

FINAL REPORT



2025-26

Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury

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The Honorable Sergio C. Tapia II
Presiding Judge
Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
111 North Hill St.
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Judge Tapia II,

It has been a singular honor to have served as the Foreperson for the 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury. The members of this year's Civil Grand Jury were diligent and responsive in their duties when looking at particular aspects of governmental agencies within Los Angeles County.

The basic function of the 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury is to make recommendations to improve these agencies in order to improve the everyday lives of County residents. It was encouraging to meet and hear from the many diligent and hard-working members of various governmental bodies. We were all motivated and impressed by the high level of intelligence and commitment to serve of the speakers who came before us.

We were impressed by the wide array of civic leaders who took time out of their busy schedules to assist us in obtaining a better understanding of how local governments operations work to better serve the public. We heard about, and investigated, issues ranging from children in the foster care system to senior citizens dealing with food insecurities.

Honorable Judge Tapia, along with the Assistant Presiding Judge Ricardo Ocampo, the Honorable Judge Yvette Verastgui, Chair of Grand Jurors Committee, the Honorable Judge Olivia Rosales, Assistant Supervising Judge of the Criminal and Vice-Chair of the Grand Jurors Committee, it has been an honor and privilege to serve you and the Civil Grand Jury Administrators who supported our efforts throughout our term of service.

Respectfully yours,

Dennis R. Martinez, Foreperson
2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury



Third Row – Left to Right: Davit Zargaryan (County Counsel), Donald A. Gonzales, Victor H. Vidal, James Bukowski, M. Gordon Seyffert, George O. Davis, Tom Hutchinson, Michael S. Stefanko, Larry Nguy (Grand Jury Administrator)

Second Row – Left to Right: Lela Hung, Eva F. Brusa, Mercedes A. Fuller, Carina H. Lister, Susan Hale Gidlow, Valerie Esquerra, Holly Carroll, Carolyn Cobb

First Row - Left to Right: Jenalea Smith, Gwen D. Morgan-Smith, Rob Martin, Dennis R. Martinez, LeRoy R. Titus, Michelle M. Wilson, Lisa Griffin

INVESTIGATIVE REPORTS

2025-26

Los Angeles County

Civil Grand Jury

To view this 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Report book, and many previous years' reports, visit us online at:

<https://www.grandjury.co.la.ca.us/gjreports.html>



**THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
Changing Culture and Increasing
Transparency**



**2025-26
Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

When our committee members were growing up, a career in law enforcement was considered an honorable profession. Police officers frequently lived in the areas and cities where they served. Hollywood also depicted police officers in a positive light. Television shows like *Dragnet*, *Hill Street Blues*, *Columbo*, *Law and Order*, and more recently, *The Rookie*, showed hard working, dedicated officers who treated citizens from all backgrounds with respect and dignity.

There was no internet, 24-hour news networks, or cell phone cameras. If an officer was disrespectful to a citizen during a traffic stop, there was no evidence. Officers didn't wear body-worn cameras, and bystanders didn't have a video camera to record the interaction.

Police officers were rarely disciplined or fired for improper conduct. This was especially the case in minority and low-income communities. The media usually took the side of the police, and many residents in the African American and Latino communities felt they had no recourse or political representation.

In 1965 and 1992, Los Angeles County had two of the largest and most expensive riots in the country with the Watts Riot and Rodney King insurrection.

Fast forward to George Floyd's death, Defund the Police movement, alleged subgroups, large lawsuit payouts due to police misconduct, and social media videos documenting excessive use of force or fatal police shootings. Law

enforcement departments across the country are struggling to adapt to new practices in policing along with challenges from a more diverse public.

As the largest county by population in the country ¹, Los Angeles is at the epicenter of the new environment. “The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) is the nation’s largest Sheriff’s Department and second largest policing agency in the United States.” ².

To fully appreciate the current challenges faced by LASD (a 175-year-old organization), one needs to fully understand its enormous scope. The Department's three main responsibilities are to provide police services for 42 of the 88 cities within Los Angeles County, courthouse security for the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, and transportation services and housing of inmates within the county jail system. LASD also patrols 4,084 square miles, and provides security for community colleges, public transit, and public health hospitals.

Our committee spent close to a year researching the Department, visiting a variety of LASD facilities and interviewing various individuals to provide the citizens of Los Angeles County with a better understanding of this important department. Additionally, we offer a series of findings and recommendations that could improve the role of civilian oversight in the custody facilities and over the patrol divisions.

This report is in two sections. The first is an overview of LASD and the pressure points faced by Sheriff Robert Luna. The second section examines

¹ “US County Populations 2026.” World Population Review <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-counties>, Accessed February 19,2026.

² Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department – Home / Bio Links. <https://lasd.org/links/>, Accessed February 23,2026. “Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department.” LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/los-angeles-county-sheriff’s-department>, Accessed February 19,2026.

the civilian and governmental oversight of the Department, along with specific recommendations for improved transparency.

The committee found that the LASD has made positive improvements with their response to Department of Justice (DOJ) Settlement Agreements (e.g., Antelope Valley, Use of Head Strikes in Custody) and the creation of an Office of Constitutional Policing under Sheriff Robert Luna.

The committee was concerned about the continued uncertainty over the future status of Men's Central Jail. The Sheriff's Department has endeavored to make changes by addressing the charges made by the DOJ settlement agreement, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reports, and the California Attorney General's lawsuit, but that doesn't alter the fact that the building is old, dangerous and needs to be replaced. The "Care First, Jails Last" policy may be a needed reform (for better treatment of, and services for, the mentally ill) but doesn't negate the responsibility of the County to protect the citizens from dangerous criminals being returned to the streets.

Our research has noted that most of the positive improvements in the overall law enforcement operation of LASD have occurred from external pressure (body-worn cameras, DOJ settlement agreements, use of force lawsuits, subgroup reports, and ACLU and Sybil Brand reports on the County jails) vs. internal initiatives by LASD leadership.

We recommend actions are taken to reduce the time required by the LASD and the principal labor union (Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs - ALADS) to implement new policies and state laws. The "meet and confer" labor process often gets delayed to the detriment of proper civilian oversight of the Department. We recommend that the Civilian Oversight Commission be given additional independence, and that the new State law (AB 847) be

expedited to enable timely access to the requested personnel records of deputies accused of abuse or criminal behavior.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is the largest department in the county (\$4.2 billion budget with nearly 17,000 approved positions),³but is often overshadowed in public awareness by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) due to LAPD's depictions in movies, TV shows, documentaries and media coverage.

The citizens of Los Angeles County deserve a current overview of the largest law enforcement agency in the United States, their scope of services (contracted cities, jails, courts, community colleges, and public hospitals), and the unique challenges faced by the Department in a changing political and social media environment.

This includes challenges in staffing with younger recruits (post George Floyd incident and Defund the Police movement), the impact of negative media coverage (subgroups, Men's Central Jail, use of force lawsuits), and budget challenges faced by Los Angeles County (sexual abuse settlement agreements, Palisades and Eaton Canyon fires, and employee collective bargaining agreements).

The committee felt this investigation was timely at a moment of increased uncertainty in Los Angeles County as we face extraordinary budgetary challenges along with the future impact of governmental restructuring that was approved by the electorate in 2024 (expansion of the Board of

³ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department – Home / Bio Links. <https://lasd.org/links/>, Accessed February 23,2026. "Current Budget Overview, FY 2025-2026." Sheriff's Department. Slide 2. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/213058.pdf>, Accessed February 23,2026.

Supervisors, election of a County Executive, creation of an Ethics Commission, etc.). Additionally, the Department will have increased demand as it joins with the LAPD, California Highway Patrol, and Federal agencies in providing public safety for upcoming global events including the 2026 World Cup, the 2027 Super Bowl and the 2028 LA Olympics and 2028 Para Olympics. A department of this size and complexity – answering to a directly-elected County official – deserves a measured, balanced review as precedent-shaping decisions are made for the future.

METHODOLOGY

In consideration of the size and scope of the LASD, our committee conducted comprehensive research to recommend findings and recommendations. This included:

- Internet Research (e.g. news articles)
- Tours of Men’s Central Jail, Twin Towers Correctional Facility, the Inmate Reception Center, and other custody facilities managed by the LASD.
- Briefings by LASD subject matter experts at the Hall of Justice in downtown Los Angeles.
- Tour and briefing at the Sheriff’s Training Academy and Regional Services (STARS) in Monterey Park.
- Meeting(s) of the Civilian Oversight Commission and interviews with key leaders of the commission.
- Meetings with senior officials in the Office of the Inspector General
- Meeting with senior leadership and tour of the Palmdale Sheriff Station.

- Interviews with members of the Palmdale Community Advisory Committee.
- Phone call with the senior leadership of the Antelope Valley-NAACP Chapter.
- Meeting with the senior leadership of ALADS (Sheriff Union representing Sworn Deputies).
- Interviews with independent journalists who frequently cover the LASD.
- Meeting with senior members of ACLU of Southern California.

DISCUSSION



Photo 1 April-1970: LASD Deputies respond to the killing of (3) CHP officers in Newhall, California

Brief History⁴

- 1850 - The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is formed as California becomes a State.

⁴ "History of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (1849-1871) / Important Dates and Developments. Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. http://shq.lasdnews.net/content/captains/LASD_History.pdf, Accessed February 24,2026.

- 1886 - The First Mexican American Deputy Sheriff, Martin G. Aguirre, is hired. ⁵
- 1899 - The first African American Deputy Sheriff, J.B. Loving, is hired.
- 1912 - Mrs. Margaret Q. Adams is sworn in as the first woman Deputy in the United States.
- 1913 - The fee system of compensation is abolished, and the Civil Service merit system is installed -- one of the most important steps toward modernizing the Department.
- 1926 - The Hall of Justice (the current LASD Headquarters) is completed in downtown Los Angeles, combining a Sheriff's office, courtrooms, a morgue, and 750 jail cells on the top floors.
- 1932 - The marked car patrol system is inaugurated. Uniforms were adopted. Prior to this time, all Departmental personnel wore civilian clothes.
- 1959 - Peter J. Pitchess began as Los Angeles County's 28th Sheriff, serving the better part of six terms (Dec. 1959 to Jan. 1982).
- 1972 - An Automated Index System is initiated, providing instant access to criminal records and fingerprints from other justice agencies, and to summary probation sentences from county courts.
- 2022 - Sheriff Robert Luna becomes the 34th Sheriff of Los Angeles County. ⁶

⁵ Cecilia Rasmussen. "L.A.'s 1st Latino Sheriff Was a 19th-Century Hero." *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-nov-15-me-43092-story.html>, Accessed February 20,2026.

⁶ "Sheriff Robert G. Luna." Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department -- Home / Executive Staff. <https://lasd.org/staffbios/>, Accessed February 20,2026.

The Big Picture



Photo 2 Photo of LASD Rescue Helicopter

- The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is the largest Sheriff Department in the United States.⁷
- The LA County Sheriff is one of the most important elected offices in Los Angeles County. The District Attorney and Assessor are the only other officials elected by the entire county.
- The position of an elected county sheriff is enshrined in the California constitution, and it is a powerful one. Unlike appointed city police chiefs who answer to mayors, city councils and city managers, sheriffs are beholden only to the voters.

⁷ "Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department." LinkedIn. <https://www.linkedin.com/company/los-angeles-county-sheriff's-department.>, Accessed February 19,2026.

LASD Scope of Services

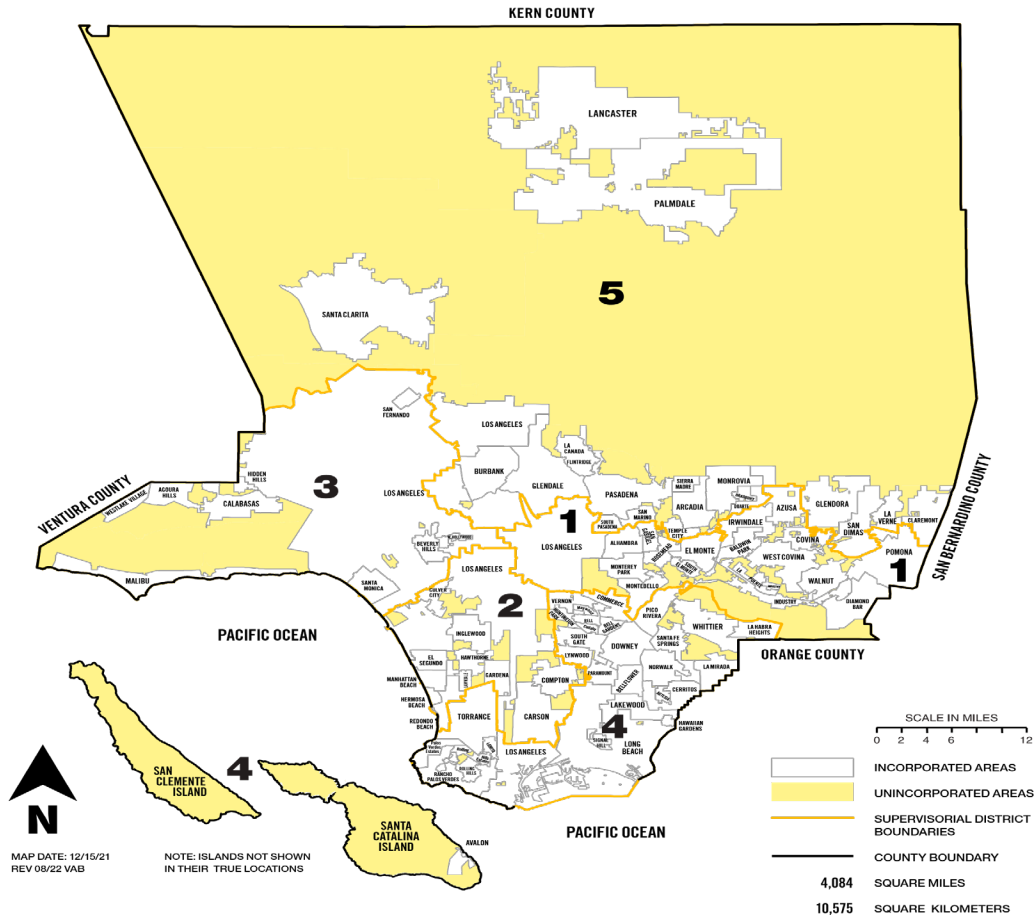


Figure 1 Map of Los Angeles County Cities

- Provides law enforcement services for 42 contract cities and 140 unincorporated communities covering 4,084 square miles.⁸
- \$4.2 billion annual budget.⁹
- Manages an average of 13,000 inmates daily at County jails.¹⁰
- Provides security services for 38 Superior Courts, 10 community colleges, and County parks as well as County public health hospitals.

