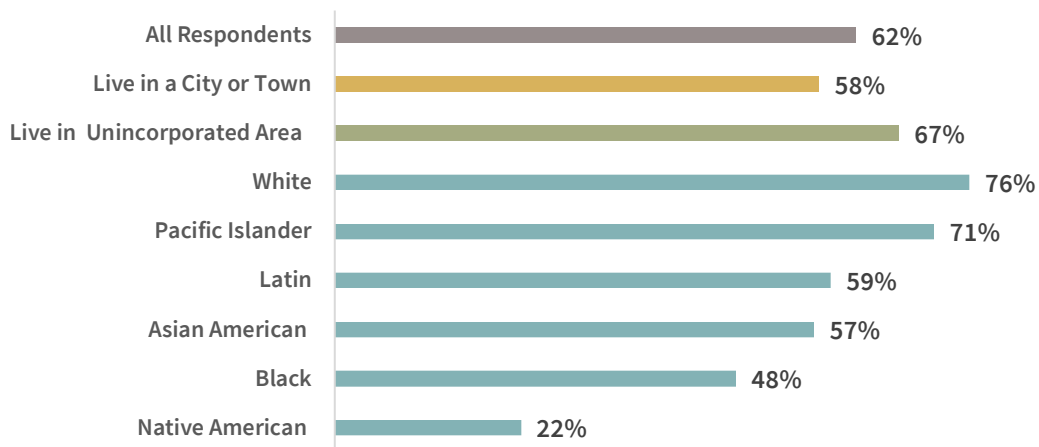
The following pages are the community survey's findings and figures. Additional tables can be found in [the Appendix](#).

Perception of the Sheriff's Office and Its Role in Community Safety

Finding 1. A moderate majority of the respondents generally feel safe in their community.

Perceived safety in the community varies by the respondents' type of locality, with residents in unincorporated areas more likely to indicate that they feel safe (67%) as compared with those living in cities or towns (58%). White respondents (75%) are far more likely than others to indicate that they feel safe, and Black (48%) and Native American (22%) residents are less likely to feel safe.

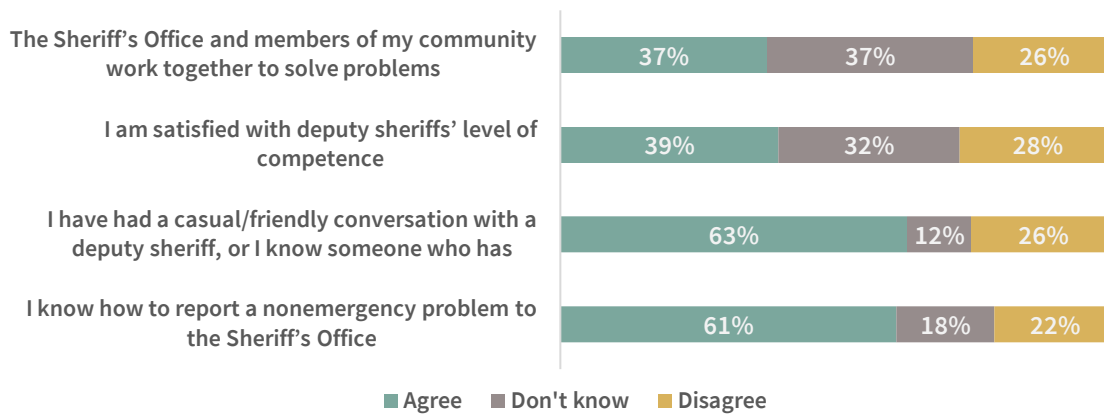
Figure 2. I Generally Feel Safe in My Community (N = 497)



Finding 2. Less than half of the respondents are satisfied with the competence of the Sheriff's Office, and a substantial proportion of the respondents are unfamiliar with the Sheriff's Office.

Less than half of the respondents are satisfied with and confident about the work of the Sheriff's Office and its partnership with community. About one-third of the respondents simply *do not know* enough about the Sheriff's Office to agree or disagree with statements pertaining to its competence or ability to work together with the community to solve problems. A moderate majority of the respondents know how to report a nonemergency to the Sheriff's Office (61%) or have had a casual conversation with an deputy sheriff (63%). One in 10 respondents has never interacted directly with the Sheriff's Office or its deputies. More than one-third *do not know* how to report a nonemergency problem.

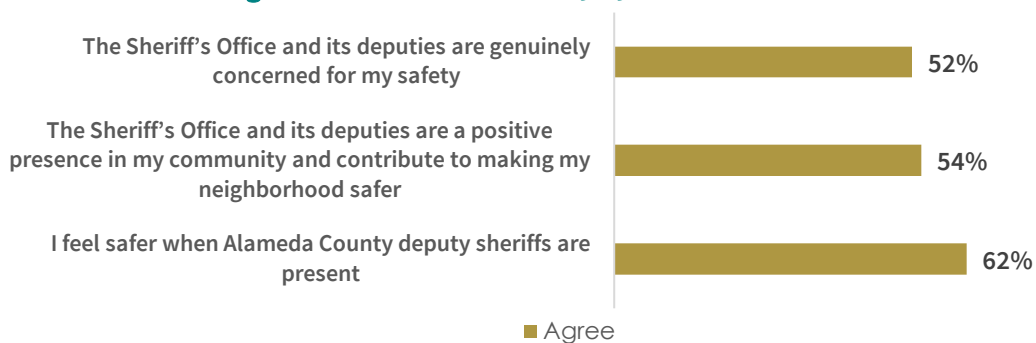
Figure 3. Knowledge of and Experience with the Sheriff's Office



Finding 3. About half of the respondents agree that the Sheriff's Office promotes and contributes to their own safety and their community's safety. Black respondents, Native American respondents, and those who live in cities and towns tend to not agree that the Sheriff's Office promotes safety.

Many do not agree that the Sheriff's Office promotes safety simply because they do not know, while others disagree. To assess whether there are notable differences, the researchers created a composite measure that includes all three questions, ranging from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the highest possible levels of confidence in the promotion of safety by the Sheriff's Office. The average score across all the respondents

Figure 4. Promotion of Safety by the Sheriff's Office



on this composite is 4.5. The composite score among the respondents from unincorporated areas (5.4) shows generally more favorable impressions regarding the promotion of safety by the Sheriff's Office as compared with the composite score among city/town residents (3.6)—this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). In terms of race and ethnicity, most groups' mean scores hover around the overall mean, except for Black (3.4) respondents and Native American (2.4) respondents, whose responses as a

whole demonstrate less confidence that the Sheriff's Office is promoting safety. Differences for Black / African American respondents are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 5. Perceived Safety-Promotion Composite Scores by Respondent Type



Finding 4. Less than half of the respondents agree that the Sheriff's Office treats people with respect and fairness. Black and Native American respondents have a tendency to perceive the Sheriff's Office as not treating people with respect and fairness.

With respect to fairness and respect, many of the respondents simply do not know or disagree. To assess whether there are notable differences, the researchers created a composite measure that includes all three questions, ranging from 1 to 10, with 10 indicating the highest possible levels of perceived respect and fairness from the Sheriff's Office. The average score across all the respondents on this composite is 4.3, represented by a vertical line in both charts below. The researchers then compared composite scores by type of locality (city/town vs. unincorporated area) and respondents' race/ethnicity. The mean Perceived Respect and Fairness Composite score among the respondents from unincorporated areas (5.1) shows generally more favorable impressions regarding respect and fairness from the Sheriff's Office as compared with the mean score among city/town residents (3.5)—this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$).

