



San Francisco Public Defender



SAN FRANCISCO
PRETRIAL DIVERSION PROJECT

Release and Reentry Success Plan for Unhoused People During COVID-19 *An implementation plan to provide hotel rooms & services for people leaving jail*

Developed by SF Pretrial Diversion Project, the San Francisco Public Defender, and the San Francisco District Attorney

CONTEXT:

In light of the current public health crisis related to the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent requirement to shelter in place, it is imperative that the City provide safe housing for individuals who are homeless and involved in the criminal justice system, to allow them to stay safely indoors while also receiving critical services that support their re-entry process. This is critical to both meet individual needs and ensure public safety for all San Franciscans.

The proposal below is a suggested implementation plan for how the city might partner with a community agency such as Pre-Trial Diversion to safely provide housing and services to people coming out of jail who have no place to go. This model would require dedicating a concentrated block of hotel rooms for people impacted by the criminal legal system, specifically those under the supervision of the SF Pretrial Diversion Project, and having both DPH and Pretrial Diversion provide services directly on-site.

The legislation passed on April 14th by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors mandates that 8,250 private hotel rooms become available immediately for the homeless population by the end of April, and specifically addresses the need to provide hotel rooms to homeless people exiting from jails.

In order to support the smooth transition of this population into private hotel rooms, Pretrial Diversion, the Public Defender's Office, and the District Attorney's office have come together to suggest this plan for how we can move forward in the most efficient and safest way possible:

One of the basic principles driving this proposal is public safety. Increasing distancing in the jails is essential for Judges to feel comfortable with the support available to clients as release determinations are considered. It remains uncertain when shelter in place will end, and even after it is lifted we will continue to live with heightened restrictions regarding congregate spaces and sanitation. People living in the streets and SROs will continue to feel the stress and uncertainty of this crisis, and lack the resources they need to be safe and make positive decisions. The proposed supportive housing approach will also give us the capacity to re-introduce services and integrate clients into what will be a very different environment as shelter in place conditions change. We do not know what that will look like, but we will be better equipped to begin planning and to protect public safety if our resources are already aligned under one roof.

Release and Reentry Success Plan Model:

Rather than disperse folks throughout the city, it would be most efficient, safe, and effective to house folks into grouped settings. To that end, we are requesting a building with at least 50 hotel rooms, preferably up to 150 if possible. The facility would be staffed and structured as a multi-service center with coordinated resources across community, city, and criminal system agencies.

Due to the shelter-in-place requirements, many clients are not able to check in with their case managers, attend support groups, or even receive basic amenities like food and clothing or access related resources. Many times, participating in services is a requirement for people being allowed to stay in Pretrial Diversion. Therefore, during this pandemic, we believe that required and needed services should be safely provided on-site, where people are sheltering-in-place. This includes technology access to allow for virtual participation in mandated groups and wellness activities.

The proposed COVID-19 supportive housing program could serve the following populations:

- Individuals being released or diverted (“zero bail” cases) everyday from jail who are underhoused or otherwise have no capacity to shelter in place.
- Individuals on pretrial release who are living in unsafe SRO and other communal living environments (currently 28 people).
- Individuals on pretrial release who are homeless (currently 123 people).

A key element of this facility would be staffing from a broad range of partners in an environment that supports social distancing, cleanliness, and integrated technology. Clients being released from the county jail have increasingly higher need levels, and one of SF Pretrial’s challenges is having the space necessary to connect with and engage clients.

An ideal facility would have rooms with individual bathrooms, refrigerators, and televisions. Using a basic hotel channel as an example, virtual support groups, and other resources could be broadcast in individual rooms. Appropriate lobby space would be necessary to support intakes of up to 12 to 15 people, along with drop-in clients and food distribution. Separate business meeting or conference rooms would also be useful to facilitate safely-distanced individual meetings with clients and support groups. Building on the existing hotel technology infrastructure, WIFI would be made available to all occupants, and video conferencing technology could be implemented for visitation and client consultations. Securing tablets, laptops, smartphones, or comparable devices would also significantly enhance communication and the ability to provide services and support remotely. Enhanced janitorial and food services services would also be required. Close proximity to 850 Bryant and SF Pretrial is desirable.