⁸ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau. "Community Policing Plan FY 2025". Page 4. <https://lasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Community-Policing-Plan-FY2025.pdf>, Accessed February 26, 2026.

⁹ "Current Budget Overview, FY 2025-2026." Sheriff's Department. Slide 2. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSinter/bos/supdocs/213058.pdf>, Accessed February 23, 2026.

¹⁰ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau. "Community Policing Plan FY 2025". Page 4. <https://lasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Community-Policing-Plan-FY2025.pdf>, Accessed February 26, 2026.

- Nearly 18,000 sworn and professional staff ¹¹, and roughly 4,200 civilian volunteers, 800 reserve deputies and 400 explorers comprise the Department.
- 23 patrol stations in four patrol divisions serve the diverse populations of LA County.

Services Provided¹²

- Law Enforcement & Patrol: Provides police services, patrol, and emergency response (911) for unincorporated LA County areas and cities that contract for services.
- Investigative Services: Includes detectives specializing in homicide, property crimes, family crimes (domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse), robbery/assault and auto theft.
- Court & Civil Services: Ensures security at Superior Courts, handles civil processes, and executes court-ordered seizures of property.
- Custody & Jail Services: Manages the county jail system, including medical services, dental care, and pharmacy services for inmates.
- Specialized Units: Offers transit policing for Metro bus/rail lines, parking enforcement, and an Explorer Program for young adults.
- Community Support: Provides the V.I.N.E. system for victim notification, crime reporting, and family assistance programs.

¹¹ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Transit Services Bureau. "Community Policing Plan FY 2025". Page 4. <https://lasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Community-Policing-Plan-FY2025.pdf>, Accessed February 26, 2026.

¹² "Your LASD". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. <https://lasd.org/>, Accessed February 26, 2026.

Cities Contracting LASD for Police Services

42 cities contract with LASD for municipal law enforcement services ¹³:

Agoura Hills	Hidden Hills	Palmdale
Artesia	City of Industry	Paramount
Avalon	La Canada Flintridge	Pico Rivera
Bellflower	La Habra Heights	Rancho Palos Verdes
Bradbury	Lakewood	Rolling Hills
Calabasas	La Mirada	Rolling Hills Estates
Carson	Lancaster	Rosemead
Cerritos	La Puente	San Dimas
Commerce	Lawndale	Santa Clarita
Compton	Lomita	South El Monte
Cudahy	Lynwood	Temple City
Diamond Bar	Malibu	Walnut
Duarte	Maywood	West Hollywood
Hawaiian Gardens	Norwalk	Westlake Village

Table 1 Cities receiving LASD Police Services

¹³ “Los Angeles County Sheriff Stations (And Cities Contracting with the LASD For Police Services)”. Los Angeles Almanac. <https://www.laalmanac.com/crime/cr67a.php>, Accessed February 24, 2026.

Executive Leadership of LASD

Robert G. Luna was elected as the 34th Los Angeles County Sheriff on November 8, 2022. Sheriff Luna commands the largest Sheriff's Department in the United States, with nearly 17,000 budgeted sworn and professional staff. ¹

In 1994, Undersheriff April Tardy graduated from the Academy and began her LASD career at the Sybil Brand Institute for Women. She promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 2011 and Commander in January 2019. Almost exactly two years later, Tardy promoted again to the rank of Chief of Central Patrol Division. ²

¹ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department – Home / Executive Staff. <https://lasd.org/staffbios/> , Accessed February 24, 2026.

² Ibid.

LASD Organization Chart

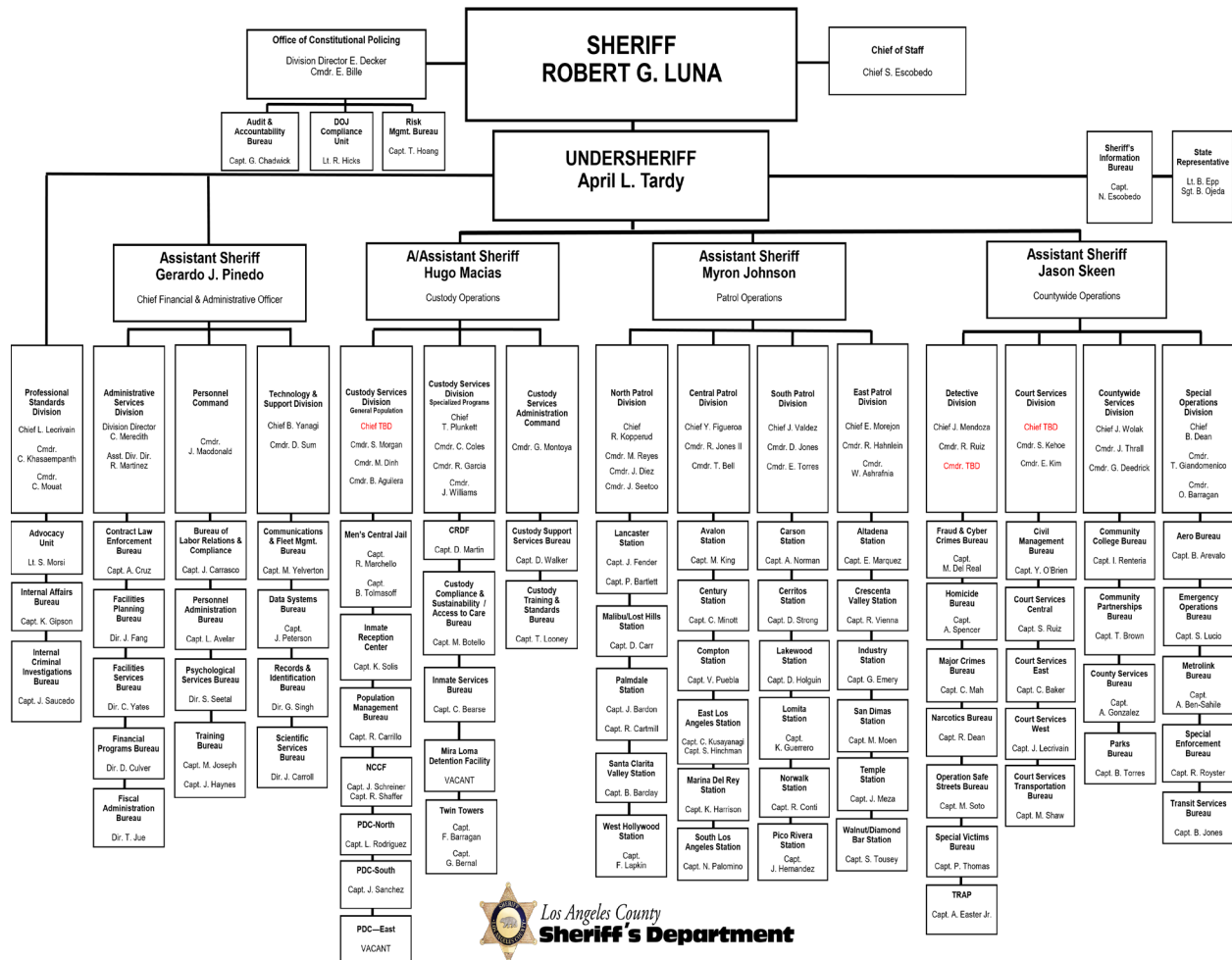


Table 2 2025-Organizational Chart of the LA County Sheriff Department

For an expandable view, see <https://lasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/LASD Org Chart Public 012326.pdf>

Pressure Points of the Los Angeles County Sheriff



Figure 2 Challenges faced by Los Angeles County Sheriff Robert Luna

Each pressure point will be further described in the following pages.

Deputy Safety and Wellness



Photo 3 June 2025-LASD Deputies in Riot Gear during No Kings Protest

As the leader of LASD, the Sheriff is concerned about the safety of the staff in the various departments:

- Patrol Deputies
- Custody (Jails)
- LA County Courts (Bailiffs)
- Public Health Hospitals
- Community Colleges
- Transit Bureau (Trains, Buses)

Employees Injured On-Duty

YEAR	2020			2021			2022			2023			2024			2025			As of 02/13/26
Rank / Division	PAT	CRT	CUS	PAT	CRT	CUS	PAT	CRT	CUS	PAT	CRT	CUS	PAT	CRT	CUS	PAT	CRT	CUS	TOTAL
Asst. Sheriff	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Chief	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	4	1	0	14
Commander	0	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	2	3	1	2	3	0	1	5	2	2	26
Captain	4	1	4	1	1	1	8	3	3	6	4	4	5	2	5	7	4	5	68
Lieutenant	14	5	17	22	5	8	25	6	24	31	6	21	22	7	29	18	7	29	296
Sergeant	57	14	42	40	8	34	37	9	42	61	22	44	67	11	45	52	9	41	635
Deputy Sheriff	176	110	109	119	112	79	205	149	152	204	138	169	337	159	207	258	174	247	3104
TOTAL SWORN	251	131	174	182	126	125	276	168	223	306	171	241	436	180	288	344	197	324	4143
Custody Assistant	14	2	76	10	2	43	22	5	82	20	5	89	19	5	98	16	7	94	609
TOTAL	265	133	250	192	128	168	298	173	305	326	176	330	455	185	386	360	204	418	4752

Table 3 LASD Employees injured on duty 2020-25³

PAT=Patrol Deputies

CRT=Court Bailiffs

CUS=Custody Officers

³ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information Regarding Employees Injured on Duty". Attachment. February 24,2026.

Deputy Wellness

Members of law enforcement are often reluctant to seek help.

Several barriers prevent law enforcement officers from seeking help for mental health concerns. They commonly don't pursue treatment primarily for four reasons:

- They did not know they were experiencing a mental health issue.
- They were concerned about confidentiality.
- They feared being misunderstood by the counselor.
- They're worried they would be found unfit for duty because of the stigma around mental health.⁴

The Sheriff is requesting \$5.1 million for the creation of a new Wellness Center.⁵ The new initiatives include:⁶

- Annual wellness visits for personnel exposed to high trauma.
- Increasing suicide prevention programming.
- Updating gyms and fitness equipment at Sheriff Stations.
- Psychologist support (at the site of an incident).
- The Department's wellness app is installed on roughly 7,376 phones which directly links personnel to services, information and the Psychological Services Bureau.
- LASD mobile vans with relaxing chairs, TV's etc. (at the site of major incidents).

⁴ Margaret Taylor. "Member Insights: A mental wellness program for law enforcement." Counseling Today, August 2023. <https://www.counseling.org/publications/counseling-today-magazine/article-archive/article/legacy-a-mental-wellness-program-for-law-enforcement/>, Accessed February 20,2026.

⁵ "Budget Request, FY 2026-2027." Sheriff's Department. Slide 5.

<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/213058.pdf>, Accessed February 23,2026.

⁶ SIB Staff, "Sheriff's Department-wide Progress in 2025". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. December 31, 2025. <https://lasd.org/sheriffs-department-wide-progress-in-2025/>, Accessed February 20,2026.

Fallen Deputies



Photo 4 Memorial to Deputy Piquette at S.T.A.R.S. Academy

- **July 2006:** Deputy Sheriff David Piquette was killed in an automobile crash on SR-91 while enroute to the agency's academy.⁷

⁷ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. LASD Museum – July 2019 Memorials. <https://lasd.org/pdf-lasd-museum/memorials/July.pdf>, Accessed February 24,2026.

- **September 2023:** Deputy Clinkunbroomer was ambushed while conducting routine patrol duties. He was in full uniform and driving a marked patrol vehicle and had just left the Palmdale Sheriff's Station.⁸
- **July 2025:** Three Los Angeles County Sheriff's (LASD) deputies from the Arson Explosives Detail were tragically killed at the Biscailuz training facility in East Los Angeles when grenades exploded unexpectedly while they were being examined. This marked a significant loss for the Department.⁹

Violent Crime in LASD Coverage Area

- Decrease in violent crimes from 2023 and 2024:
 - There was a significant decrease in Part I crimes, which include violent and property crimes, with a 12.5% drop from 2024 and a 14% reduction from 2023.
 - Property crimes, particularly burglaries, declined sharply, with a notable 20% reduction in auto theft across the County.
 - Aggravated assaults with firearms and unlawful shootings also decreased. This achievement was attributed to targeted hotspot enforcement, data-driven deployment strategies, and strong collaboration with local, state, and federal partners.¹⁰

⁸ Keri Blakinger, *et. al.* "Mystery surrounds ambush killing of L.A. County sheriff's deputy: 'Somebody knows something'." Sept. 16, 2023. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-09-16/on-duty-los-angeles-sheriffs-deputy-shot-near-palmdale-station>, Accessed April 16, 2026.

⁹ SIB Staff, "Memorial Messages for SEB Deputies". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. August 7, 2025. <https://lasd.org/memorial-messages-for-seb-deputies/>, Accessed February 20, 2026.

¹⁰ SIB Staff, "Sheriff's Department-wide Progress in 2025". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. December 31, 2025. <https://lasd.org/sheriffs-department-wide-progress-in-2025/>, Accessed February 20, 2026.

Media Coverage and Public Image



Photo 5 2023-Sheriff Luna Press Conference

The digital age and emergence of social media platforms reduce the impact of traditional law enforcement press conferences.

- A negatively impacted “brand”, creating a nationwide challenge in recruitment.
- Viral social media videos of excessive force by police officers against motorists and citizens.
- Backlash to aggressive ICE actions and the killings of Renee Good on January 7, 2026, and Alex Pretti on January 24, 2026, in Minneapolis.
- Stronger disciplinary actions (holding officers accountable) by the district attorney and civilian oversight agencies.
- More aggressive activists (attending police commission meetings, press conferences, podcasts).
- Large settlements in use of force lawsuits paid out by taxpayers.