Figure 6. Treatment of Residents by the Sheriff's Office

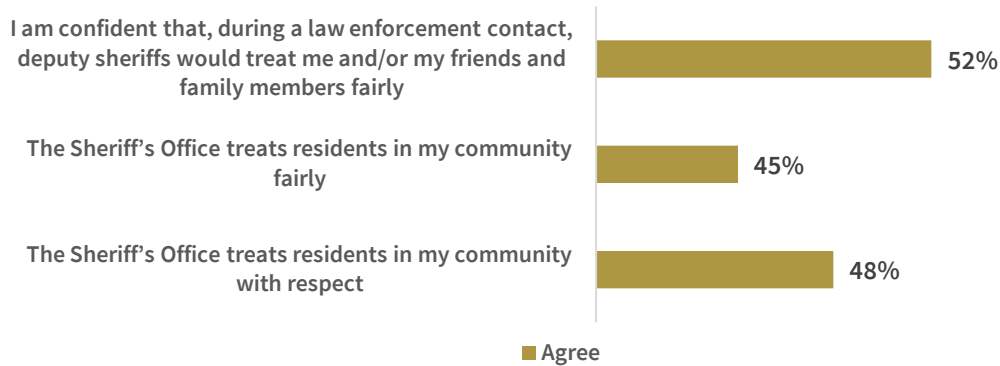


Figure 7. Perceived Respect and Fairness Composite Scores by Respondent Type



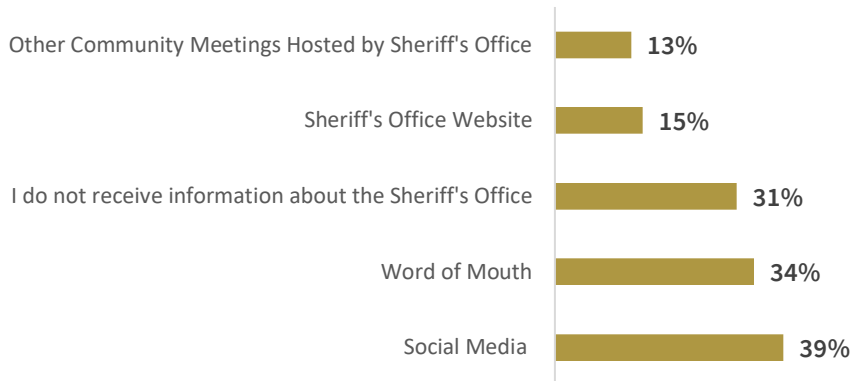
“My family member is seriously mentally ill and often needs to be in a mental hospital like John George or Villa Fairmont. I’m hoping our county will recognize [that] we need hospital beds that can be accessed as easily as beds at Santa Rita...I wish the deputies could treat her with respect and sympathy always. When she arrives at Santa Rita, I want to be informed. If she were to get sick or die there, I would want to be informed.”

Communication and Interactions with the Sheriff's Office

Finding 5. When the respondents were asked about how they receive information from the Sheriff's Office, they indicated social media and word of mouth as the top-two channels.

About one-third or more indicated that they receive information from the Sheriff's Office from social media (39%) and word of mouth (34%). A similar proportion (31%) stated that they do not receive information from the Sheriff's Office from any source. About one-quarter of the respondents felt satisfied, while about half felt neutral about their level of access to information about the Sheriff's Office.

Figure 8. Top-Five Information Sources from the Sheriff's Office



Finding 6. A majority of the respondents were satisfied when they received help from a deputy sheriff in the community, called the Sheriff's Office nonemergency number, or called 911.

About one-third or more of the respondents have received help from the Sheriff's Office in their community, called 911, or called the nonemergency number. They rated all these experiences positively. The types of interactions resulting in the least positive experiences for the respondents are interacting with a deputy sheriff because of an eviction process; interacting with Santa Rita Jail because someone close to them was incarcerated; and responding to individuals who are unhoused/houseless in the community. People who were incarcerated in Santa Rita Jail were not asked to rate their satisfaction.

Table 5. Interactions with the Sheriff's Office	Frequency	% Satisfied
Receiving help from a deputy sheriff in your community or neighborhood	210	73%
Calling 911	162	65%
Calling the Sheriff's Office nonemergency number	199	64%
Interacting with a deputy sheriff as an SRO at your child's school	39	62%
Interacting with a deputy sheriff at the Oakland Airport	68	58%
A deputy sheriff responded to a request as a business owner	19	58%
Interacting with the AC Coroner	30	57%
Interacting with a deputy sheriff while in the East Bay Regional Park District	26	56%
Interacting with a deputy sheriff while on AC Transit	13	46%
Responding to a mental health crisis in your home or neighborhood	55	40%
Responding to unhoused individuals in your community	65	35%
Interacting with Santa Rita Jail because someone close to you was a resident there	58	26%
Interacting with a deputy sheriff because of an eviction process	7	14%
Spending time in Santa Rita Jail as a resident there	15	N/A
Never interacted directly with the Sheriff's Office	60	N/A

“I just don't know a lot about the differences between Oakland police and [the] Alameda Sheriff[s] Office. Who should I call for different emergencies? I know that 911 will route me to the appropriate police or fire agency, but [it] might save a couple of minutes of precious time if we knew when to use OPD and when to reach out to [the] Sheriff.”

“In past years, I had no problem with the Sheriff's [Office], and we work together as [a] community and a leader in Cherryland. But after COVID-19, we had lot of changes, like new sheriff members that need[ed] to be train[ed] to be able to help all of our communities in [a] respectful way.”

“I grew up in this community and have always found the Sheriff's Office to be responsive to calls for help for everything from gunshots heard in the area to a woman unknown in the neighborhood who tripped over her dog and then...became hysterical and unable to communicate. I believe they are doing a good job.”

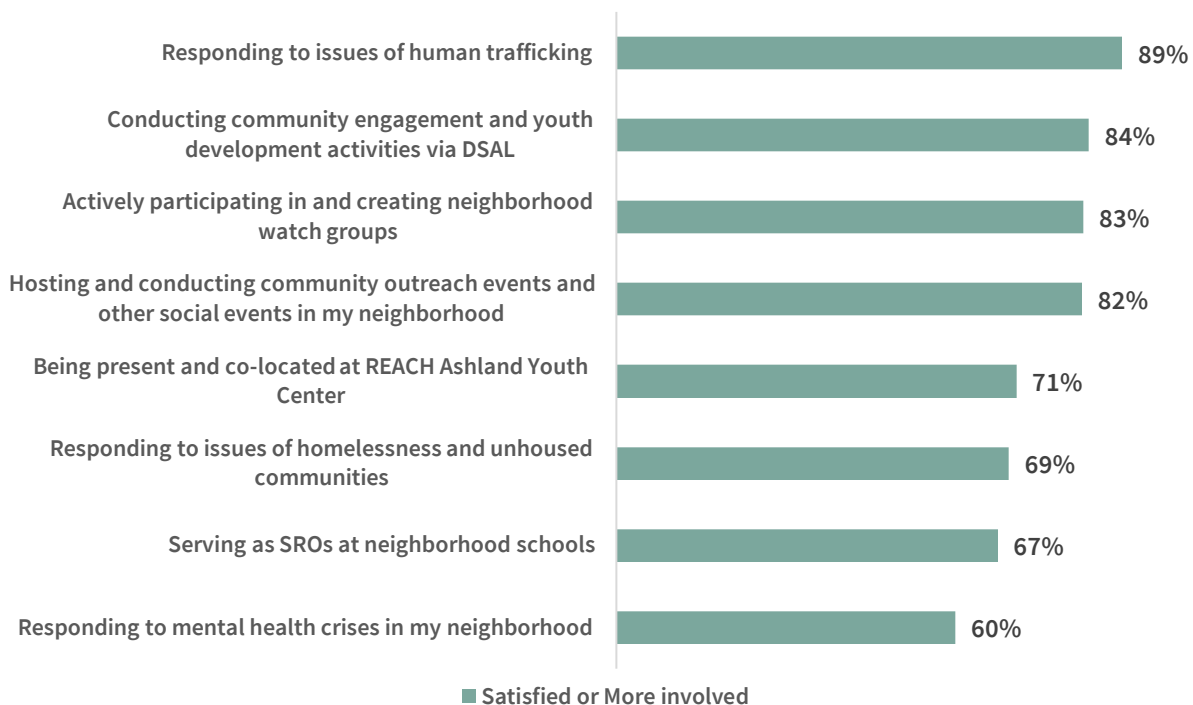
Community Priorities for the Sheriff's Office

Finding 7. When asked about the level of involvement from the Sheriff's Office in different areas of work, a majority of the respondents favor maintaining or increasing the involvement of the Sheriff's Office in human-trafficking responses, neighborhood watch groups, community outreach events, and DSAL youth/community engagement.

More than four out of five respondents wanted sustained or more involvement in human-trafficking responses, neighborhood watch groups, community outreach events, and DSAL youth/community engagement. They tended to be less supportive of the Sheriff's Office deepening their involvement in responding to mental health crises and unhoused communities or being present in youth spaces like schools and the REACH Ashland Youth Center. The respondents' interest in seeing greater involvement in various work areas differs according to the locality type in which they reside. Residents from unincorporated areas were more interested in seeing the Sheriff's Office increase its involvement in neighborhood watch groups, unhoused responses, and as School Resource Officers (SROs). No significant differences in terms of the level of involvement of the Sheriff's Office were evident by race or ethnicity.