The following entities could staff and provide services and safety support:

Human Services Agency - HSA could work with the Sheriff’s office and DPH to identify which hotel would be most appropriate for this initiative. They could also provide an on-site presence to facilitate MediCal enrollment, a critical need as services are reinstated upon release. Partnership could also explore connections to Social Security, DMV and other necessary agencies that support successful reentry.

Department of Public Health - DPH would be the lead agency and coordinator overseeing this hotel, in close coordination with San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project. DPH would be a

critical onsite provider to administer and manage testing and the operation of a safe and Covid-19 compliant environment. If there is sufficient staffing, DPH could provide support groups with the appropriate distancing and safety protocols. DPH Jail Health continues to be a critical partner in this process, and it would be ideal to have specific staffing from that division, or staff that could continue to facilitate an exchange of information based on HIPAA and coordinated care guidelines.

San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project - SF Pretrial would help staff the facility, provide case management, front desk, group facilitation, administrative and other staffing. They would also coordinate transportation to the hotel site for folks who are being released from jail. The existing office would remain open to accommodate drop-ins, but adequate staff would be provided to support clients and general operations. SF Pretrial also has the capacity to implement technology solutions, including broadcasting support groups. Twitch has generously donated two restaurant quality meals a day, and we could shift part of that donation to this facility, while requesting additional meals as needed. The staffing in the proposed budget represents clinical support and overnight staffing. SF Pretrial would relocate existing staff at no additional expense to support daytime and evening operations.

San Francisco Sheriff's Office - SFSO would be a critical partner as the custodian of the jail overseeing releases and related services. Potentially, the proposed supportive COVID program could also be one of the central locations for electronic monitoring installation as needed to minimize transportation logistics.

District Attorney and Public Defender's Office - As needed, space could be provided for attorneys to consult with their clients and provide mental health, victim support, and other services.

Adult Probation Department - APD and the Reentry Council are providing a wide range of groups and classes by Zoom. We could use existing hotel technology to broadcast classes, or set up socially distanced classes using monitors in the conference rooms.

Services and partners would not be limited to these agencies, and would be expanded during the planning and implementation process. The Safety and Justice Challenge Workgroup is already convening discussions related to this work and their membership includes these stakeholders and other relevant agencies. That Safety & Justice forum can be used to coordinate services and participation. Tipping Point is a participant in the Safety & Justice Challenge, and they have agreed to explore how they can support this project.

Funding

This model will rely on City funding, but we have also begun to approach philanthropic partners to support some of the programmatic components of this plan. The estimated cost for the identified programmatic components of the COVID Release and Reentry Success Plan is \$277,511 for a six month period, for up to 100 clients. This amount does not include hotel operations, but does accommodate having staff available 24/7 to support clients. While up to 400 people would benefit from this type of residential support program, we understand it might take time to reach that scale.

Why This Program is Critical at this Time:

- San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project has significantly more to offer clients and maximize public safety but cannot reach its potential during this public health crisis and its distancing requirements without additional space in close proximity to its clientele.
- In addition, other programs providing support to the criminal system-involved population have had to cut back these services due to reallocation of staff and social distancing guidelines. As a result, some of our most high need clients are not receiving the support they need to maximize their likelihood of staying clean, crime-free, and engaged in care such that they will not cycle back into jail.
- Currently, people being released from jail have access to SRO rooms, unless they are deemed medically vulnerable. Not only are the SRO hotels dangerous for contracting COVID-19, their residents are also forced to travel to obtain services, putting themselves and others at further risk of contracting COVID-19. There are also many clients on pretrial release who were released before the public health crisis began, and therefore are living in dangerous conditions on the street.

Budget Detail

Budget Expense Line Items	Total Budget Request
A) Program Salaries & Fringe Benefits	\$108,359
B) Direct Program Operating Expenses	\$7,680
C) Program [Sub-]Contract Services	\$134,800
D) Program Equipment Purchase	\$10,000
X) Non-Program Indirect/Admin/Overhead Costs**	\$16,672
TOTAL PROGRAM [& NON-PROGRAM] AMOUNT:	\$ 277,511

For questions regarding this proposal, please contact the following individuals:

David Mauroff, CEO, San Francisco Pretrial Diversion Project davidm@sfpretrial.org

Carolyn Goossen, Co-Director of Policy, San Francisco Public Defender's Office carolyn.goossen@sfgov.org

Tara Anderson, Director of Policy, San Francisco District Attorney's Office tara.anderson@sfgov.org