LASD Social Media Outreach

The Department posts frequently on Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and the Nextdoor app. They also have a YouTube Channel. There is a community-wide account, and each individual Sheriff Station is allowed to post items of interest. Due to the geographic expanse of the Department's reach and the many communities they serve, this layered approach provides for the greatest reach for the diverse populations served.¹¹

Followers/Subscribers (as of 2/24/26):

LASD Headquarters Account (not counting Sheriff Stations)

- Facebook: 320,000
- Twitter (X): 212,000
- Instagram: 169,000
- YouTube: 38,300

In contrast:

LAPD Headquarters Account (not counting local Stations)

- Facebook: 262,000
- Twitter (X): 265,000
- Instagram: 292,000
- YouTube: 98,000

Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". February 11, 2026.

Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors



Photo 6 2025 Photo-Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors

- Each of the five County Supervisors represents roughly two million residents.
- Although the County Sheriff is an elected position, the Sheriff needs the support of the Board of Supervisors to approve his budget requests.
- Additionally, the Sheriff needs to maintain a good working relationship to receive political support for future elections.
- Each Supervisor has unique and specific law enforcement requests for the residents of their district.
- The Board of Supervisors will expand from five to nine members by 2030, with staggered elections to begin in 2032.¹²

¹² Measure G - Governance Reform, County of Los Angeles. <https://measureg.lacounty.gov/> Accessed February 27,2026.

Los Angeles County Jails



Photo 7 Twin Towers Correctional Facility in downtown Los Angeles

- Daily average of 17,000 incarcerated individuals across all County detention centers, of whom 2,000 are women.¹³
- 67% of the staff are LASD Deputies and 33% are Custody Assistants.¹⁴
- 53% of the inmate population are pre-trial.¹⁵
- Increased incarceration due to the Passing of Proposition 36 (increased filing of theft and shoplifting cases by the Los Angeles County District Attorney).¹⁶

¹³ "Jails Project". ACLU Southern California. <https://www.aclusocal.org/issues/jails-project>, Accessed February 25,2026.

¹⁴ Interview with former member of Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission on January 15,2026.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Legislative Analyst's Office. "Overview of Proposition 36 Fiscal Impacts and Selected Substance Use Disorder Treatment Programs". February 25, 2025. <https://lao.ca.gov/handouts/crimjust/2025/Fiscal-Impacts-of-Proposition-36-022525.pdf>. Page 4, Accessed February 25,2026.

- Recent implementation of body worn cameras by the custody officers at Men’s Central Jail, Twin Towers Correctional Facility, Inmate Reception Center and the Century Regional Detention Facility.¹⁷

Jail Facilities Managed by LASD¹⁸

- Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF) (women's jail)
- Men's Central Jail (MCJ)
- Twin Towers Correctional Facility (TTCF)
- Inmate Reception Center (IRC) (processing facility)
- North County Correctional Facility (NCCF)
- Pitchess Detention Center (PDC) - North Facility
- Pitchess Detention Center (PDC) – South Facility

Inmate Buses¹⁹:

- L.A. County sheriff's deputies transport, on average, 2,000 people every day to 37 courthouses and seven custody facilities.
- On any given day, less than half of the Department’s 82 buses are functional. In 2024, that figure dipped below a dozen.²⁰
- For some inmates, their day begins at 2 am with a bus ride from Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic to the Inmate Reception Center in downtown Los Angeles, where they wait with others from Men's Central Jail or Twin Towers before being bused to various courts across the county.

¹⁷ SIB Staff, “Sheriff’s Department-wide Progress in 2025”. Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. December 31, 2025. <https://lasd.org/sheriffs-department-wide-progress-in-2025/>, Accessed February 20,2026.

¹⁸ “Custody Operations”. Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department – Home / Custody Main. <https://lasd.org/custody/>, Accessed February 27,2026.

¹⁹ Phillip Palmer. “LA County struggles to get inmates to court as bus shortage fuels missed appearances”. KABC Television - ABC7. March 6, 2026. <https://abc7.com/post/la-county-struggles-to-get-inmates-to-court-as-bus-shortage-fuels-missed-appearances/18685284/>, Accessed March 11,2026.

²⁰ Keri Blakinger and James Queally. “LA County Sheriff’s Dept. can’t get inmates to court on time, angering judges, delaying justice”. Los Angeles Times. March 28, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-28/why-are-l-a-jails-running-out-of-buses-that-transport-inmates-to-court-away-from-fires>, Accessed March 11,2026.

- In September 2023 the Board of Supervisors approved the purchase of 20 new buses. But when the new buses are delivered, older buses are often removed from service which makes the process of rebuilding the fleet difficult. If the buses ordered stay on schedule, it would still take until 2029 before the fleet will have 73 new buses. It is a logistical challenge to overcome every day that court is in session and can result in cancellations and inconveniences to those affected.

Demographics of Custody Assistants²¹

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Total</u>
White	52	94	146
Black	102	91	193
Latino	258	320	578
Asian	13	24	37
Filipino	8	18	26
Two or More-Races	9	7	16
Native American		1	1
Grand Total	442	557	999

Table 4 Demographics of Custody Assistants in LA County Jails (Active full-time as of January 27,2026).

²¹ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Custody Assistants Attachment. January 29,2026.

Inmates with Diagnosed Mental Illness ²²

LASD has opened a new Mental Health Assessment Area at the IRC, part of an effort to strengthen care and improve efficiency for incoming jail detainees with mental health issues. The project was launched amid overcrowding at the facility, and the new area increases capacity from five to nine assessment windows to allow clinicians to conduct evaluations more efficiently.²³

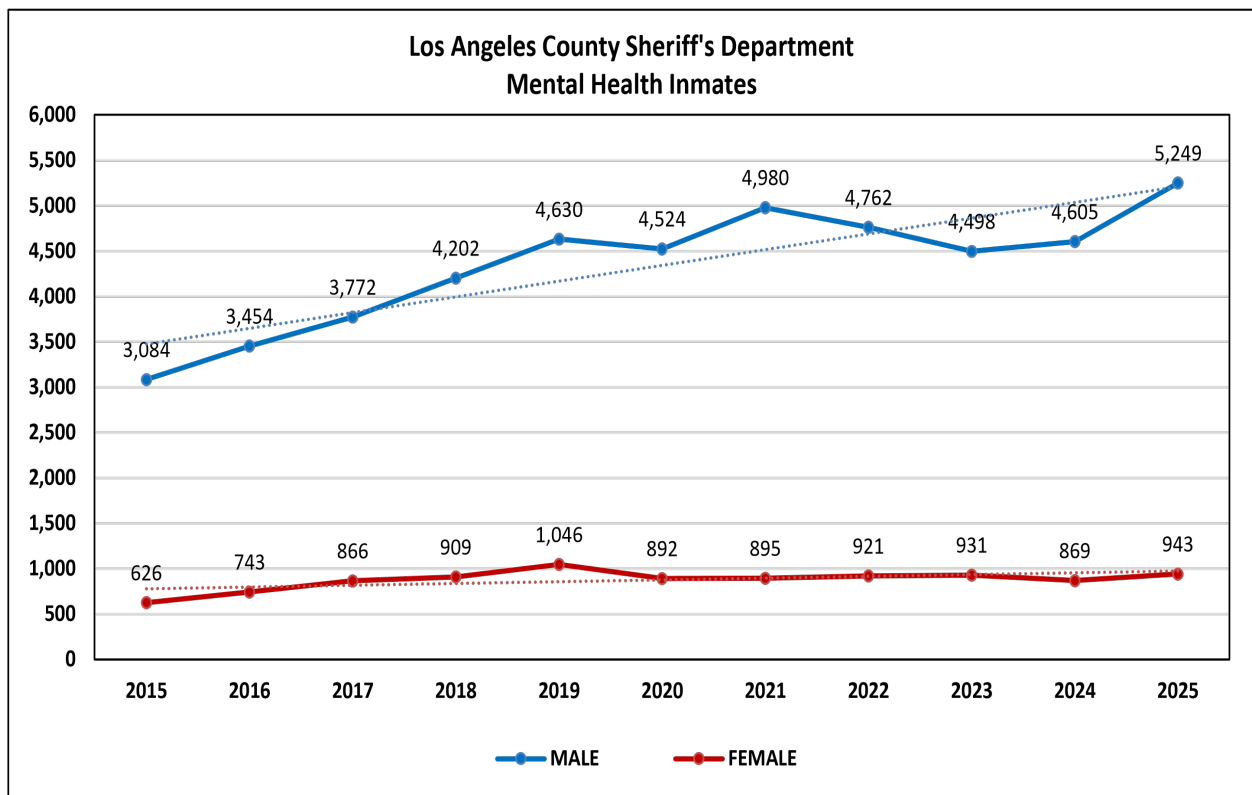


Table 5 Male and Female Inmates with Diagnosed Mental Illness in LA County Jails

²²Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". Attachment, Accessed March 4, 2026.

²³"LA County Jail Adds Mental Health Assessment Area". *Los Angeles Today*. Feb. 10, 2026. <https://nationaltoday.com/us/ca/los-angeles/news/2026/02/10/la-county-jail-adds-mental-health-assessment-area/>, Accessed March 5, 2026.

Men's Central Jail

- MCJ opened in 1963. It's located in downtown Los Angeles, has an inmate bed capacity of 5,640 inmates and houses inmates of all security levels, from general population to high security. MCJ also has medical housing areas, which are used for inmates requiring daily medical care, and inmates who require assistance from wheelchairs or crutches. It is the largest jail in the nation (actually, in the world).²⁴
- Substantial, on-going infrastructure challenges (plumbing, elevators, and escalators not working).²⁵
- In 2025, LASD reached a Settlement agreement with U.S. DOJ on mental health care and use of force against inmates.²⁶
- In 2025, the California Attorney General sued the LASD on the "Humanitarian Crisis" at County jails, alleging: "The Attorney General's investigation found that Los Angeles County jails are uninhabitable and under-resourced. People incarcerated in the Los Angeles County jails, many of whom are awaiting trial, are forced to live in filthy cells with broken and overflowing toilets, infestations of rats and roaches, and no clean water for drinking or bathing. They are provided spoiled, moldy, and nutritionally inadequate meals; little to no access to hygiene supplies, such as soap, toilet paper, and menstrual products; little to no clean clothing and bedding; and almost no time outside their cells."²⁷

²⁴ "Custody Services Division – General Population". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

<http://shq.lasdnews.net/pages/pagedetail.aspx?id=1716>, Accessed February 25, 2026.

²⁵ Tour of Men's Central Jail by 2025-2026 Civil Grand Jury on August 26, 2025.

²⁶ "Justice Department Reaches Agreement with Los Angeles County to Implement Sweeping Reforms on Mental Health Care and Use of Force Throughout the County Jail System". Press Release Number 15-971, August 5, 2015. Archives, U.S. Department of Justice. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-los-angeles-county-implement-sweeping-reforms-mental>, Accessed February 25, 2026.

²⁷ "Attorney General Bonta Sues Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Over Inhumane Conditions at County Jails". Press Release, September 8, 2025. State of California Department of Justice. <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-sues-los-angeles-county-sheriff%E2%80%99s-department-over>, Accessed February 25, 2026.

Will Men’s Central Jail Close or Be Replaced?

- 2018: The LA County Board of Supervisors approved a \$2.2 billion plan to tear down MCJ and replace it with a “Consolidated Correctional Treatment Facility” focused on rehabilitation.²⁸
- 2019: The LA County Board of Supervisors changed course in February and approved a revised plan to create instead a new Mental Health Treatment Center run under the direction, not of the Sheriff’s Department, but the County Department of Health Services.
- In August of the same year the Supervisors, under pressure from justice reform advocates, abandoned the plan entirely in favor of a “Care First Jails Last” policy with the idea of closing the 57-year-old facility without building a replacement, seeking instead diversion alternatives.²⁹
- The Supervisors who had supported the Mental Health Treatment Center expressed concern over “having to spend even more than the agreed-upon \$2.2 billion if they had to start over with McCarthy [Building Companies] or another building company.”³⁰
- In 2026, one Supervisor has become concerned enough over plans for closure of Men’s Central Jail falling short that she has introduced a motion to reinstate the Jail Closure Implementation Team in the hope “to better align with the Board’s priority of safely closing Men’s Central Jail” and to report monthly “on timelines with specific dates on when the next steps are expected to be completed,....”³¹

²⁸ Kari Blakinger and Rebecca Ellis. “‘Pendulum has swung’: Supervisors signal shift on Men’s Central Jail closure plan”. *Los Angeles Times*. August 5, 2024. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-08-05/pendulum-has-swung-supervisors-signal-shift-on-mens-central-jail-closure-plan>, Accessed March 13, 2026.

²⁹ Ibid, and Taylor Walker. “Updated – Supes Vote to Cancel Controversial \$1.7 Billion Men’s Central Jail Replacement Contract”. *WitnessLA*, August 13, 2019. <https://witnessla.com/supes-may-vote-to-cancel-controversial-1-7-billion-mens-central-jail-replacement-contract-next-tuesday/>, Accessed February 27, 2026.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ “Revised Motion by Supervisor Janice Hahn”. Agenda for the Regular Meeting of the Board of Supervisors, County of Los Angeles, California. AGN. NO. 25. March 3, 2026.

Political Impasse

The Committee, in investigating the complexities of the Sheriff's Department and the environment in which it operates, found that problems identified appear never to reach final solutions. The conflicting requirements of public safety versus public responsibility for provision of attentive care to those in custody presents an almost intractable problem. The facts of the situation seem to set the stage for conflict:

- Our oldest detention facilities were built at a time when the mentally ill were treated, often involuntarily, through a system of State mental hospitals.
- A "Care First, Jails Last" policy has been adopted by the Board of Supervisors.
- No alternative site for the MCJ has been identified.
- In the interim, MCJ is under intense pressure from oversight officials due to the Jail's deteriorated physical condition.
- The Supervisor for the district covering the heart of downtown Los Angeles (about to be termed out) is against the replacement of MCJ in her district.
- The MCJ is, however, close to courtrooms of the Superior Court to which those in custody are brought for their trials. It's also close to both the Public Defender's Office, and the LA General Medical Center where most inmates receive medical treatment.
- Relocating MCJ away from downtown Los Angeles would increase the distances to needed destinations and thereby increase both transportation costs and staff positions.