[\(See the Appendix.\)](#)

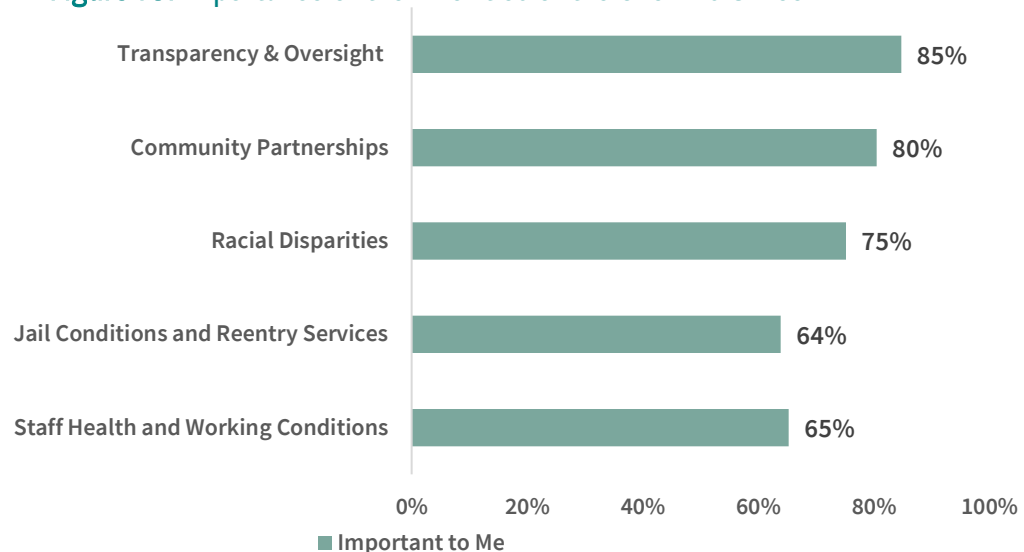
Figure 9. Desired Levels of Sheriff's Office Involvement



Finding 8. A majority of the respondents expressed support for the draft priorities of the Sheriff's Office, with transparency and oversight ranking as the most important. A larger proportion of the respondents who have a personal connection to Santa Rita Jail, are Black, or live in cities and towns indicated that improving jail conditions is important compared to others.

About two-thirds or more ranked the Sheriff's draft priorities as important, with the largest proportion indicating transparency and oversight as important. There are not marked differences of opinion among the respondents on the basis of where they live or race and ethnicity. However, when it comes to improving the jail conditions and reentry services, more than three-quarters of the respondents who are Black (79%), live in cities and towns (78%), or have a personal connection to the jail (77%)—either as a former jail resident or as a family member of someone incarcerated there—had the most support for improving conditions at Santa Rita Jail. The difference is statistically significant when comparing the opinions of those who live in towns and cities to those who live in unincorporated areas, and when comparing those who have a personal connection to the jail to those who do not ($p < 0.001$). Those who live in cities in towns (87%) also tend to prioritize addressing racial disparities as being more important than those who live in unincorporated areas (66%)—this difference is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). [\(See the Appendix.\)](#)

Figure 10. Importance of the Priorities of the Sheriff's Office



“ [I would] love to see [a] Community Advisory Group formed to establish norms and goals to have uncomfortable conversations as well as an independent oversight committee to hold the department accountable. All the data should be readily available on the website. Reevaluate trainings and shift toward decarceration and connecting people to services.”

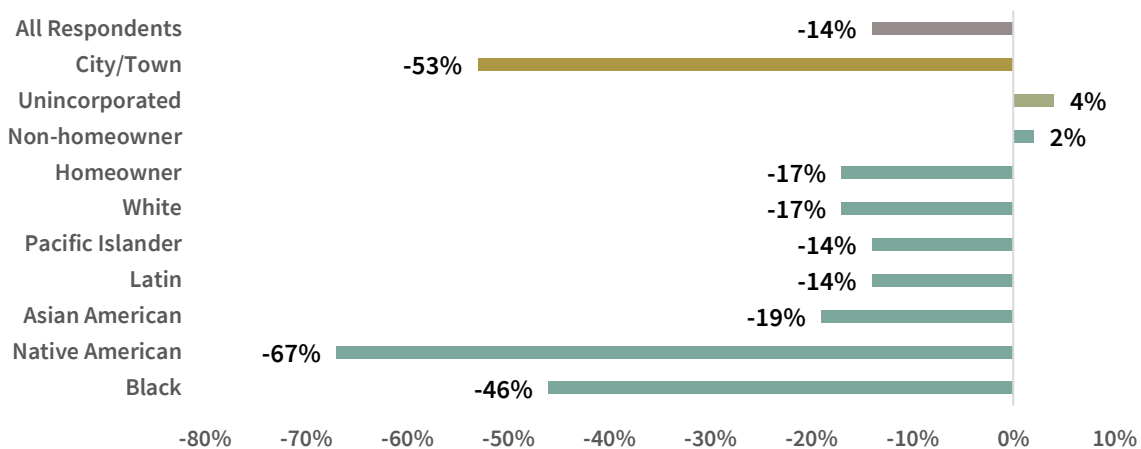
“I do not believe that Santa Rita Jail should act as a psych facility. That being said, there needs to be better psychological care and evaluation at the jail...Oversight needs to have its own legal counsel, not the supervisors and [the] county’s legal counsel. I am glad that the new Sheriff has been more transparent regarding deaths in the jail. It is a change in the right direction.”

Sheriff’s Office Net Promoter Score

The community survey asked the respondents to rate how likely they are to recommend the Sheriff’s Office to a friend or family member, from 0 (not likely at all) to 10 (very likely). This NPS question is a validated research question to assess customer satisfaction and loyalty to an organization, its brand, and its services. The [NPS](#) methodology takes the percentage of those who responded with a 9 or 10 (“promoters”) and subtracts the percentage of those who responded with 0 through 6 (“detractors”) to come up with the net score. Many companies and organizations use the NPS as a benchmark to assess trends in customer satisfaction internally and comparison with its industry’s standards. There is no current industry NPS average for law enforcement, but it is likely low given the nature of the work of law enforcement agencies.

The overall NPS for the Sheriff’s Office is -13.7, with 29% of the respondents as promoters and 43% as detractors. BRG calculated the NPS for different subgroups within the sample. These calculations show that the NPS for the Sheriff’s Office among Black and Native American respondents is the lowest as compared with the NPS of other racial/ethnic groups. The NPS among city/town residents is remarkably lower than that calculated from among respondents living in unincorporated areas.

Figure 11. Sheriff’s Office NPS by Respondents



“I would like to see more community involvement from the Sheriff’s Office. We voted for Sheriff Sanchez based on her promise to work with our community and expand community-oriented policing and programs to all aspects of what the Sheriff does.”

“Having the deputies in the rural unincorporated areas introduce themselves and find out who lives in their area would be nice.”

“I would like [a] rigorous recruitment process to ensure that law enforcement officers have no history of violence or behavioral problems that might impact their ability to serve and protect the public. If a candidate has been fired for cause from another law enforcement, then a thorough investigation should be done.”

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of the community engagement process was to learn about community priorities for public safety and receive feedback on the draft priorities of the Sheriff's Office as Sheriff Sanchez takes the helm. The results reported here can serve as a baseline against which to measure future progress. The community engagement process engaged 145 residents and providers in priority population community input meetings and close to 500 survey responses from jurisdictions across the county. While the survey results and priority population input generated diverse feedback regarding the role of the agency in protecting public safety, there are some important themes and results for the agency to consider as it re-envisions its mission and role.

Strong Support for Sheriff Sanchez's Draft Priorities for Public Safety and Focus on Santa Rita Jail: The community input process indicates strong support for Sheriff Sanchez's draft priorities for the agency. While those who had experience with directly interacting with Santa Rita Jail cited transforming the culture, policies, and practices of the jail as their top priority, both the priority population sessions and the resident survey indicated strong support for strengthening community partnership, developing relationships with community residents, and deepening the agency's capacity to serve Alameda County's culturally and linguistically diverse residents. For the residents of unincorporated areas, this means increasing the availability of materials in other languages, especially Spanish; being present in the community; and closing the feedback loop. For priority populations, this means taking steps to acknowledge, repair, and restore the institution's legacy of harm and racial bias. In their eyes, building a trusting relationship will require transforming the overall organizational culture, policies, and practices, beginning with Santa Rita Jail; expanding access to community-based providers and services; and ending inhumane treatment and conditions that lead to illness and death.

Strengthen Communication, Transparency, and Oversight: There was also consensus around the need for the agency to strengthen communication, transparency, and oversight. The survey respondents reported not knowing enough about the agency to comment on their performance and wanted more transparency about the role of the agency in the community. Those who participated in priority population meetings expressed similar sentiments: they wanted more oversight at Santa Rita Jail, better accountability and

discipline of staff, and more communication about their loved ones. They also wanted greater transparency about custody deaths, the release of data, and external oversight.

Care and Alternatives for People with Behavioral Health Concerns and Unhoused Individuals: The process generated diverse perspectives around the role of the Sheriff's Office in responding to people who are unhoused or experiencing a behavioral health crisis, as well as their care during incarceration. Two-thirds of the survey respondents were satisfied with the agency's current level of involvement or wanted more involvement from the Sheriff's Office. Many of the providers and residents who were formerly incarcerated called for the Sheriff's Office to collaborate with other organizations to care for the county's most vulnerable and to use its position to develop alternatives for these groups.