- Meanwhile, conditions at the jail impact the morale of LASD Deputies and Custody Assistants, potentially leading to allegations of mistreatment of inmates (*e.g.*, use of force), and resulting lawsuits and State/Federal actions.
- Stress factors impacting LASD staff have pushed “Wellness” considerations towards the top of the Department’s priorities list.
- Sheriff Luna understands the current political environment and is calling the anticipated new jail a “Correctional Care Facility.”
- Negative headlines frequently lead to either policy changes or political instability, or both. Any progress towards solutions may be lost, thereby continuing the problem while restarting the clock.

These facts have led, as will be seen, to Committee findings, and in some cases to recommendations. Nevertheless, “easy answers” are elusive.

Alleged “Subgroups”

The topic of alleged “subgroups” has been debated for decades in Los Angeles County – reappearing periodically, only to again diminish as a solution remains elusive.

- In 2019, LA County Supervisor Hilda Solis offered a motion to address secret deputy subgroups, which she referenced existing as far back as 1971.³²

³² “Motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis.” Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Statement of Proceedings, AGN. NO. 41-A. March 12, 2019. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/133802.pdf>, Accessed 25 Feb 2026.

- In 2021, a RAND Corporation study of the question suggested that the pervasiveness of the problem may be based within the size and complex nature of the Department itself.³³
- “The report suggests that the wide geographic and organizational structure of the Department plays a role in subgroups forming. Individual stations have their own histories and traditions, and more than half of those surveyed agreed that deputies typically feel more loyal to the unit or station where they trained than to the Department overall.”³⁴
- The report explains the formation of such groups:

“...loyalties and reputational concerns can begin to form during deputies’ first assignments. Deputies begin their careers in the jails, where social circles develop. They can request where they want to do patrol training, so friends can request the same station. This contributes to peer selection processes and station loyalties, which are likely precursors for subgroup formation.”³⁵
- A Loyola Law School report³⁶ written near the same time reaches similar conclusions and contains over 200 footnotes which “allow the reader to independently evaluate our study of deputy gangs in the LASD.”³⁷
- The continued turmoil over deputy subgroups is not without financial implications for the County. “The County has faced significant liability for

³³ Samuel Peterson, *et. al.*, “Understanding Subgroups Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department: Community and Department Perceptions with Recommendations for Change”. RAND Corporation Research Report RRA616-1 (2021). Accessed February 25, 2026.

³⁴ “Stronger Leadership Action in L.A. Sheriff’s Department Needed to Curb Influence of Problematic Subgroups, Address Community Concerns”. RAND Press Room News Release, September 10, 2021. <https://www.rand.org/news/press/2021/09/10/index1.html>, Accessed November 24, 2025.

³⁵ Samuel Peterson, *et. al.*, “Understanding Subgroups Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department: Community and Department Perceptions with Recommendations for Change”. RAND Corporation Research Report RRA616-1 (2021), Pg. xvi.

³⁶ “CJLP Releases Report on Impact of L.A. Deputy Sheriff Gangs”. Loyola Law School, Loyola Marymount University. <https://www.lls.edu/academics/centers/centerforjuvenilelawpolicy/cjlpdeputygangreport/>. Accessed 25 Feb 2026.

³⁷ Sean Kennedy, comment dated 20 May 2023 in: Celeste Fremon, “LA County Inspector General Uses CA’s New Deputy Gang Laws to Start Identifying LASD’s Gangsters with Badges...”. WitnessLA, May 16, 2023. <https://witnessla.com/la-county-inspector-general-uses-cas-new-deputy-gang-laws-to-start-iding-lasds-gangsters-with-badges/>, Accessed 18 Nov. 2025.

these ongoing issues, including a 2014 lawsuit for which the County paid \$1.5 million to a female Los Angeles Sheriff's deputy who alleged that she had suffered verbal abuse and hazing by her colleagues..."³⁸

- In 2023 the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission issued a report entitled: "Report and Recommendations of the Special Counsel to the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission Regarding Deputy Gangs and Deputy Cliques in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department."³⁹
- The findings of this report are still being debated over two years later, largely due to the Meet and Confer⁴⁰ process required by labor law and the reluctance of the Sheriff's Department to risk violating restrictions set by California Penal Code §832.7 (relating to personnel confidentiality).⁴¹
- The Sheriff has most recently provided a comprehensive "Update" on the 2023 Recommendations of the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) as of February 3, 2025⁴², and has additionally responded (May 15, 2025) to the COC's memorandum to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) of April 10, 2025 (relating to Recommendation No. 19 of the COC Ad Hoc Committee on Deputy Gangs).⁴³
- In July 2025, the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission requested public input via survey questionnaire as to community experiences with LASD

³⁸ "Motion by Supervisor Hilda L. Solis." Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors Statement of Proceedings, AGN. NO. 41-A. March 12, 2019. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/133802.pdf>, Accessed 25 Feb 2026.

³⁹ "Deputy Gangs". Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, County of Los Angeles. <https://coc.lacounty.gov/deputy-gangs/>. Report:

https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/commissionpublications/report/1138014_DeputyGangsSpecialCounselReporttoCOC3.2.2023.PDF.PDF, Accessed 25 Feb. 2026.

⁴⁰ "Meyers-Milias-Brown Act". California Association of Professional Employees. <https://capeunion.org/contracts/meyers-milias-brown-act>, Accessed February 27, 2026

⁴¹ "California Code, PEN 832.7". California Legislative Information.

https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?sectionNum=832.7.&lawCode=PEN. Accessed February 25, 2026.

⁴² Robert G. Luna, Sheriff and April L. Tardy, Undersheriff. "Update on the 2023 Recommendations of the Civilian Oversight Commission on Deputy Gangs/Cliques". February 4, 2025, electronic submittal of February 3, 2025 status report.

⁴³ Robert G. Luna, Sheriff. "Response to Office of Inspector General Update on Civilian Oversight Commission Deputy Gang Recommendation No. 19." May 15, 2025.

deputy gangs.⁴⁴ Results of the survey response analysis have yet to be released.

- The subgroup issue came up as recently as February 4, 2025. LASD released the following statement to the media:
 - “Law enforcement gang behavior has no place in the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. It is unacceptable, particularly when it undermines the hard work of most of our personnel. The Department is actively addressing the long-standing issue of law enforcement gangs and is holding personnel accountable for misconduct related to gang like actions that contradict our core values, violate the law and our department policies.”⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Will Conybeare, “Authorities ask Los Angeles County residents to speak out on deputy gangs”. KTLA, June 22, 2025. https://www.yahoo.com/news/authorities-ask-los-angeles-county-161348587.html?fr=yhssrp_catchall, Accessed February 2, 2026.

⁴⁵ Gina Silva. “LASD captain says tattoo on his ankle cost him a promotion”. Fox11 Los Angeles. <https://www.foxla.com/news/lasd-captain-tattoo-ankle-cost-him-promotion>. February 6, 2026, Accessed March 6, 2026.

List of Alleged Subgroups and Cliques

Banditos	Cavemen
Compton Executioners	Grim Reapers
Cowboys	Industry Indians
Jump Out Boys	Little Devils
Little Red Devils	Lomita Lizards
Lynwood Vikings	Pirates
Posse	Rattlesnakes
Regulators	Spartans
Tasmanian Devils	The Leafs
3,000 Boys	2,000 Boys
Temple Station V-Boys	Wayside Whites

Table 6 Subgroups in the LASD⁴⁶

⁴⁶ "LASD Records: Databases of Known Associates of Deputy Gangs in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and Deputy Shootings 1984-Current." <https://lasd.knock-la.com/#gangs>, Accessed November 17,2025.

LASD Labor Unions



Photo 8 ALADS main office in Monterey Park, CA

ALADS

The Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs (ALADS) was formed in February 1970 by ten Deputies who joined together to collectively resolve a labor dispute and to ensure that the rights of future Deputy Sheriffs would be protected.⁴⁷

- ALADS represents more than 8,000 sworn Deputy Sheriffs and District Attorney Investigators.
- Peace officers can't strike, thus "Meet and Confer" is ALADS' main legal option to negotiate with LASD on new policy recommendations.
- The ALADS Political Endorsement Committee consists of current and retired deputy sheriffs and district attorney investigators.

⁴⁷ "ALADS is the Certified Bargaining Unit for deputy sheriffs and district attorney investigators working in Los Angeles County". ALADS – Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs. <https://www.alads.org/Home/AboutUs>, Accessed February 27,2026.

- The Committee holds meetings on an “as needed” basis and usually makes endorsement recommendations at the local and statewide levels.⁴⁸

PPOA

- Established in 1951, the Professional Peace Officers Association (PPOA) supports the supervisors of the LASD and civilian staff (e.g., custody assistants, dispatchers).⁴⁹
- Offices in San Dimas, CA.
- Members also include the Department of Medical Examiner and the District Attorney’s Office.
- The union represents over 8,400 members.

As to the above major labor representatives, the Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of Inspector General have raised consistent concerns that the “Meet and Confer” process in collective bargaining has been extended beyond labor related issues to include compliance with California State laws on “use of force” complaints and investigations of Subgroups.

Meet and Confer (Meyers-Milias-Brown Act)

The Meyers-Milias-Brown Act (MMBA) governs the labor-management relations in California local government, including cities, counties, and most special districts.

The MMBA provides that the governing body of a public agency shall meet and confer in good faith on wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment with representatives of recognized employee organizations (i.e. unions or bargaining units). The MMBA defines meeting and conferring in good faith as having the mutual obligation to personally meet and confer

⁴⁸ “ALADS Political Endorsement Committee”. ALADS – Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs. <https://www.alads.org/Home/Endorsements>, Accessed February 27,2026.

⁴⁹ <https://ppoa.org>

promptly upon request by either party and continue for a reasonable period to freely exchange information, opinions, and proposals and to endeavor to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation.

The scope of representation includes all matters related to employment conditions and employer-employee relations, including, but not limited to, wages, hours and other terms and conditions of employment, except, however, that the scope of representation shall not include consideration of the merits, necessity, or organization of any service or activity provided by law or executive order.⁵⁰

Meet and Confer: Open Cases as of March 4, 2026⁵¹

Case Tracker #	Case Name	Start Date
2023 0038	MPP Grooming and Dress Standards Policy Revision	08/09/2023
2023 0039	MPP Employee Groups Which Violate Rights of Other Employees or Members of the Public	08/09/2023
2023 0040	MPP Station and Unit Logos new policy	08/09/2023
2024 0006	Use of Motorola Radio Location Capabilities	01/22/2024
2024 0008	AB2188 Marijuana OR-Duty Use	01/11/2024
2024 0014	Breacher Pay	03/07/2024
2024 0010	LET Rotation to HOJ	02/15/2024
2024 0023	Manpower Shortage Helicopter Mechanic Ser	04/09/2024
2024 0033	LET – Job Analysis	05/21/2024
2024 0042	Aero Bureau Manual	07/08/2024
2024 0044	MPP Safety of Firearms & OR Duty Incidents	08/18/2024
2024 0052	MPP Body Worn Cameras	09/23/2024

⁵⁰ “Meyers-Milias-Brown Act”. California Association of Professional Employees. <https://capeunion.org/contracts/meyers-milias-brown-act>, Accessed February 27,2026.

⁵¹ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Attachment. March 11,2026

2024 0053	Street Takeovers	09/22/2024
2024 0054	ACLU Lawsuit Exemption Disclosure	09/30/2024
2024 0057	SIB & MCB Reorganization	11/19/2024
2024 0060	MCJ Cell Door Failures	11/25/2024

2024 0062	IAB Administrative Handbook Revision	12/11/2024
2024 0063	WCSCR Handbook Revision	12/11/2024
2024 0065	IAB MPP Revisions Associated w/WCSCR	12/26/2024
2025 0001	Hazard Concerns from Fire Emergency	01/16/2025
2025 0007	County Contracts Termination	03/22/2025
2025 0013	Polygraph Unit Reorganization	05/20/2025
2025 0021	Eaton & Palisade Fire Evidence Preservation	07/07/2025
2025 0028	PSN 510 Canine Handler – Transfer of Covet	08/26/2025
2025 0029	PRB – OCP Reorganization	08/29/2025
2025 0030	Arson Field Investigator Dep. (PSN 331)	09/08/2025
2025 0036	2026 Lieutenant Exam	10/1/2025
2025 0040	NCCF Scheduling	10/20/2025
2025 0042	MLH 3 X 12 Schedule	11/19/2025
2025 0043	CCB Critical Arc GPS Program	12/12/2025
2025 0044	PFP Training	12/15/2025
2026 0001	CDM PREA Investigations, Grievances	01/06/2026
2026 0002	FIFA Credentialing	01/15/2026
2026 0003	CRDF Overtime Hiring Practices	01/16/2026
2026 0004	Military Equipment Use and Reporting	01/20/2026
2026 0005	Double Patrol Failures	01/21/2026
2026 006	CCB Daily Activity Log Application	01/22/2026
2026 0007	Centralized Dispatching Operations	02/10/2026
2026 0009	SDM Overtime Hiring	02/17/2026
2026 0010	MPP ALPR Privacy Policy	02/19/2026
TOTAL OPEN CASES: 40		

Lawsuit Payouts by LASD¹

Case Subtype	# of Lawsuits	Total Expenses FY 24-25	% Change from
Excessive Force	147	\$40,050,012	88%

¹ Office of the County Counsel, County of Los Angeles. "Law Enforcement Expenses Comparison" in: Annual Litigation Cost Report FY2024-2025, Sheriff's Department, Page 33.
<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/211986.pdf>, Accessed February 27,2026.

Other Law Enforcement	70	\$3,510, 533	13%
Jail Conditions	26	\$3,442,372	-83%
False Arrest	36	\$2,681,872	70%
Civil Rights Violation	29	\$1,992,825	-15%
Failure to Protect	48	\$1,502,318	78%
Detention	11	\$1,135,149	-81%
Search and Seizure	14	\$871,465	-67%
Wrongful Prosecution	5	\$528,726	2597%
Non-Patrol/Non-Custody	8	\$510,576	10%
Sexual Assault by Deputy	11	\$289,311	-79%
False Imprisonment	8	\$182,879	1232%
Malicious Prosecution	1	26,975	-100%
Wrongful Seizure	3	\$1,850	-80%
TOTAL	417	\$56,726,883	-21%

Table 7 LASD Lawsuit Detail provided by LA County Counsel

- In calendar year 2025, LA County spent more than \$112 million defending the Sheriff’s Department against lawsuits (more than five times the legal expenses of any other County agency).²

² Rebecca Ellis. “Defending Sheriff’s Department against lawsuits cost L.A. County more than \$100 million”. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-02-03/defending-sheriffs-department-cost-la-county-over-100-million>. February 3, 2026.

Budget Challenges



Photo 9 LASD Court Services Division provides bailiffs for more than 600 Court Rooms

Los Angeles County faces major financial pressures from wildfire recovery (Palisades and Altadena Fires in 2025) and a massive settlement for childhood sexual assault claims, leading to spending cuts across most departments.

- Los Angeles County has reached a \$4 billion tentative agreement to settle more than 6,800 sexual abuse claims dating back to 1959.³
- 2025-2026 LASD Recommended Budget was \$4,071,789,000 (small increase).⁴

³ Countywide Communications. "LA County Reaches \$4 Billion Tentative Settlement in Thousands of Sexual Abuse Cases". April 4, 2025. <https://lacounty.gov/2025/04/04/la-county-reaches-4-billion-tentative-settlement-in-thousands-of-sexual-abuse-cases/>, Accessed February 27, 2026.

⁴ "Changes from the 2025-26 Recommended Budget – Attachment I, General Fund and Hospital Enterprise (Sheriff 2025-26 Recommended Budget, Gross Appropriation) to: Chief Executive Officer. Recommended Adjustments to the 2025-26 Recommended Budget to Reflect Various Changes and Request Authorization to Execute Funding Agreements. June 23, 2025. <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/204437.pdf>

- 2025-26 LASD Approved Budget increased to \$4,213,000,000.⁵
- LASD is requesting a \$400 million increase in the 2026-27 budget.
- The Department received \$315 million in revenue from the 42 cities in the county that are provided with police services.⁶

Budget Priorities

- **Hiring & Staffing:** Aiming to fill over 1,400 sworn deputy vacancies by running more academy classes (80-100+ recruits/class).
- **Technology:** Funding two new Real-Time Crime Centers (RTCCs) and upgrading outdated cameras and cybersecurity.
- The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD) is replacing its outdated, 38-year-old **Computer Aided Dispatch System** (CAD) after suffering numerous failures. For example, the system crashed during the 2025 Pasadena Rose Parade.⁷
 - The outage extended for several days and forced 911 operators to write down notes from callers and then relay the information to responding deputies through the radio or phone.
- In January 2026, LASD announced the purchase of a new CAD system from a firm called Pulsiam.⁸
 - The contract is for a six-year term with four one-year extensions.
 - Maximum contract of \$59,112,99 over the potential ten-year term.
- The Benefits of the new CAD System (implemented February 2026)⁹:
 - Tracking officers’ locations/coordinates for deputies in the field

⁵ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department – Home / Bio Links. <https://lasd.org/links/>, Accessed February 23,2026. “Current Budget Overview, FY 2025-2026.” Sheriff’s Department. Slide 2.

<https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/213058.pdf>, Accessed February 23,2026.

⁶ “Advocacy at the State Capitol”. *Star & Shield*, Volume 52 Issue 2 (February/March 2025), page 8.

<https://ppoa.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/star-and-shield-february-2025.pdf>. Accessed 2 March 2026.

⁷ Sheriff Luna, Speaker to the Civil Grand Jury, Oct. 22, 2025.

⁸Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Page 2, Response 1. January 29,2026.

⁹ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Page 2, Response 2. January 29,2026.

- Suggest strategic deployment of officers based on location, type, and nature of the call, and availability of units
- Real time location and address authentication for members of the public who call 911
- **Jail Improvements:** Addressing Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) compliance, improving Mental Evaluation Teams (METs), and handling inmate grievances.
- **Wellness Center:** The Sheriff requests \$5 million to build a wellness center for sworn deputies and their families (to address the impact of forced overtime, time away from family etc.
- **Vendor Contracts:** LASD’s operations are broad in scope, and this results in significant need for goods and services.
- **Aging Vehicle, Bus, and Helicopter Fleets:** Additional fleet purchases are delayed because of the County’s budget constraints. LASD has some helicopters which now are 23 years old. Procurement of new aircraft is a must for pilots and others to perform their duties more safely and a more cost-effective long-term option.¹⁰ The lack of sufficient buses for transporting inmates to the courts and the public health hospital has caused courts to postpone proceedings in recent years.

¹⁰ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Pages 2-4, Response 3. March 11,2026.

Top Ten LASD Vendor Contracts-2025¹¹

Contracts Unit's Highest Annual Contract Maximum Obligations

No.	Contract No.	Service	Contractor	Maximum Annual Contract Obligation
1	78469/ 78467	Security Guard Services (Revenue Offset)	Securitas/ Allied Universal	\$ 84,048,856.00
2	79182	Fleet Services	Centerra	\$ 22,158,008.00
3	77655	Inmate Telephone System and Services	Public Communications Services	\$ 12,996,000.00
4	79672	Computer Aided Dispatch System	Pulsiam	\$ 4,000,000.00
5	79140	As-Needed Security Guard Services	Securitas	\$ 4,000,000.00
6	79744	Custodial Services	Uniserve	\$ 3,352,595.00
7	79477	Gotham Maintenance Services	Pat V. Mack	\$ 1,266,977.00
8	75485	Laundry Equipment Services	Western State Design	\$ 1,227,200.00
9	69301	Architectural/Engineering and Related Services	Multiple	\$ 1,000,000.00
10	74301	Elevator and Escalator Maintenance Services	Amtech	\$ 1,000,000.00
			TOTAL	\$ 135,049,636.00

Figure 3 Chart provided by LASD

Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". Attachment spreadsheet. January 13,2026.

Recruitment and Retention



Photo 10 LASD Recruitment ad on Inmate Transport Bus

Outreach **12**

- Social Media Platforms: Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor Neighborhood, making every effort to post daily¹³
- Outreach to family members or current staff (sworn, custody and civilian). Special outreach to military veterans
- LASD highlights over 350 unique assignments for Deputy Sheriffs.
- Hired a marketing firm (Gravity Global) to boost recruitment efforts¹⁴

¹² Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Personnel Administration Bureau. "Recruitment Goals". Presentation to Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Committee, Hall of Justice, October 16,2025.

¹³ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". Question 4 Response. February 11,2026.

¹⁴ Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Personnel Administration Bureau. "Marketing Agency: Gravity Global". Presentation to Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Committee, Hall of Justice, October 16,2025.

- Added bus wraps on Metro Buses, and a billboard campaign

Benefits Offered

- Sick Leave: "Sworn employees receive up to 80 hours of 100 percent paid sick leave and 40 hours of 50 percent paid sick leave, in their first year while employed."¹⁵
- Vacations and Holidays: "After one year of service, sworn employees receive 80 hours of vacation per year. They can also earn up to 200 hours per year throughout their career. Every sworn employee also receives a total of 13 paid holidays per year."¹⁶
- Pensions for Sworn employees: "A sworn employee must have 20 years of California law enforcement service with the last 10 years as a member of this Department, or the employee must be 50 years of age and have 10 years of Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department service prior to retirement."¹⁷
-

Background Checks 18

- LASD background investigations are conducted internally and generally last between 6-8 months. The exact duration can vary significantly depending on an individual applicant's life experience and background. The overall hiring process generally takes 6-12 months. The Department has no current plans to outsource the process.

LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". Question 2 Response. February 11,2026.

¹⁵ "Sick Leave and Disability Benefits". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department – Home / Careers Main / Salary and Benefits. <https://lasd.org/careers/benefits/>, Accessed March 2,2026.

¹⁶ "Vacation and Holidays". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department – Home / Careers Main / Salary and Benefits. <https://lasd.org/careers/benefits/>, Accessed March 2,2026.

¹⁷ "Requirements for a Department Recognized Retirement". LASD Manual of Policy and Procedures, 3-02/170.52. <https://pars.lasd.org/Viewer/Manuals/10472/Content/19133?showHistorical=True#>, Accessed March 2,2026. Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing. "Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information". Question 1 Response. January 29,2026.

- Internal delays (officers “juggling” other duties) resulted in roughly half of the applicants dropping out during background checks.
- The California Highway Patrol (CHP) “for many years resisted outsourcing its background check process, partly because of the cost, but also to avoid going against tradition that said the process should be handled in-house.”¹⁹

Now, the CHP uses a third-party company that... has significantly sped up the process for new recruits. The agency also moved from a paper application to an online form that allowed recruits to track the process and stay in regular contact with recruiters.”²⁰

- “As a result, the number of CHP applicants who went through the background process jumped from about 1,500 in fiscal year 2021-2022 to 4,500 last year.”²¹

¹⁹ Libor Jany. “How the CHP is drawing a flood of new recruits when the LAPD, other agencies struggle to hire”. *Los Angeles Times*. Dec. 27, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-12-27/why-chp-beats-lapd-recruiting-officers>, Accessed February 25,2026.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

STARS Training Academy in Whittier



Photo 11 Deputy Candidates at the S.T.A.R.S Academy in Whittier

Committee Visit Observations/Notes²²

- Sheriff Training Academy and Regional Services (S.T.A.R.S.)
- Largest law enforcement training academy in the country
- Trainee selection -- only 3% pass background checks!
- Rigorous program -- 20-25% attrition rate

²² Civil Grand Jury Committee tour of, and interviews at, S.T.A.R.S. in Whittier, September 29, 2025.

- Cost to the taxpayers is \$4,099 per applicant
- GRIT (Getting Recruits into Training)
- Candidates are trained in a “Stress Environment” (e.g., pepper spray) at the Academy (vs LAPD). LASD believes that their training style prepares future deputies to maintain a “command presence” when interacting with members of the public.
- Female candidates normally make up to 10-20% of the class.
- No daycare services provided
- Every recruit entering the academy must acknowledge a policy that prohibits them from joining a law enforcement gang, with the understanding that any violation will result in termination.²³

2026 Update on Recruitment Efforts²⁴

- 8 Academy Classes (averaging 100 candidates)
- 401 Graduated Deputies
- 29% Class Size Increase
- 18,000 Applications Processed
- Attrition reduced to less than 5%

Staff out on Medical or Disability Leave (Impairments)²⁵

- LASD Impairments (staff injured on duty) are also a staffing issue, as interim replacements cannot be hired to maintain staffing levels.
- However, LASD has launched a creative alternative for patrol deputies on impairments, called “Virtual Deputy”, presently employed at three stations. This allows citizens to interact with sworn deputies via the

²³ Gina Silva. “LASD captain says tattoo on his ankle cost him a promotion”. Fox11 Los Angeles. <https://www.foxla.com/news/lasd-captain-tattoo-ankle-cost-him-promotion>. February 6, 2026, Accessed March 6, 2026.

²⁴ Response letter from LASD Office of Constitutional Policing “Response to the Civil Grand Jury Request for Information”. Question 4 Response. January 29, 2026.

²⁵ Civil Grand Jury Committee tour of, and interviews at, Palmdale Sheriff Station, December 8, 2025.

internet (*i.e.*, “Zoom call”) at a Sheriff station for relatively low-level concerns (car burglaries, abandoned cars etc.) or questions, all without taking a deputy away from more important patrol duties.

Overtime and Forced Overtime

- “Custody, Patrol, and Court personnel must work overtime if duties extend beyond the end of their shift (*i.e.* emergencies, arrests, late court proceedings).
- All personnel must work overtime to appear in court upon subpoena during their off-duty hours.
- All personnel must work overtime to fill shifts due to vacant positions, sick call-ins, personnel off due to injury, personnel relieved of duty, personnel off for military leave, personnel off under Family Medical Leave Act or similar entitlement.
- Current minimum overtime per month requirements:
 - Custody: six to eight overtime shifts (48-64 hours) per deputy
 - Patrol: five to ten overtime shifts (40-80 hours) per deputy
 - Court: none ²⁶

²⁶ “Overtime” – LASD Work Schedules (ASH CCS 06/25/24), in: Jill Torres, Assistant Sheriff, Chief Financial and Administrative Officer. “Response to the Civilian Oversight Commission’s Request for Information Related to Department’s Overtime Data and Psychological Services Bureau.” June 26, 2024.

Retention Challenges ²⁷

- Graduates from the Academy are assigned to custody duty (jails) for up to two years. This could contribute to resignations (especially those assigned to MCJ).
- Experienced officers leave once they are eligible for retirement.
- Old equipment, technology and infrastructure (compared to smaller law enforcement agencies) can be demoralizing for staff.

Competition from other Law Enforcement Agencies

- Law enforcement agencies throughout the country are challenged in recruiting new officers and deputies. Many are “sweetening” the offers (bonuses, student loan forgiveness, and increased salaries). Many are also lowering standards and expediting background checks. ²⁸
- LASD’s starting annual salary in 2025 was \$82,080.00. They are getting poached by other law enforcement agencies (offering up to 70% bonuses) and competitive salaries, such as:
 - The city of Burbank offers a starting annual salary of \$95,467.00
 - The LAPD’s annual salary is \$91,224.00
 - An Orange County Deputy Sheriff Trainee annual salary is \$91,353.60²⁹
- The city of Alameda is offering a \$75,000 enlistment bonus in addition to a \$110,000 starting salary. ³⁰

²⁷ Civil Grand Jury Committee tour of, and interviews at, S.T.A.R.S. in Whittier, September 29, 2025.

²⁸ “Why Police Departments are Struggling with Recruitment: Challenges and Solutions”. *CentralSquare*. Mar 07, 2024. <https://www.centalsquare.com/resources/articles/why-police-departments-are-struggling-with-recruitment-challenges-and-solutions>, Accessed March 3,2026.