APPENDIX

Memo: Summary of Findings from Community Provider Input Meeting

On March 30, 2023, Bright Research Group (BRG) facilitated a two-hour community input meeting with providers, advocates, faith-based organizations, and other community partners to solicit input on community priorities for public safety, feedback on Sheriff Sanchez's draft priorities for the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office), community perceptions of and experiences with the Sheriff's Office, and feedback and recommendations for strengthening partnership with the community. Thirty-eight attendees participated in the meeting, representing a wide range of agencies across the county, including community-based providers of services at Santa Rita Jail, faith-based organizations, and community-based providers who work with county residents who are unhoused, have a serious mental illness or dual diagnosis, and/or are members of undocumented and immigrant communities. The agenda consisted of a brief welcome from BRG and the Sheriff's Office, followed by one hour and 20 minutes in breakout groups. Notes were recorded on a computer and analyzed by key theme. This document provides a summary of the key themes from the meeting.

KEY FINDINGS FROM THE ADVOCATE AND PROVIDER INPUT MEETING

The providers and advocates were asked about their priorities for public safety in their community, the populations they work with, and Alameda County as a whole. The participants were also asked about what

Deaths and Conditions at Santa Rita Jail

- Abuse, neglect, and inhumane treatment of people who reside at Santa Rita Jail lead to death, suicide, and drug overdose at Santa Rita Jail
- Conflicts of interest with the Coroner's Office
- Availability of prerelease, mental health, and community resources in the jail
- Reduce the jail population; strengthen community-based alternatives

Oversight and Transparency

- Civilian Oversight Commission
- Improving the accountability, discipline, and performance standards of deputies
- Transparent, consistent, and accessible information on the health and status of jail residents

Community Partnership

- Community Advisory Board
- Decrease the Sheriff's Office budget and reallocate resources to community partners
- Authentic partnership, allyship, and power sharing with the community
- Repair the legacy of institutional harm to communities

Feedback on the Priorities of the Sheriff's Office

- SMART goals; focus on action
- Decrease the role of the Sheriff's Office in responding to those with mental illness and the unhoused
- Training on racial bias and responding to mental health crises
- Prioritize hiring from local communities of color

concern or priority brought them to the input meeting. The key themes regarding public safety priorities are captured in the table below:

Deaths and Conditions at Santa Rita Jail

Deaths in the Jail and Abuse of People Who Reside at Santa Rita Jail: A significant number of the providers and advocates were concerned about the conditions within the jail that have led to death and named inhumane conditions at the jail, a lack of transparency about deaths within the jail, and a conflict of interest between the Coroner’s Office and Santa Rita Jail. A majority of the participants decried the inhumane treatment of people who reside at Santa Rita Jail, citing a lack of care and respect for basic human dignity, particularly for Black and brown residents, people with mental health conditions, the undocumented, and unhoused individuals. Providers with lived experience at Santa Rita Jail shared stories of abuse, mistreatment, neglect, and harm inflicted on them, their loved ones, and the clients they serve. The participants were concerned about the failure of the Sheriff’s Office to discipline and remove deputies who abuse people who reside at Santa Rita Jail. The participants offered a number of recommendations with respect to improving the conditions at Santa Rita Jail:

- Prioritize the health and safety of people who reside at Santa Rita Jail, addressing and correcting gross failures, deplorable conditions, and inappropriate staff behaviors
- Adopt and monitor the implementation of best practices established by the Vera Institute and the Brennan Center for Justice to prevent suicide and reduce the overall numbers of deaths that occur in the jail
- Reduce the jail population by investing in diversion programs, pretrial programs, and alternatives, especially for people with mental health challenges
- Conduct independent investigation of all deaths that occur in the jail
- Share data and information with greater transparency about jail deaths; strengthen oversight (see above)
- Hire people from the community; train them in implicit bias and community policing, trauma-informed care, and rehabilitation
- Strengthen the discipline, performance evaluation, and termination of deputies from the Sheriff’s Office who fail to perform the mission of protecting and serving; do not fire whistleblowers within the Sheriff’s Office; decrease overtime for deputies

“ They have deputies walking back and forth. People call for help, and they will act like they don’t even hear people. That is just speaking from my experience and loved ones I have known. I have seen women that have severe mental health issues walk into a holding cell with 20 women, covered in menstrual cycle, and no one helps.”

Access to Community Providers within the Jail: A key theme that echoed throughout the meeting was the need to increase prerelease programming at Santa Rita Jail, including mental health services, education

and employment supports, rehabilitative programs, and discharge and reentry planning. There was consensus that supportive services should be provided by community-based organizations whose staff possess expertise in addressing complex trauma, dual diagnoses, and other client needs. Several providers expressed concern that Santa Rita Jail was the largest provider of mental health services in Alameda County. Many recommended that while supportive services should be expanded within the jail, community-based providers—instead of deputies from the Sheriff’s Office—should be responsible for delivering these services. The participants surfaced the following recommendations with regard to this point:

- Santa Rita Jail needs to view itself as part of a continuum of care and do a better job of coordinating and collaborating with other partners, agencies, and providers who serve people with mental health challenges, the unhoused, and the formerly incarcerated before and after their period of incarceration
- Increase the number and type of community-based organizations that are providing services within the jail; remove barriers and allow people with lived experience to provide prerelease services inside; invest AB 109 funds for community-based programs
- Increase mental health resources for those in maximum security, and offer services and supports that match residents’ level of security classification and release schedule. Create less restrictive housing classifications
- Strengthen the language capacity of staff and service providers within the jail, and increase communication/transparency with family members and loved ones
- Expand prerelease planning and programming, particularly for individuals who are unhoused, such as expanding the availability of the CATT team, improving communication with providers who can support people when they are released, and formalizing discharge planning

“ We need to be careful about not legitimizing the jail as a school or service provider. We want to make sure those services are provided in the community and that the jail is a last resort.”

“ There needs to be more coordination, collaboration, and investment in those caring for those who end up in Santa Rita to prevent incarceration.”

Oversight, Transparency, and Accountability

The providers and advocates urged Sheriff Sanchez to take concrete action to strengthen the overall level of transparency, accountability, and oversight of the Sheriff’s Office. Some wanted to see Sheriff Sanchez follow through on her campaign promise to establish a Civilian Oversight Commission. Establishing such a commission would offer numerous benefits, including strengthening checks and balances, supporting the Sheriff on reform efforts, rebuilding community trust, and increasing accountability. They maintained that

the County Counsel possesses a conflict of interest when it comes to investigating complaints against the Sheriff's Office and expressed concern that the Sheriff has backed away from this campaign promise. The participants noted that powerful law enforcement agencies cannot be expected to produce transparency and accountability without external pressure to do so. They recommended that this body be comprised of residents of diverse backgrounds and include an inspector general with independent power to subpoena.

Additional recommendations to strengthen accountability and transparency included:

- Expand the recruitment of people from the community to work at Santa Rita Jail; adopt a more intentional structure of advancement that rewards deputies who adopt restorative practices in their interactions with people incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail
- Transparent communication about funding, allocation of resources, and agency budget
- Transparent, consistent, and accessible information on the health and status of people who reside at Santa Rita Jail that is updated regularly and in real time on a public dashboard
- Collection and publication of data about racial disparities in law enforcement contacts, deaths in the jail, and progress toward concrete reform goals
- More sharing of information with community-based providers, especially around the time when residents are getting released
- Extract the Coroner's Office from the Sheriff's Office, as the coroner cannot independently investigate in-custody deaths

“An independent oversight body would build dialogue and trust with the community. It requires confidence from the community and would give people a place to go. The issue of trust cannot be understated.”

“You need to get serious about discipline. Some people cannot be trained out. If you think it is funny to watch people in pain, there is no training for that.”

Community Partnership

Negative Perceptions of the Sheriff's Office as an Institution: When asked about their perceptions of the Sheriff's Office and actual interactions with the office, the participants described the Sheriff's Office as corrupt, abusive, racist, powerful, unapologetic, unjust, unlawful, unresponsive, and unwilling to acknowledge its past failures, abuses, and missteps. Many advocates and providers urged the Sheriff's Office to acknowledge the harm it has caused to many communities and take concrete actions to repair and restore its relationships with the community. The participants named a number of contributing events and patterns of behavior that produced the negative reputation of the Sheriff's Office in their community:

- *Personnel Practices*: hiring officers dismissed from the Oakland Police Department; a recent scandal involving officers who were deemed psychologically unfit, then hired by the Sheriff's Office; inadequate training and failure to dismiss deputies who mistreat residents
- *Racially Biased Policing and Practices in the Jail*: the disparate treatment of Black and brown residents; absence of data on contacts with law enforcement by race
- *Response to Unhoused Residents and People with Mental Health Issues*: a failure to respond competently to unhoused residents and those experiencing mental health crises (i.e., 5150s); a need for alternatives to incarceration for this population
- *Absence of Top Leadership in the Community*: the participants noted that prior administrations of the Sheriff's Office had failed to show up for community events, support community initiatives for public safety, listen to community expertise, or see their office as part of an ecosystem of actors and agencies responsible for community safety
- *Lack of Transparency*: from providing families with information about their loved ones at Santa Rita Jail to reporting on racial disparities or deaths at Santa Rita Jail to changing course on planned programs and services, the participants said a lack of transparency eroded trust in the office
- *Historical Legacy*: many participants emphasized that the negative reputation of the Sheriff's Office preceded Sheriff Sanchez and that she was facing internal resistance and a culture of abuse that would be difficult to challenge without community support and partnership

“ Sheriff Sanchez needs to engage and represent ACSO in public places. AB 109 is an obvious place. Participate in public discussions and hear public comment... Ahern never showed up in 10 years.”