²⁹ Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department Personnel Administration Bureau. “Sworn Deputy Salary Comparisons”. Presentation to Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Committee, Hall of Justice, October 16,2025.

³⁰ Anabel Sosa. “A California city offered a \$75,000 bonus to new cops. These departments are trying to keep up”. *CalMatters*. September 5, 2023. <https://calmatters.org/justice/2023/09/california-police-bonuses-raises-contracts/>, Accessed March 3,2026.

- LA Metro is starting their own police department to patrol the trains and buses.³¹

³¹ "Metro moves to create its own police agency amid violence on public transit". *Long Beach Post*. Jun 28, 2024. <https://lbpost.com/news/metro-moves-to-create-its-own-police-agency-amid-violence-on-public-transit/>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

Election for LA County Sheriff in 2026



Photo 12 2022-Sheriff Debate between Candidate Robert Luna and Sheriff Alex Villaneuva

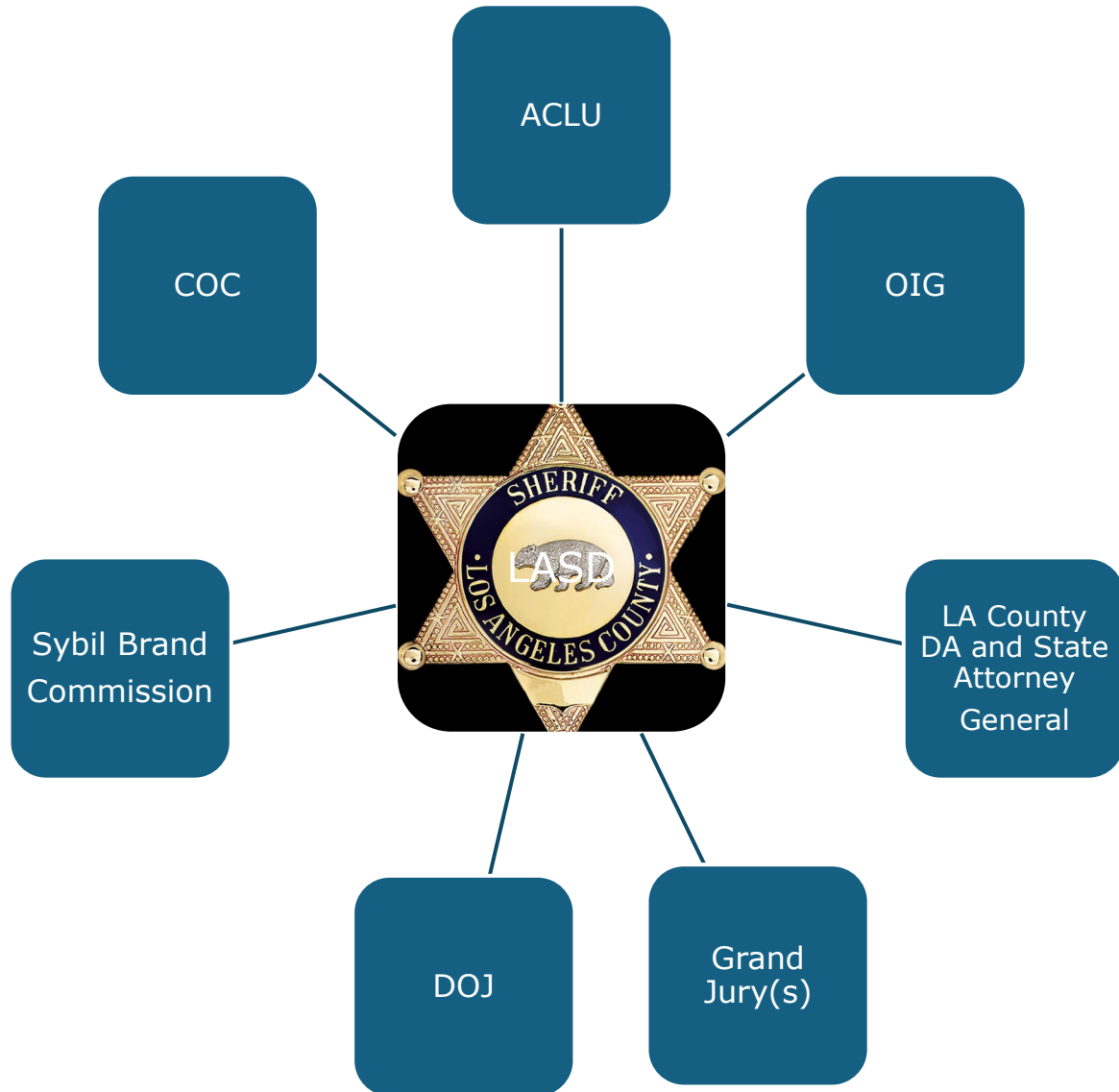
- Six candidates entered the field to challenge Sheriff Robert Luna in the June 2026 primary.³²
- Former Sheriff Alex Villanueva is seeking the office again.
- In the 2022 election, Sheriff Luna was supported by both the Board of Supervisors and ALADS. He won 60% of the vote.³³ He also received endorsements by the Los Angeles Democratic Party, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the powerful union SEIU Local 721.³⁴

³² Connor Sheets. "Insults are already flying in the crowded race for L.A. County sheriff". *Los Angeles Times*. Sept. 26, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-09-26/luna-sheriff-election-2026>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

³³ Keri Blakinger. "Will L.A. County's sheriff run for reelection in 2026? 'Absolutely,' Robert Luna says". *Los Angeles Times*. Nov. 12, 2024. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2024-11-12/robert-luna-absolutely-plans-to-run-for-reelection-in-2026>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

³⁴ "LA County Democratic Party endorses Robert Luna for Sheriff". Press release, Los Angeles County Democratic Party. Jul 13, 2022, updated Aug 29, 2022. <https://www.lunaforsheriff.com/post/la-county-democratic-party-endorses-robert-luna-for-sheriff>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

Pressure Points: External Oversight of LASD



OIG: Office of Inspector General-LASD

COC: Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission

DOJ: Department of Justice (Federal)

Grand Jury: Criminal and Civil

Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission



Photo 13 Monthly meeting of the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission

- Established in 2016
- 9 Members of the LASD Civilian Oversight Commission (COC)
 - 1 from each of the five supervisors
 - 4 appointed from the Community
- "The purpose of the Commission is to improve public transparency and accountability with respect to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, by providing robust opportunities for community engagement, ongoing analysis and oversight of the Department's policies, practices, procedures, and advice to the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department and the public." ³⁵

³⁵ Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission County of Los Angeles. <https://coc.lacounty.gov/>, Accessed March 6,2026.

- New California State law AB 847 grants civilian police oversight commission access to confidential personnel records
- ACLU Findings ³⁶
 - Their organizational focus is on incarceration issues
 - Political uncertainty continues about the future of MCJ
 - Agrees that the LASD has made positive improvements with the DOJ Antelope Valley agreement and the Use of Force lawsuit in the jails
- Civil Grand Jury Inquiries with Informed Sources
 - Interviewee Number One ³⁷
 - States that “Deputy gangs” have been a part of LASD for over 50 years
 - Feels County Counsel mainly represents LASD and the Board of Supervisors and thus, have more concerns about potential litigation (or bad press) and not clear and full transparency from the Sheriff Department (use of force complaints, investigating “deputy gangs”). Accordingly, recommends COC has their own independent counsel.
 - Further recommends that the OIG reports to the COC
 - Respects the role of ALADS but feels “Meet and Confer” should mainly cover labor issues and not State laws
 - Interviewee Number Two ³⁸
 - Stressed the importance of Sheriff Luna attending the COC meetings
 - Feels that County Counsel is conflicted in representing LASD and the COC

³⁶ Interview with representative of the ACLU of Southern California. January 23,2026.

³⁷ Interview with recognized law enforcement oversight. January 15,2026.

³⁸ Interview with recognized legal expert. February 24,2026.

- Concerns were voiced about the potential cost of external counsel and recommend that COC have legal representation by the County District Attorney's office or the County Public Defender.
- The Los Angeles media (broadcast and print) has reduced staffing and no longer assigns dedicated staff to cover the LASD.
- Stressed the importance of having strong, independent members on the COC. The terms of concurrent chairpersons were not renewed by the Board of Supervisors

Office of Inspector General

"The purpose of the Office is to promote constitutional policing and the fair and impartial administration of justice, and to facilitate the Board of Supervisors' responsibility.... The Inspector General serves as special counsel to the Board of Supervisors, the Civilian Oversight Commission, and the Probation Oversight Commission." ³⁹

Max Huntsman was hired as the first LA County OIG in 2013 and resigned suddenly on December 9, 2025. In his resignation letter to the LA County Board of Supervisors ⁴⁰, he stated the following:

- "...the county refuses to require the photographing of suspected gang tattoos in secretive groups that the undersheriff has identified as violating state law."
- "...the County has driven out two successive chairs of the Civilian Oversight Commission, permitted the sheriff's department to block

³⁹ Office of Inspector General County of Los Angeles. <https://oig.lacounty.gov/about>, Accessed March 6,2026.

⁴⁰ Max Huntsman. County of Los Angeles Office of Inspector General. Open letter, December 9, 2025.

oversight and has now defunded the Office of Inspector General by removing a third of its staff.”

- “Government always claims to value transparency and accountability, but shooting the messenger is still the most common response to criticism.”

On December 16, 2025, the Los Angeles Board of Supervisors appointed Eric D. Bates as the interim Inspector General for LA County.

Mr. Bates has “...over three decades of oversight and trial experience, [and] most recently served as an Assistant Inspector General with the LA County Office of the Inspector General.” Prior to his work for the County of Los Angeles, Mr. Bates “served for five years as a Special Assistant Inspector General with the California Office of the Inspector General, where he was responsible for oversight of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.”⁴¹

Sybil Brand Commission ⁴²

- “Sybil Brand, philanthropist and civic leader, was the recipient of over 2,000 awards, commendations, and resolutions in recognition of her generosity and lifetime commitment on behalf of the people of Los Angeles County.”
- Founded in 1959, the Sybil Brand Commission conducts regular, unannounced inspections of Los Angeles County jail facilities and Sheriff-maintained adult courthouse lockups.
- The 10 Commissioners are appointed by the LA County Board of Supervisors.

⁴¹ “LA County Board of Supervisors Appoints Eric Bates as Interim Inspector General”. *Pasadena Now*. December 16, 2025. <https://pasadenanow.com/main/la-county-board-of-supervisors-appoints-eric-bates-as-interim-inspector-general>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

⁴² Sybil Brand Commission – About Us. <https://sbc.lacounty.gov/about-us>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

- In a cost-cutting move, the Board of Supervisors is proposing to eliminate the commission. ⁴³ Their annual budget is \$40,000.
- The proposal would “sunset” six commissions, including Sybil Brand, and “potentially merge” 40 others. The report noted that “jail and detention inspection duties are also monitored by the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission.” ⁴⁴

⁴³ Connor Sheets. “Jail watchdog that exposed grim conditions faces elimination under L.A. County plan”. *Los Angeles Times*. Sept. 20, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-09-20/sybil-brand-commission-sunsetting>, Accessed March 3, 2026.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

DOJ-Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement ⁴⁵

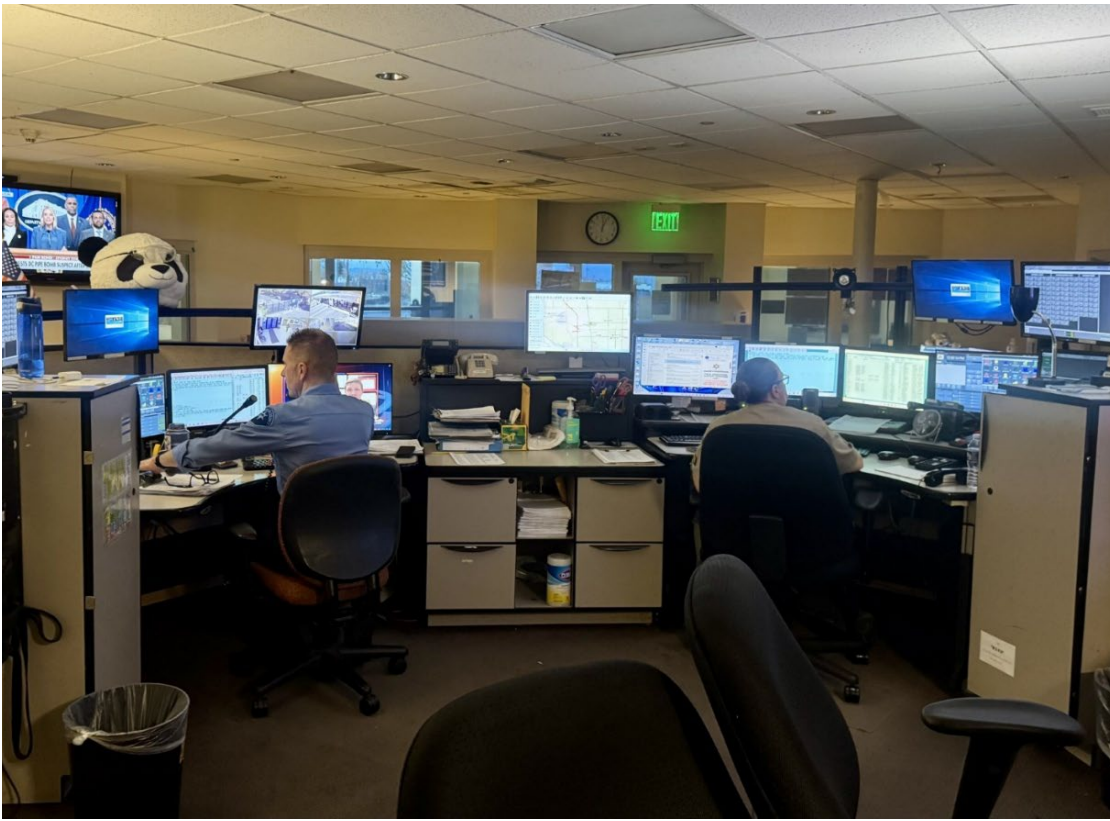


Photo 14 Dispatch Center at the Palmdale Sheriff Station

DOJ-Antelope Valley Settlement Agreement Summary

- Deputies are required to attend training that emphasizes Fourth Amendment and related legal restrictions on searches and seizures.
- Deputies are required to ensure their stops and detentions are conducted in accordance with the Constitution, and both State and Federal law.
- Bias Free policing - all members of the public receive equal protection of the law without bias

⁴⁵ Settlement Agreement, No. CV 15-03174, *United States v. Los Angeles County et. al.* (D.C. Cal. Apr. 28, 2015).