Cross-Agency Partnership and Strengthening Collaboration: The providers and advocates would like to see the Sheriff's Office show up as more of a partner with community-based organizations and other agencies, “stay in their lane” with regard to providing youth- and community-based services, and invest resources in community-based organizations. They noted that the ecosystem of service providers, community leaders, public agencies, and law enforcement agencies that promote community safety operate in silos. Many participants maintained that the Sheriff's Office is performing roles in the community that they do not have expertise in, thereby monopolizing funding for those services, particularly in unincorporated areas. They argued that such programming is critical but should not be delivered by the Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League (DSAL) and that resources should be redirected to community-based providers. At the very least, the DSAL should have to compete for funding as most nonprofits do. Several emphasized that the Sheriff's Office has neither a strong history of sharing power with less powerful institutions nor one of listening to those with expertise in serving young people, people with mental illness, the formerly incarcerated, and other vulnerable populations. There was consensus that the Sheriff's Office approaches their interactions and collaborations with communities from a position of authority and expertise, as opposed to one of listening and learning. The participants recommended the following:

- Develop a Community Advisory Board to encourage community partnership, increase power sharing, cultivate a practice of listening to community expertise; remind the Sheriff to listen, partner, and show up as an ally to community-driven efforts, as opposed to as a leader
- Reallocate DSAL funding to a community-based partner or create an open RFP process
- Engage people with lived experience in supporting public safety; allow them to come into the jail and provide prerelease services, reentry planning, and community-response/violence-interruption support
- Continue to hold community input events, and move towards shared decision-making with community; increase Sheriff Sanchez's overall presence and accessibility in the community

“There’s a lot of money funded by the Sheriff’s Office. If they come with a bad idea or unrealistic intention, I should feel comfortable telling them it’s a bad idea. But the dynamic doesn’t allow for those open conversations.”

“The Sheriff comes and takes over instead of partnering with us, especially when interacting with minors.”

Feedback on Public Safety Priorities of the Sheriff’s Office

During the input meeting, the participants were asked to share their feedback on the Sheriff’s draft priorities, their ideas about the role of the Sheriff’s Office in protecting public safety, and which services the Sheriff’s Office should stop delivering. There was consensus that the Sheriff’s Office should focus on its primary role as a law enforcement agency, take steps to acknowledge and repair the legacy of harm the institution has caused, and decrease its role in responding to people who are experiencing a mental health crisis or are unhoused. Some participants expressed skepticism about the list of priorities and urged the Sheriff to establish SMART goals with concrete timelines for each of the listed priorities. Additional recommendations surfaced include:

- Decrease the role of the Sheriff’s Office, and increase the role of people with lived experience (peers) and community-based organizations in responding to calls for service for vulnerable populations or crises (i.e., unhoused people, people with a mental illness); publicize a list of which agencies can and already respond to 5150 calls
- Increase training for deputies on substance use, mental illness, racial bias and disparities in policing, and human trafficking
- Create alternative sentencing options for people who are unhoused, struggling with mental illness and substance abuse, or are from other vulnerable populations; establish alternatives to arrest for these populations, and partner in training local police on these alternatives

“The problems arise when [deputies] don’t listen to you or follow your instructions! We see such variance in how different [deputies] show up. Some are wonderfully supportive, but some are aggressive and elevate the crisis.”

“Stick to your lane. Armed people should not be involved in relocating unhoused community members or be in spaces where children gather.”

List of Community Based Organizations

Thirty-eight people attended the input sessions, representing the following 35 organizations:

Alameda County Community Food Bank	Eden United Church of Christ
Alameda County Public Health Department	Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Alameda County Workforce Development Board (ACWDB)	First Presbyterian Church of Hayward
All of Us or None	ICJJ
American Friends Service Committee	Justice Reinvestment Coalition
BAWAR	La Clinica de la Raza
Behavioral Health Collaborative of Alameda County	Latino Task Force
BOSS	League of Women Voters
Centreforce	Livermore Indivisible
CityTeam	Mental Health Association of Alameda County
Civicorps	National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
Coalition for Police Accountability	Open Gate
Covenant House California	Pathways to Wellness
CURYJ	REACH Ashland Youth Center
DVP	Seneca Family of Agencies
EBAYC	St. Charles Borromeo Catholic Church
Eden I&R / 2-1-1 Alameda County	Tri-Valley Progressives
	Urban Strategies Council

Memo: Summary of Findings from Santa Rita Jail Experience Community Meeting

On April 4, 2023, Bright Research Group (BRG) held a focus group with people who were formerly incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail and their loved ones / family members. The focus group covered a range of topics, including the participants' feedback and experiences at Santa Rita Jail, the Sheriff's priorities for public safety, and community partnership. Thirty-two participants were in attendance. BRG provided a brief introduction about the community engagement effort of the Alameda County Sheriff's Office (Sheriff's Office), then assigned the participants to one of three breakout groups for a small group discussion that lasted about one hour and 15 minutes:

- 11 family members whose loved ones had been incarcerated
- 8 men with experience at Santa Rita Jail
- 13 women with experience at Santa Rita Jail

Notes were recorded on a computer, and the chat from the Zoom breakout room was saved. In addition, the researchers conducted one-on-one interviews with four Spanish-speaking residents of Alameda County. One had been incarcerated, and the others were family members. The researchers analyzed the results by key theme. This document summarizes those findings.

Summary of Key Findings from the Santa Rita Jail Focus Group

The key themes from the Santa Rita Jail focus group are captured in the table below.



Abuse of Power and Inhumane Treatment of People Who Reside within Santa Rita Jail

The participants were asked about what concern brought them to the community meeting and about their perceptions of and experiences with the Santa Rita Jail. The participants who spent time in Santa Rita Jail described it as an inhospitable, dangerous facility and describe deputies sheriffs as disrespectful, unresponsive, and abusive. The participants provided detailed accounts of the ways in which deputy sheriffs and other staff at Santa Rita Jail abused them, dehumanized them, and harmed their physical and

psychological well-being. The participants explained that deputy sheriffs are particularly hostile and violent toward people of color, especially large Black men and women, whom they perceive as asking too many questions. The deputy sheriffs are overly aggressive in their interactions with Black men and quick to resort to physical punishment. The participants said that most deputy sheriffs are demeaning, abusive, petty, and lacking in care or concern for people who reside within Santa Rita Jail. From the perspective of those participants who had been incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail, the deputy sheriffs value compliance—they overreact and punish people who reside within Santa Rita Jail for any perceived threat to their authority. As one participant put it, “Once you are an inmate, you are nothing.” One participant, who said she was wrongfully accused and never convicted of a crime, spent two days in Santa Rita Jail, where she witnessed countless instances of inhumane abuse and unsanitary conditions. The participants reported that this abusive treatment erodes a sense of hope and optimism for the future, exacerbating mental health conditions. Among the key concerns:

- A lack of care, respect, and attention to safety for people in crisis, those with mental health concerns, those withdrawing from substance use, and other vulnerable individuals, including women
- Misuse of isolation. Participants described multiple instances in which they were put in isolation for simply asking a question, such as how to file a grievance, or for disturbing a deputy’s sense of authority by asking for information
- A lack of safety and care for women who reside within Santa Rita Jail. Female residents were not provided with sanitary products for their menstrual cycles, were left in isolation cells naked, were strip-searched on the yard, were given dirty underwear, and were demeaned by male and female guards alike
- Overly punitive responses to requests for information
- The destruction or removal of personal belongings that residents value, such as pictures of loved ones, clothing, clean underwear, books, and educational materials
- Family members highlighted the ways in which a stay at Santa Rita Jail can negatively impact the entire family—from a loss of income or employment to continued mental health challenges that impact the entire family unit

“When I was 17, I spent time in Rita fighting a case, and I was abused, beat up, put in a cell, and had no opportunity to put in a grievance. They need to have better oversight of their staff and more opportunities for inmates to voice their complaints.”

“Guards do not appear to know the procedures—maybe they are short staffed. There is no order or accountability; they were winging it. Some are really mean and degrading. Some would talk to you as a human being.”

“They’re known for that unfair treatment to Black in men in Rita.”

“I got put in isolation. I had my menstrual cycle. I was calling for help. Finally, a female deputy came and helped me. She said there was no record of me being in isolation, and she let me out.”

Unsanitary Conditions

The focus group participants remarked on the reputation of Santa Rita Jail as an unsanitary facility with deplorable conditions. They described intake holding cells as filthy, with garbage and rotting food on the floor, while being held there with many others for hours—sometimes days—either with dirty clothing or no clothing at all. Many described shared bathroom facilities in which there was feces and urine on floors and surfaces and that were often without toilet paper and had not been cleaned for many days. The participants mentioned poor sanitation, inadequate medical facilities, and a lack of nutritious meals. Others observed rats crawling over food, plates, and food-prep equipment, as well as unsanitary and unsafe conditions in the kitchen. One participant described a continuous leak that was left unaddressed for weeks, causing multiple accidents and falls, including his own, which led to a severe shoulder injury that was ignored and untreated despite his pleas for medical attention. He received treatment and surgery only after he was released. The participants offered the following recommendations:

- Regular and consistent cleaning of all shared spaces and holding areas, especially of medical facilities, bathrooms, and kitchens
- Deep cleaning of cells once a month and always before a new resident is assigned to a cell
- Ensure that all people who reside within Santa Rita Jail have access to adequate quantities of soap for bathing, laundry detergent, and cleaning supplies
- Improve the quality of food to include nutritious meals, and ensure its cleanliness. Serve food at regular mealtimes

“You might be in there with 15 people and one toilet. Dirty, food on the floor, sandwiches, mustard packs, used toilet paper. It was horrific; [the] smell was terrible. You would be in there for hours. You might be there for a couple of days.”

“The bathrooms were filthy—piss and shit all over the seats and floors—and there was never enough toilet paper, never enough cleaning supplies.”

Inadequate Medical Care and Mental Health Supports

There was consensus among the participants that a stay at Santa Rita Jail produces PTSD, worsened mental health conditions, and even death. The participants decried the lack of medical care, mental health supports, and medical malpractice at Santa Rita Jail, citing multiple examples of residents' medical needs being ignored. Some describe instances in which the medical staff at Santa Rita Jail failed to diagnose serious disease or illness, and multiple participants reported that a family member had died in jail due to a lack of medical attention. Others said they were physically beaten, had their personal possessions taken and destroyed, and/or were deprived of basic necessities like soap or food. Several men and women mentioned contracting COVID-19 while in Santa Rita Jail, citing the lack of regular cleaning and a failure to adhere to safety protocols and rapid testing after exposure. There was a consensus that mental health illness among people who reside within Santa Rita Jail goes undiagnosed or ignored. Residents with mental illness are particularly vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse from other residents. The participants explained that people with mental illness experience worsening conditions that include defecating and urinating on themselves, inducing self-harm, and behaving erratically. Recommendations offered by the participants include:

- Better evaluation of and treatment for medical issues and more serious attention given to people who reside within Santa Rita Jail who report medical problems. Provide women with adequate feminine products and/or prenatal care when necessary
- Better screening for and assessment of mental health issues and improved mental health supports and treatment in the jail

The participants also emphasized that a stay at Santa Rita Jail for those without a diagnosed or preexisting behavioral health concern produces lasting trauma, mental health concerns, and emotional distress for both individuals who stay at Santa Rita Jail as well as their family members.

“ They don’t monitor or notice people with mental health issues... Sometimes people have mental health issues when they get in, and they’re worse when they get out. ”

“ When it comes to medical care and mental health, I have a cousin who died in Santa Rita. She was pregnant. She had a heart condition. She passed alone. For people who have severe health issues or health risks, there should be another unit or pod. ”

“ No one told me I was on suicide watch—they took my clothes. I was freezing. No one would tell me why. No clinician came to see me. They took all of my belongings. ”

Lack of Process, Procedure, and Policy from Intake to Discharge

The focus group participants described the jail as an institution that lacked a sense of policy, procedure, and accountability to performance standards. From intake to discharge, the participants decried the lack of transparency, care, and due process. They felt that the institution as a whole lacked a sense of order and safety and that people who reside within Santa Rita Jail were subject to the whims, preferences, and personalities of individual deputy sheriffs. Both men and women mentioned that the jail makes it exceedingly difficult to submit grievances against deputy sheriffs, that when grievances are submitted they “don’t go anywhere” and are ignored, and that people who reside within Santa Rita Jail will receive retaliatory treatment by deputy sheriffs as a consequence. The participants describe the jail staff as young, immature, and unprepared to work in the jail, and that they are often unfamiliar with processes and rules or are always tense and on edge, which leads to overly aggressive, disrespectful behaviors toward people who reside within Santa Rita Jail that can quickly escalate to confrontation. While a couple of people who had spent time at the Santa Rita Jail described instances of deputy sheriffs showing compassion, humanity, and respect in their interactions with people who reside there, the input was overwhelmingly negative. In particular:

- The intake process is particularly dehumanizing: the conditions of the holding cell are unsanitary, unsafe, and overcrowded; none of the staff seem to know what is going on; having to be strip-searched is degrading; and people who reside within Santa Rita Jail cannot get transparent information about where they are in the process and when they will be transferred to a cell
- Family members cannot get information about their loved ones in a timely fashion, and the visitation policy lacks transparency. Women, in particular, feel unsafe when they are released in the middle of the night and need to get to BART
- The grievance system is broken; filing a grievance does not result in response or an investigation of unacceptable staff behaviors; and some people who reside within Santa Rita Jail are punished for filing a grievance
- Overall communication and information management practices are inconsistent, and there is a sense of chaotic operations and an inability to get information from the jail staff. Individuals who were eventually found innocent or whose charges were dropped were confused by the lack of information from the courts, the criminal legal process, and next steps after a case was closed

Participants offered a number of recommendations, including:

- Have grievances collected, reviewed, and approved by non-jail staff who are unbiased—not by CO supervisors or jail administrators—to ensure transparency and objectivity
- Higher standards of selection and training for Santa Rita Jail deputy sheriffs and staff, as well as more accountability/discipline measures for those who violate performance standards
- The Sheriff’s Office should develop a performance management system and technology to flag and investigate deputy sheriffs who abuse people who reside within Santa Rita Jail, then discipline or fire them as appropriate

“You are vulnerable; there is no sense of authority or order. They put the power in the hands of everyone else. The deputies—I would not see them until it was time to eat and go back to the cell. I did not feel that I was in their hands. I was in the hands of the prisoners.”

“At intake, they made me strip, bend over, and cough. Then they gave me dirty underwear.”

“Intake processing is the most dehumanizing part of being incarcerated.”

“Discharge is never clear. [The] release date is always vague. It keeps you in the dark. They might release you at midnight or later. My family had to wait eight hours outside with no updates. That’s unacceptable—they have lives too. It needs to change.”

Negative Community Perception and Reputation

The focus group participants concurred that the Sheriff’s Office is viewed as hostile and aggressive toward marginalized populations, especially Black and Latino communities. They shared a common belief that deputies tend to abuse their authority when providing services to communities of color, either because they are unfamiliar with or intimidated by Black and brown men or they are unprepared to respond to certain calls, such as mental health crises. A significant number of focus group participants described instances of intimidating and disrespectful behavior by deputies during traffic stops or in public spaces. Many spoke about being racially profiled and/or targeted by deputies for being Black or brown or for presenting as being “from the hood.” Several explained that deputy sheriffs would wrongfully insinuate that participants were selling drugs or were gang affiliated when searching their person or vehicle. Others shared personal experiences in which deputies were overly aggressive and physical with them, with a few describing instances of outright abuse and beatings. Several said that deputies disrespected and dismissed them when they requested information or asked questions about criminal legal processes and Sheriff’s Office procedures. One family member described a SWAT team raid that happened at her home to arrest her son as particularly traumatic. Her children were sleeping, and they did not show a warrant and made all the children get out of the house in the early morning. Ultimately, her son was wrongfully accused, and the case was dismissed.

The participants offered the following recommendations to improve the reputation of the Sherriff’s Office within the community:

- Deputy sheriffs need to show up in the community differently, as a servant giving back to the community. They need to learn how to connect and build relationships with residents, as opposed to responding with a heavy-handed law enforcement response
- Deputies should have a decreased role in responding to nonviolent situations, such as mental health and/or unhoused crises. The participants recommended that training for how respond to such situations should be improved or that responses should be made by trained clinicians and social service professionals. Also, the Sheriff's Office should support investments in community-based efforts
- The recruitment and screening processes for the hiring of deputies needs to be improved. The Sheriff's Office should hire more people from the community
- Deputies should show more care when interacting with children, particularly during an arrest or SWAT raid. The Sheriff's Office should apologize when they make a mistake, arrest the wrong person, or mistreat residents

“I live in Dublin. I see deputies all the time, and they look at me crazy—size me up and eye me down just because of who I am. I got a good job, so I have nice clothes and a nice car, but they assume I’m up to no good, asking if I’m selling, what I’m up to, if I got a gun.”

“Bottom line: they need to just do their job correctly and not abuse their authority. Stop pulling us over for fake reasons and ego-tripping.”

“I would like the SWAT team to be more careful when there are children involved. Especially when the person they are looking for had already been arrested.”