- Enforcement of housing requirements - "Section 8 42 US Code Section 1437f "
- Personnel complaint review, community engagement and accountability recommendations.

Implementation of Civilian Advisory Committee (Palmdale Station) ⁴⁶

- The Civilian Advisory Committee is led by a Station Captain.
- 13 Diverse Members of the Community
- Serve two-year terms
- Receive background checks

Two-Captain model ⁴⁷

- Implemented in 2023
- Allows one captain to oversee patrol deputies (examine traffic stops, arrests, and other actions) and the second Captain to focus on administrative duties (Human Resources, Legal, LASD policies, Union issues).

Virtual Deputy Program ⁴⁸

- Deputies can communicate with members of the public via zoom meetings to file lower-level crime reports or respond to questions from residents.
- Pilot program at (3) LASD Stations (Palmdale, Lancaster and East LA).
- Enables deputies on medical leave or with physical disabilities to serve the community and not be at home.

⁴⁶ Tour and Interview with Palmdale Sheriff Station leadership, December 8,2025.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "Virtual Deputy Program" Agenda Item, and "Revolutionizing Law Enforcement Service Delivery: The Virtual Deputy Program". Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Presentation to Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Committee, Hall of Justice, October 16,2025.

- Creative way of saving expenses (fuel, overtime) by having a sworn Deputy to communicate with members of the public via zoom meetings
- Currently not staffed 24/7 but plans to expand to three workstations.

Wellness Initiatives by LASD Palmdale Leadership ⁴⁹

- Substantial effort to create a great working environment for the staff
- New weight room
- New room for officers interacting with children (crimes or domestic issues).
- Outdoor patio area donated by Lowes

⁴⁹ Tour and Interview with Palmdale Sheriff Station leadership, December 8,2025.

FINDINGS

FINDING 1.1

The two-Captain system initially implemented at three Sheriff stations shows promise for improving station culture and community relations, due to the splitting of managerial duties of Station leadership into more manageable spans of control. One Captain focuses on administrative duties (Human Resources, Scheduling, Deputies on medical leave, Union issues) while the other Captain focuses on patrol deputies in the field (monitoring stops, use of force, citizen complaints) and community relations.

FINDING 1.2

The Virtual Deputy Program, currently in use, has shown to be an advantage in response time over in-person response to calls. The public benefits from reduced response times and LASD benefits from fewer staffing challenges.

FINDING 1.3

The LASD conducts background checks internally for job applicants. The California Highway Patrol has, by outsourcing this function, processed applicants faster, allowing for fewer applicant losses.

FINDING 1.4

County Counsel simultaneously represents the Board of Supervisors, LASD, and the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission. Recent trends in oversight now call into question whether they can equally and fully represent the “public interest.” The primary concern of the County’s lawyers is prevention/reduction of legal risk to the County. While this is understandable, it often delays or impedes the timely investigation of problem deputies and custody officers.

FINDING 1.5

The Civilian Oversight Commission and the Office of Inspector General are aligned in strategy, yet they overlap in function and reporting. Restructuring to include the OIG, Sybil Brand, COC, and Independent Counsel under the same organization, would offer the public more clarity, as well as increase the public’s belief that the intended missions are being addressed.

FINDING 1.6

“Meet and Confer” negotiations between the LASD and its unions, who cannot strike, are used to balance the influence of management. This often results in the inability of the COC to secure confidential deputy testimony required for oversight.

FINDING 1.7

Recent positive change at LASD appears to have been primarily the result of external pressure, e.g., settlements, oversight, publicity, as opposed to internal evolution in organizational culture, which tends to change in concert with changes in personnel and leadership.

FINDING 1.8

The replacement of Men's Central Jail, despite universal recognition as a necessary measure, remains unresolved after many years of being in a state of political limbo - to the frustration of all.

FINDING 1.9

The absence of daycare services provided at the STARS Academy for Deputy Sheriff Trainees with children is an additional barrier to competitive recruitment and the successful completion of the training.

FINDING 1.10

LASD's hiring campaigns have emphasized the diversity of job assignments not available in smaller or more singularly focused agencies, yet many smaller competitors are nimble in offering signing bonuses and other benefits in this competitive environment

FINDING 1.11

LASD is challenged to fund purchases of vehicles, helicopters, and inmate transport buses. Often, budget decisions highlight more pressing challenges with a "hope" that deferred maintenance can wait until capital requests are approved by the Board of Supervisors. Aging helicopters present both maintenance costs and potential liability problems. LASD's lack of inmate transport buses leads to the cancellation of court dates, which results in financial consequences for the LASD, Courts and family members.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1.1

Expand the two-Captain structure to additional Sheriff Stations.

RECOMMENDATION 1.2

Expand the Virtual Deputy program to the remaining LASD stations in the County

RECOMMENDATION 1.3

LASD should outsource the background process and find other internal opportunities for the staff members currently assigned to this process.

RECOMMENDATION 1.4

The Civilian Oversight Commission should have its own independent legal staff. County Counsel should not be involved in recommending or selecting outside counsel for the COC.

RECOMMENDATION 1.5

Restructure the COC to allow stronger independence and reduce the overlap in reporting structures:

- County Counsel is conflicted in equally representing the BOS, LASD and the Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission. Accordingly, we recommend:
 - COC would have its own legal staff, i.e., no longer represented by County Counsel.
 - No use of Pro Bono Counsel representation (paid only).
 - Office of OIG would be under the COC.
 - To avoid the cancellation of the Sybil Brand Commission and the perception of overlapping duties (\$40,000 annual budget), it would be moved under the COC.

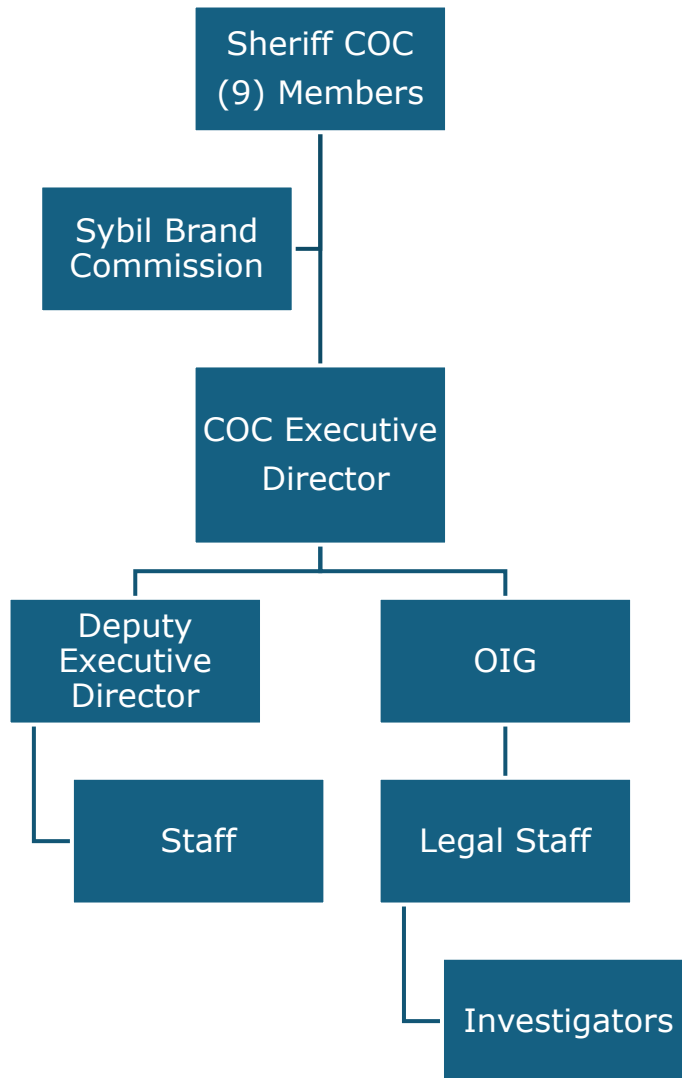


Figure 4 Proposed Restructuring of LASD Civilian Oversight

RECOMMENDATION 1.6

We recommend that “Meet and Confer” issues with the unions are limited to labor issues and not State law (e.g., AB 847, access to law enforcement personnel records). Additionally, we strongly recommend that the process is completed within 60 days and not allowed to drag on for extended periods of time.

RECOMMENDATION 1.7

The Department needs to be more proactive regarding internal versus external institutional change, in part, by being open to new approaches and listening to new voices.

RECOMMENDATION 1.8

We recommend that the new jail location be in close proximity to the Inmate Reception Center, the downtown courthouse and the Los Angeles General Medical Center. What is not acceptable is the continued delays in resolving this issue.

RECOMMENDATION 1.9

LASD should offer paid daycare services for candidates attending the LASD STARS Academy, which is currently arranged between candidates with babysitting challenges.

RECOMMENDATION 1.10

LASD should consider offering signing bonuses, as it also monitors other benefits offered by competing law enforcement agencies.

RECOMMENDATION 1.11

The aging condition of equipment (helicopters, vehicles, and inmate transport buses) directly impacts the quality of legal services or medical treatment offered to inmates in custody. This “downstream impact” needs to be factored into budget priorities by the LA County Board of Supervisors.

COMMENDATIONS



Photo 15 2025-LA County Board of Supervisors recognizing the LASD on its 175-year anniversary

The committee appreciates the timely response from the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department on our inquiry. In particular, the Office of Constitutional Policing.

We also appreciate the expertise offered by law enforcement oversight and transparency experts that recommended new approaches in policing and custody.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b). All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
 c/o Grand Jury Administration
 222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11
Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10, 1.11
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department	1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.6, 1.7, 1.8, 1.9, 1.10

Acronyms

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ALADS	Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch

CHP	California Highway Patrol
COC	Civilian Oversight Commission
DOJ	Department of Justice
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LASD	Los Angeles (County) Sheriff's Department
MCJ	Men's Central Jail
MMBA	Meyers-Milias-Brown Act
OIG	Office of Inspector General
PPOA	Professional Peace Officers Association
STARS	Sheriff Training Academy and Regional Services

Committee Members

George O. Davis, Chair
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Michelle Wilson

LOS ANGELES COUNTY FOSTER CARE



2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“LA County Reaches \$4 Billion Tentative Settlement in Thousands of Sexual Abuse Cases.”¹ Few news reports elicit as much horror and disbelief than reading about the abuse of innocent lives, especially children. Extensive media coverage of the \$4 billion settlement for 6,800 claims of sexual abuse of children in foster care and juvenile facilities spurred our curiosity, which led to the discovery of more cases of child abuse and fatalities. These news reports triggered the Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury 2025-26 Foster Care Committee’s interest in understanding the severity of the problems in foster care and finding out what can be done to improve it.

The Committee conducted interviews and did its own research to get a clearer and less sensationalized version of the truth. One of the key findings was that foster care in Los Angeles County (LACO) is currently not as bad as it seems. Some lawsuit allegations were true, some lacked historical data to prove falsehood, and some are still under investigation for fraud. Many allegations were in the past, dating as far back as 1959. When we looked at the data over the past 10 years, foster care outcomes have improved significantly in LACO, and it is doing better than the State of California and the country.

How did that happen? Over time, because of multiple lawsuits, the LACO foster care system and the department charged with its oversight, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), have been scrutinized multiple times, in different ways and by several entities. This resulted in

¹ Ellis, Rebecca. “L.A. County approves \$4-billion sex abuse settlement, largest in U.S. history.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-04-29/l-a-county-approves-4-billion-sex-abuse-settlement-largest-in-u-s-history>.

significant reforms in the foster care system, from how abuse and neglect are reported, to how children are placed and eventually reunified with their families or adopted. There are currently more and better ways of supporting children and families to keep the children at home. There are expanded efforts and better methods in finding parents and relatives to care for the children, and there is greater collaboration among workers providing care and treatment. These are just some of the changes that contributed to better outcomes.

The Committee appreciates DCFS, Department of Mental Health (DMH), and other government agencies that have contributed to the improvements in foster care. We know the system is not perfect and human error cannot be eliminated. However, we are relieved and happy to know there are less children being taken into foster care, and that children and families in foster care are getting more services and better care than ever. Children in foster care today have a greater chance of healing and thriving when they leave foster care.

Therefore, the Committee's recommendations are not meant to substantially change foster care in LACO. Instead, they are recommendations in support of DCFS's commitment to quality and continuous improvement.

BACKGROUND

“L.A. County approves \$4-billion sex abuse settlement, largest in U.S. history.”² “Toddler died after LA County placed her with dad previously jailed for abuse, lawsuit says.”³ “L.A.’s foster care system is negligent and outdated, lawsuit claims.”⁴ These were some of the recent news headlines about foster care in LACO. The foster care system has a tainted reputation due to the abundance of negative and sensationalized media coverage of its deficiencies that resulted in major lawsuits. In 2024, DCFS was the most frequently sued agency in LACO, with 882 cases in 2024.⁵

In a 2025 randomized survey by Loyola Marymount University, when asked how well LACO serves foster youth, 53% of the respondents rated it Poor, 38% rated it Fair, and less than 10% rated it Excellent or Good.⁶

All this negativity sparked the interest of the Foster Care Committee members to inquire what is wrong with foster care in LACO. Is the foster care system as bad as the media made it out to be? Is it as bad as what most people think? What are the real problems? Will we be able to come up with findings and recommendations to help reduce or alleviate some pain, or perhaps even save a life? Those were the questions we had in mind as we set forth into the maze that is the LACO foster care system.

²Ibid.

³ Ellis, Rebecca and Queally, James. “Toddler died after L.A. County placed her with dad previously jailed for abuse, lawsuit says.” *Los Angeles Times*, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-02-25/la-county-sued-over-alleged-child-abuse-that-killed-1-year-old>.