Memo: Summary of Findings from Three Community Input Meetings

Bright Research Group (BRG) held three additional input meetings to hear from residents, advocates, and community-based providers in Alameda County. These included conversations with the Interfaith Coalition for Justice in the Jails (ICJJ), community residents in unincorporated areas, and the Behavioral Health Collaborative of Alameda County. Most of the participants were advocates, community-based providers, and community leaders. The meetings covered a range of topics, including participants' feedback regarding the Sheriff's priorities for public safety, Santa Rita Jail, and community partnership. BRG provided a brief introduction about the Alameda County Sheriff's Office's (the Sheriff's Office) community engagement effort and Sheriff Sanchez's draft priorities for public safety. Notes were recorded on a computer, and the chat from the Zoom meeting was saved. Researchers analyzed the results by key theme. This document summarizes the key findings.

Date	Meeting	# Participants	Participant Description
March 29	Interfaith Coalition for Justice in the Jails	3	Advocates
April 12	Community residents; prioritizing unincorporated areas	9	Mix of residents, community providers, and staff from elected officials who represent or serve unincorporated areas
April 13	Behavioral Health Collaborative of AC	27	Behavioral health providers
Total		39	

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS ACROSS THREE MEETINGS

Support for the Priorities of the Sheriff's Office

- Support for accountability, transparency, and action
- Shift the organizational culture and mindset
- Decrease the budget of the Sheriff's Office and build alternatives

Deaths, Conditions, and Treatment at Santa Rita Jail

- Inhumane treatment and conditions leading to death
- Improve processes for visitation, grievances, and discharge
- Expand community-based programming in Santa Rita Jail
- Lack of care coordination with community-based providers
- Lack of accountability and transparency

Community Partnership

- Mixed perception of the Sheriff's Office
- Increase Sheriff Sanchez's visibility and accessibility in the community
- Proactive communication with the community and providers
- Unincorporated community members lack knowledge of the role of the Sheriff's Office

Support for the Draft Priorities of the Sheriff's Office

When asked for their feedback on the draft priorities of Sheriff Sanchez, the participants expressed support for them but emphasized that the Sheriff must take concrete action toward these goals to strengthen trust in the Sheriff's Office. They believe that Sheriff Sanchez can differentiate herself from her predecessors by moving swiftly and without hesitation to implement these priorities. There were two additional priorities that surfaced across the three community meetings: shift the organizational culture toward a restorative and human-centered approach, and create alternatives for people with mental health concerns and the unhoused.

Transform Organizational Culture at Santa Rita Jail and in the Community: The providers, advocates, and community members emphasized the need for the culture of the office to shift from one that is violent and inhumane toward one that promotes a service-oriented and human-centered approach to serving and protecting. They stated that the current recruitment, hiring, and training breeds and reinforces a culture of violence and militarized responses. They offered a few recommendations to transform the culture of the agency:

- Recruit and hire from impact communities and communities of color; address staffing gaps to reduce overtime and burnout
- Train deputies in trauma-informed restorative justice; mental health first aid; and human-centered practices in partnership with community-based providers and experts
- Incentivize and promote deputies who serve and perform with a new mindset and culture based on care and dignity

Build Alternatives to Incarceration: Secondly, the providers and advocates urged the Sheriff to participate in the creation of alternatives to incarceration for people who are unhoused and/or those with mental health and substance use concerns. They urged the Sheriff's Office to use their position to strengthen community-based alternatives, care, treatment, and prevention. The providers and advocates also acknowledged that the current ecosystem of services provides few alternatives to incarceration. They urged Sheriff Sanchez to take the lead in creating alignment across partners of the criminal justice system and partnering with community-based organizations to build community-based crisis response, diversion programs, and alternatives. The participants shared the following recommendations:

- Initiate conversations regarding alternatives to incarceration and criminal justice reform among county agencies and elected officials in order to build political will and support
- Partner with community-based organizations to create an alternative model for responding to mental health crises and victims of the commercial sexual exploitation of children that include peer-based support and a decreased role of the Sheriff's Office; collaborate with Call 988
- Reduce the overall budget of the agency and reinvest in community-based prevention, diversion, and crisis response services; reallocate resources to address gaps in mental health, substance use, and housing supports and services
- Proactively communicate with community providers about the service gaps that deputies from the Sheriff's Office encounter during referrals so that providers can work toward addressing community needs
- Advocate for the funding of diversion programs and courts designed for individuals with behavioral health challenges and nonviolent offenses

“ If [the] community and [the] Sheriff want to shift who is dealing with mental health crisis, we need resources to build the system. There are gaps and limitations of the current setup. We need political will and resources.”

“ Instead of taking them to jail, let’s take them to [an] alternative spot funded by Behavioral Health. If we did better [on the] front end, then less people [would be] in jail. But once they do get in, they need to be properly assessed. Focus on prevention; it can be done.”

“ [The] training academy is where they first experience their role in community...they need to have an honest look at that. How can they expect to change [their] mindset if [they] keep doing the same things early on? How much are we, CBOs and partners experts, invited into that to train for mental health crisis?”

Deaths, Treatment, and Conditions at Santa Rita Jail

When asked about their primary concern, the advocates and residents in unincorporated areas alike named the inhumane treatment and cruel conditions at Santa Rita Jail, which lead to recidivism, death, and suicide. The family members of individuals incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail reported that their loved ones are denied basic needs, including food and showers, and are treated poorly by staff. The family members faced communication barriers and a lack of support from the staff at Santa Rita Jail with regard to visiting their loved ones, planning for their release, or understanding the discharge plan. They emphasized the important role that family members play in supporting a successful reentry. Similarly, the providers and advocates voiced frustration with the lack of transparent communication and had trouble getting the information they need to continue to support their clients. Several cited examples of how the lack of coordination of care exacerbated physical health and mental health conditions and, in some instances, led to death. Many urged the Sheriff’s Office to expand on-site services and programs for medical care, substance use treatment, and mental health services. The providers and advocates believe the Sheriff’s Office needs to be more accountable and release transparent data about the demographics of people who reside in Santa Rita Jail, the services and treatment they receive, and the health outcomes of residents.

The participants named these recommendations to improve the conditions and treatment at Santa Rita Jail:

- Improve the conditions and treatment of Santa Rita Jail residents; treat people who reside there with care, respect, and dignity

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- Improve visitation, grievance, and discharge processes and communication to families; concrete recommendations include increasing amount of parking for visitors, addressing e-visit technical difficulties, and expanding hours beyond 9:00–5:00 p.m.
 - Improve mental health, physical health, and substance use assessment, treatment, and resources for those in Santa Rita Jail; partner with and exchange health information with providers and families to coordinate and continue care
 - Increase access for community-based providers to provide services within Santa Rita Jail by reducing bureaucratic barriers and unnecessary restrictive eligibility criteria
 - Provide accessible data on the demographics, health, and status of residents on a public dashboard
 - Release real-time information from the Coroner’s Office to community-based providers
 - Evaluate the performance of deputies on the basis of the quality of care and service at Santa Rita Jail

“I have a loved one incarcerated in Santa Rita and am concerned about their mental health—they are not getting showers and treatment...His tablet cannot connect. Every time I go there, the video cuts out...he has not seen any rehab programs and [has] been there three weeks...Yesenia Sanchez was at Santa Rita. What is she going to do as sheriff? What is she going to do better for inmates so they aren't treated like dogs?”

“Fund alternatives so jail is not the only option. Once they get there, we need better and more comprehensive assessment around [the] extent of illness and necessary treatment, also transparency around sharing information. They need to connect with [the] care team and existing providers to assure them they will have care.”

Community Partnerships

The participants in the input meetings shared mixed perceptions of the Sheriff's Office. The community advocates and family members of people who have been incarcerated tended to hold negative perceptions of the Sheriff's Office, while the providers and residents from unincorporated areas expressed neutral or somewhat positive perceptions. Despite these varying perspectives, there was consensus among the participants that Sheriff Sanchez should increase her visibility and presence in the community. Some specifically recommended that she focus on developing a relationship with the predominantly non-English-speaking immigrant communities of unincorporated areas. Some emphasized that the lack of turnout of residents to community engagement events was evidence that the Sheriff's Office needs to improve community engagement in unincorporated areas. One shared that most residents of unincorporated areas do not know the role and purview of the Sheriff's Office and the different roles of each law enforcement agency. A few were encouraged by the monthly meetings in Castro Valley and the availability of flyers in Spanish. The participants surfaced the following recommendations:

- Create an accessible, visible, and relationship-based presence in the community; hold community meetings in different locations
- Initiate more-intentional outreach and engagement with the Spanish-speaking community, especially in unincorporated areas; make information and events accessible through translation and interpretation and the use of plain language
- Proactively educate residents about the role and responsibilities of the Sheriff's Office with regard to protecting public safety

“[The] relationship with Ashland and Cherryland has been very good, and they have tried to get involved more. Most recently, [the Sheriff's Office] had a fair, and for the first time, the flyer was in English and Spanish, which is minor but so significant. It shows they understand and [that] there is a connection there.”

“A few weeks ago, something serious happened in the community, [and it]...seemed like they were responsive. But there was no follow-up afterwards [or] updates. I think we were on lockdown. What if there was someone still at large?”

“[The] Sheriff should be more approachable, be more visible, and be present...Also be very intentional around translation, especially in unincorporated areas like Ashland.”

Community Survey Methods and Results Tables

Detailed Statistical Analysis

BRG performed the following statistical analysis for the community survey results:

- **Unweighted Frequencies:** For each question included in this analysis, BRG has provided the distribution of responses. While the sample is not perfectly representative of the Alameda County population, the BRG team determined that the sample is not sufficiently askew to justify weighting the results to compensate for what are only small over- and under-representations.
- **Composite Measures:** The questionnaire contains several questions that center on perceived safety promotion and perceived respect and fairness. To summarize the respondents’ general perceptions of these topics and to facilitate comparisons across key demographic variables, these groups of questions were combined into two composite measures: Perceived Safety Promotion Composite and Perceived Respect and Fairness Composite. The two most common methods for creating a composite score are to add the scores from the included questions together or to calculate a mathematical mean of the scores. BRG selected the mean-score calculation method, averaging scores across the three questions in each question group, thereby allowing for the inclusion of respondents who may have answered only one or two of the questions.
- **Comparisons:** Comparisons on the basis of the respondents’ race/ethnicity and city/town versus unincorporated area were conducted on the two composite variables as well as the NPS. Race/ethnicity was selected as an independent variable due to well-established research demonstrating differential treatment by law enforcement on the basis of race/ethnicity and corresponding differentials in satisfaction with and perception of law enforcement roles. We compared responses based on where they live, either city and town or unincorporated areas, because the Sheriff’s Office plays different roles for the residents of these two types of localities.
- **Net Promoter Score:** An NPS is a common measure of satisfaction that is measured by asking respondents to indicate how likely they are to recommend an organization and its services on a scale of 0–10. The responses are then organized into detractors (those responding with 0–6), passives (7–8), and promoters (9–10). The percentage of detractors is subtracted from the percentage of promoters to determine the overall NPS. In this analysis, NPSs are provided across the respondents as a whole, by race/ethnicity, and by city/town versus unincorporated residents.

Tables for Community Survey Results

Table 1. Gender Identity of the Respondents	N	%	% Excluding “Declined”
Female	261	52.5%	63.7%
Male	145	29.2%	35.4%
Gender Nonconforming	4	0.8%	1.0%
Declined to State	87	17.5%	--
TOTAL	497	100%	100%

Table 2. Race and Ethnicity	N	%	% Excluding “Decline”	County Population ⁹
Black / African American	69	13.9%	16.6%	10.7%
American Indian / Alaska Native	9	1.8%	2.2%	1.1%
Asian / Asian American	42	8.5%	10.1%	33.8%
Hispanic/Latino	66	13.3%	15.9%	22.4%
Pacific Islander	7	1.4%	1.7%	1.0%
White	198	39.8%	47.7%	29.2%
Other	24	4.8%	5.8%	5.6%
Declined to State	82	16.5%	--	--
TOTAL	497	100%	100%	103.8%

Table 3. Subpopulations Represented	%
Homeowners	59%
Community advocate / activist	21%
Service provider / community worker	15%
Business owner	11%
Sheriff’s Office system partner / employee	2%

⁹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/alamedacountycalifornia>

Table 4. Sheriff's Office Promotion of Safety	N	Agree	I don't Know	Disagree
I feel safer when deputy sheriffs are present	495	61.6%	17.8%	20.6%
The Sheriff's Office and its deputies are a positive presence in my community and contribute to making my neighborhood safer	490	53.7%	22.9%	23.5%
The Sheriff's Office and its deputies are genuinely concerned for my safety	491	52.1%	32.0%	15.9%

Table 5. Sheriff's Office Treatment of Residents	N	Agree	I don't Know	Disagree
The Sheriff's Office treats residents in my community with respect	488	48.2%	32.2%	19.7%
The Sheriff's Office treats residents in my community fairly	490	44.9%	35.5%	19.6%
I am confident that, during a law enforcement contact, deputy sheriffs would treat me and/or my friends and family members fairly	490	51.6%	26.3%	22.0%

Table 6. Sources of Information from the Sheriff's Office	%
Social media (Twitter, Facebook, Next Door, etc.)	38.8%
Word of mouth	33.6%
I do not receive information about the Sheriff's Office	30.8%
Sheriff's Office website	14.7%
Other community meetings hosted by the Sheriff's Office	12.5%
I contact the Sheriff's Office myself	10.9%
Community groups/meetings	9.1%
Sheriff's Office advisory meetings in unincorporated areas	7.0%
News	5.0%
Work	1.4%
Santa Rita Jail advisory group calls	1.2%
Faith-based groups	1.2%
Emails	0.4%

Table 7. Satisfaction with Level of Access to Information about the Sheriff's Office (N=482)		%
Satisfied		23.1%
Neutral		47.2%
Not Satisfied		27.3%

Table 8. Sheriff's Office Levels of Involvement in...	This Should Not Be Their Role	Less Involved	I'm Satisfied with the Current Level	More Involved
Responding to issues of human trafficking (e.g., laborers, sex workers) (N=347)	8.1%	2.6%	22.5%	66.9%
Actively participating in and creating neighborhood watch groups (N=361)	12.7%	4.7%	18.8%	63.7%
Hosting and conducting community outreach events (N=380)	13.9%	3.7%	22.6%	59.7%
Conducting community engagement and youth development activities via the DSAL (N=296)	13.9%	2.7%	26.4%	57.1%
Responding to issues with unhoused communities (N=383)	23.8%	6.8%	16.4%	53.0%
Serving as SROs at neighborhood schools (N=365)	27.9%	4.7%	15.1%	52.3%
Being present and co-located at the REACH Ashland Youth Center (N = 205)	24.9%	4.4%	26.3%	44.4%
Responding to mental health crises in my neighborhood (N=364)	33.2%	6.9%	20.6%	39.3%

Table 9. Percent That Desire More Involvement from the Sheriff's Office by Respondent Type	Black (N=67)	Native American (N=9)	Asian American (N=41)	Latino (N=66)	Pacific Islander (N=7)	White (N=195)	City/Town (N=198)	Unincorporated (N=242)
Actively participating in and creating neighborhood watch groups	55.1%	66.7%	61.9%	55.4%	57.1%	44.4%	44.9%	55.1%
Hosting and conducting community outreach events	59.4%	44.4%	54.8%	50.8%	28.6%	46.7%	50.3%	50.6%
Being present and co-located at the REACH Ashland Youth Center	25.4%	44.4%	21.4%	41.5%	42.9%	13.0%	22.7%	18.3%
Conducting community engagement and youth development activities via the DSAL	54.4%	77.8%	40.5%	41.5%	71.4%	30.4%	42.9%	33.3%
Responding to mental health crises	37.3%	55.6%	41.5%	36.4%	42.9%	23.6%	33.8%	29.2%
Responding to issues with unhoused communities	40.6%	88.9%	57.1%	50.0%	28.6%	38.5%	40.9%	47.7%
Responding to issues of human trafficking	55.1%	88.9%	47.6%	66.7%	57.1%	47.4%	56.6%	47.9%
Serving as SROs at neighborhood schools	39.1%	44.4%	43.9%	50.0%	42.9%	33.7%	34.9%	47.8%

Table 10 . Importance of Sheriff's Office Priority Areas by Respondent Type	Black (N=67)	Native American (N=9)	Asian American (N=41)	Latin (N=66)	Pacific Islander (N=7)	White (N=195)	City /Town (N=196)	Unincorporated (N=242)
Staff health and working conditions	65.2%	77.8%	69.0%	71.2%	85.7%	62.0%	64.8%	66.3%
Transparency and oversight	82.4%	100%	85.4%	89.2%	100%	84.4%	87.3%	82.6%
Santa Rita Jail conditions and reentry services	79.4%	66.7%	64.3%	68.2%	85.7%	66.0%	77.6%	53.1%
Community partnerships	87.0%	100%	88.1%	84.8%	85.7%	79.2%	84.6%	76.6%
Addressing racial disparities	85.3%	88.9%	71.4%	84.8%	100%	79.9%	86.7%	66.0%

Table 11. Net Promoter Scores	Negative	Positive	Neutral	Total	NPS
All respondents					-13%
Black	45	14	8	67	-46%
Native American	6	0	3	9	-67%
Asian American	20	12	11	43	-19%
Latin	31	22	12	65	-14%
Pacific Islander	3	2	2	7	-14%
White	88	56	44	188	-17%
Homeowner	134	85	66	285	-17%
Non-homeowner	81	85	36	202	2%
Unincorporated	67	74	26	167	4%
City/Town	136	33	26	195	-53%



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