⁴ Verano, Brenda Fernanda, “L.A.’s foster care system is negligent and outdated, lawsuit claims.” *CALONews*, July 18, 2025, updated October 22, 2025, https://www.calonews.com/communities/los-angeles-county/l-a-s-foster-care-system-is-negligent-and-outdated-lawsuit-claims/article_8e6c0ec2-7c23-471b-b363-fd8ca4e8bb78.html.

⁵ Blakinger, Keri and Ellis, Rebecca. “L.A. County hit with record number of lawsuits amid flood of child sex abuse claims.” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-06/l-a-county-hit-with-record-number-of-lawsuits-amid-flood-of-sex-abuse-claims>.

⁶ Loyola Marymount University Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles. 2025 LA County Governance Reform Data Brief, Fall 2025.

METHODOLOGY

Most of the Committee members had minimal knowledge about the foster care system, so one of the initial challenges was to gain an understanding of how it works. It felt like “drinking from a fire hose.” Despite the challenge, we believe having a good understanding of the system is crucial in coming up with accurate findings and useful recommendations. To that end, the Committee pursued its fact-finding quest through the following means:

- Interviews and meetings with:
 - Management of:
 - Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)
 - Department of Mental Health (DMH)
 - Foster Family Agencies (FFA)
 - DCFS and FFA social workers
 - DMH and FFA mental health clinicians
 - DCFS and FFA foster parents
- FFA site visits
- Online research and study of the following:
 - News articles
 - Government agency websites
 - Private agency websites
 - Publicly funded studies and reports
 - Privately funded studies and reports
 - Policies and Procedures

Due to the limited time available to conduct the investigation and the complexity of the foster care system, we decided to limit the scope of the investigation to foster children who are 0 to 15 years old, are not on probation, and have no severe mental, emotional, or physical challenge.

DISCUSSION

“As one of the largest county governed child protective services agencies in the nation, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services is responsible for ensuring the safety of more than 2 million children across 88 diverse cities in Los Angeles County.”⁷

“The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services has worked to keep children safe and support families in crisis since 1984.”⁸

DCFS promotes child safety and well-being by partnering with other government and community-based agencies to strengthen families, keeping children at home whenever possible, and connecting them with stable, loving homes in times of need. “Director Brandon T. Nichols works closely with an executive team and (over) 9,000 staff across 20 regional offices, specialized bureaus, and administrative offices that cover a broad array of services and programs to support children and families in crisis. DCFS is one of (over) 38 Los Angeles County Departments governed by the five-member Board of Supervisors.”⁹

History

The Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services originated from the Office of Superintendent of Children’s and Women’s Work that formed in 1891, to care for destitute women and their children under the guidelines of the 1851 Poor Law. In 1903, the First Juvenile Court in

⁷ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/about/who-we-are/>.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

California was established, and in 1913, the first iteration of DCFS as we know it today was created under the Department of Charities.^{10 11}

Over the years, approaches to child welfare have adapted to changes in the norms and expectations of society. Many of the changes have been brought about by serious civil litigation. Major lawsuits have exposed systemic failures (including child deaths) in the foster care system, leading to massive settlements and structural reforms aimed at child safety, housing stability and mental health access. These reforms have led to enhanced oversight, greater access to resources for families, improved social worker staffing, and better outcomes. These are some landmark lawsuits and reforms that led to significant changes in foster care in LACO.

1. Emily Q. v. Bontá (1998): This landmark federal class action lawsuit was filed on behalf of a minor who had been institutionalized, partly because the mental health support and treatments were not covered by California's Medi-Cal for her to receive such treatment in a home setting. The lawsuit resulted in allowing children to receive needed Therapeutic Behavior Services in a home, community or school setting.^{12 13}

2. Katie A. v. Bontá (2002): This landmark class-action lawsuit alleged that LACO failed to provide essential mental health services to foster children. The settlement led to the permanent closure of the MacLaren Children's Center in 2003 and the creation of an expert advisory panel to monitor County progress. It established Wraparound Services, Intensive Care

¹⁰<https://www.laalmanac.com/social/so05b.php#:~:text=The%20Los%20Angeles%20County%20Department,of%20Children%20and%20Family%20Services.>

¹¹ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/History-of-The-Los-Angeles-Department-of-Children-and-Family-Services.pdf>.

¹² American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, <https://www.aclusocal.org/news/breakthrough-emily-q-case-children-stuck-costly-mental-institutions/>, accessed February 26,2026.

¹³ Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse, <https://clearinghouse.net/case/11588/>, accessed February 26,2026.

Coordination, and Intensive Home-Based Services to prevent multiple placements and unnecessary hospitalizations.¹⁴

3. Gabriel Fernandez Case (2013): A criminal prosecution for the tragic death of Gabriel Fernandez sparked a massive civil outcry and pressure for legal reform. It led to the formation of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection, which recommended over 100 reforms, including the creation of the Office of Child Protection to improve inter-departmental data sharing. This is the link to the report: [Final Report of the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection](#).¹⁵

4. Continuum of Care Reform, Assembly Bill 403 (2015): AB 403 provides the statutory and policy framework to ensure services and support are provided to the child/youth and the family with the goal of maintaining a stable and permanent family. Reliance on congregate care is limited to short-term, therapeutic interventions that are just one part of a continuum of care available for foster children. This marked a pivotal moment in foster care housing in California and LACO, with a policy shift away from group homes towards family-based settings where greater support is provided.¹⁶

5. Family First Prevention Services Act (2018): This landmark U.S. legislation shifted child welfare focus to family preservation by funding services like mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment, and in-home parenting skill-based programs to keep children out of foster care, while also

¹⁴ Judge Leonard Edwards, The Bench, The Judge's Corner, Fall 2018, "An Update On The Case Of Katie A V Bonta: Services For Children With Mental Health Challenges And Suggestions How Judges Can Assist The Service Delivery Process", <http://judgeleonardedwards.com/docs/KatieAVBontaUpdate.pdf>.

¹⁵ "The Road to Safety for Our Children, Final Report of the Los Angeles County Blue Ribbon Commission on Child Protection", 04/18/2014, https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Blue-Ribbon-Commission_Final_Report_April_18_2014.pdf.

¹⁶ California Department of Social Services, <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/resource-families/continuum-of-care-reform>.

limiting group home placements and promoting family-like settings, marking a major federal funding overhaul for child well-being.¹⁷

6. Sexual Abuse Claims Settlement (2025): In 2020, the California legislature passed Assembly Bill 218 which opened a window for victims to file lawsuits even though the statute of limitations had expired. Consequently, thousands of victims filed claims against California counties, including LACO, for alleged abuse in various county facilities.¹⁸

Foster Care Today

In April 2025, LACO reached a historic \$4 billion settlement to resolve roughly 6,800 claims of sexual abuse in foster care and juvenile facilities dating back to 1959. A third of the claims involved foster care and two-thirds involved probation. A second settlement occurred in October 2025 in the amount of \$828 million. An additional 5,500 unsettled cases may result in more liability for LACO. Reforms included a Countywide Hotline for reporting abuse against county employees, enhanced employee background checks, expedited investigations by independent experts, and a Zero Tolerance policy for substantiated allegations.^{19 20}

On November 19, 2025, LACO District Attorney Nathan Hochman announced a criminal investigation into potentially false claims filed against LACO under California Assembly Bill 218. There were allegations that some individuals were paid cash to have law firms file false sexual abuse claims.²¹

¹⁷ LACO DCFS, “Los Angeles County Family First Prevention Services Act”, https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/FFPSA_FAQCommunityProviders.pdf.

¹⁸ Ellis, Rebecca. “L.A. County approves \$4-billion sex abuse settlement, largest in U.S. history.” *Los Angeles Times*, April 29, 2025, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-04-29/l-a-county-approves-4-billion-sex-abuse-settlement-largest-in-u-s-history>.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Multiple Interviews DCFS staff on October 2 and October 8, 2025.

²¹ County of Los Angeles, Office of County Counsel, “LA County Counsel Continues AB 218 Anti-Fraud Efforts by Opening a Formal Investigation into DTLA Law Group Relating to Potential Fraud in AB 218 Sexual Abuse Claims”,

Readily apparent from a review of reports in *The Los Angeles Times*, *The Imprint* and other publications (previously cited *supra*) that over the last two decades, billions of dollars have been spent on litigation and research, dramatically transforming foster care in LACO. According to LACO Office of Child Protection’s Countywide Strategic Plan 2016-2026, policy changes and adoption of evidence-based practices resulted in major changes in the following areas:

- Reducing congregate placements, i.e. group homes
- Improving mental health service access
- Increasing support for youth, parents and caregivers
- Strengthening child safety practices
- Strengthening social work²²
- Integrating Technology to Enhance Child Safety and Investigations of Abuse²³

The following are notable changes:

- Emergency Response has improved. The use of a data-informed tool improved collaboration between emergency response and service providers. It also helped social workers prioritize higher risk cases.²⁴ Social workers also receive specialized training in the use of the Structured Decision-Making tool to assist them in their investigations of abuse or neglect.²⁵

<https://lacounty.gov/2026/02/27/county-counsel-ab-218-anti-fraud-efforts-dtla-law-group/>, accessed March 16,2026.

²² Continuum of Care Reform; OCP Strategic Plan 2016-2026.pdf;

https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1170231_OfficeofChildProtection_OCP_ProgressUpdate_Attachment10-31-2024.pdf#:~:text=It%20has%20submitted%20quarterly%20updates,submitted%20o.

²³ https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/lac/1179616_DCFSReformsTimeline_03242025Final.pdf.

²⁴ DCFS, 9/5/2024, “New Analysis of DCFS Data Shows Improvement in Safety with Use of Data-Informed Technology”, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/press-release-new-analysis-of-dcfs-data-shows-improvement-in-safety-with-use-of-data-informed-technology/>.

²⁵https://policy.dcfslacounty.gov/Policy?id=5941#Section_Safety_Assessment_To.

- There is a stronger focus on keeping children at home or in a family environment, preferably with relatives or close family friends.
- More support services are available through partnerships with community-based organizations.²⁶
- DCFS was reorganized to encourage collaboration among workers from different government agencies, and to increase efficiency in delivering various services to children/families in foster care.
- Social worker attrition and burnout have gone down. DCFS hired more social workers, assigned Human Services Aides to help them, and reduced caseloads. These ultimately result in better supervision and care of children and families.

These and other changes are described in greater detail in Fact Sheet: Reforming Child Welfare in Los Angeles County to Better Support Families in Need.²⁷

Improvements in foster care have resulted in 38% less children in foster care in the last 10 years and 50% less new entries, with substantial improvements in the last 4-5 years, as shown in the following diagrams:

²⁶ DCFS, https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/lac/1181055_DCFSFactSheet_ReformingChildWelfare_040220255.pdf.

²⁷ Ibid.

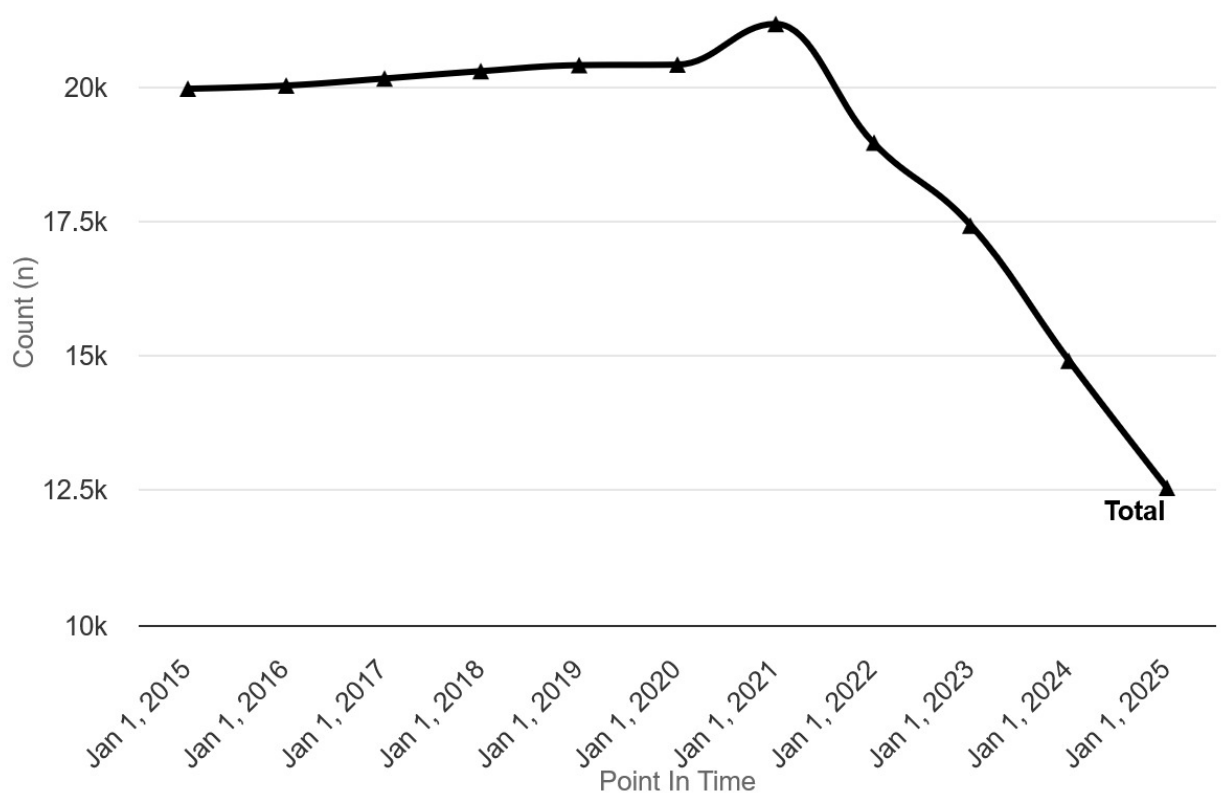


Figure 1. Children in Foster Care 2015-2025 (38% reduction)²⁸

²⁸ DCFS graphic October 2, 2025.

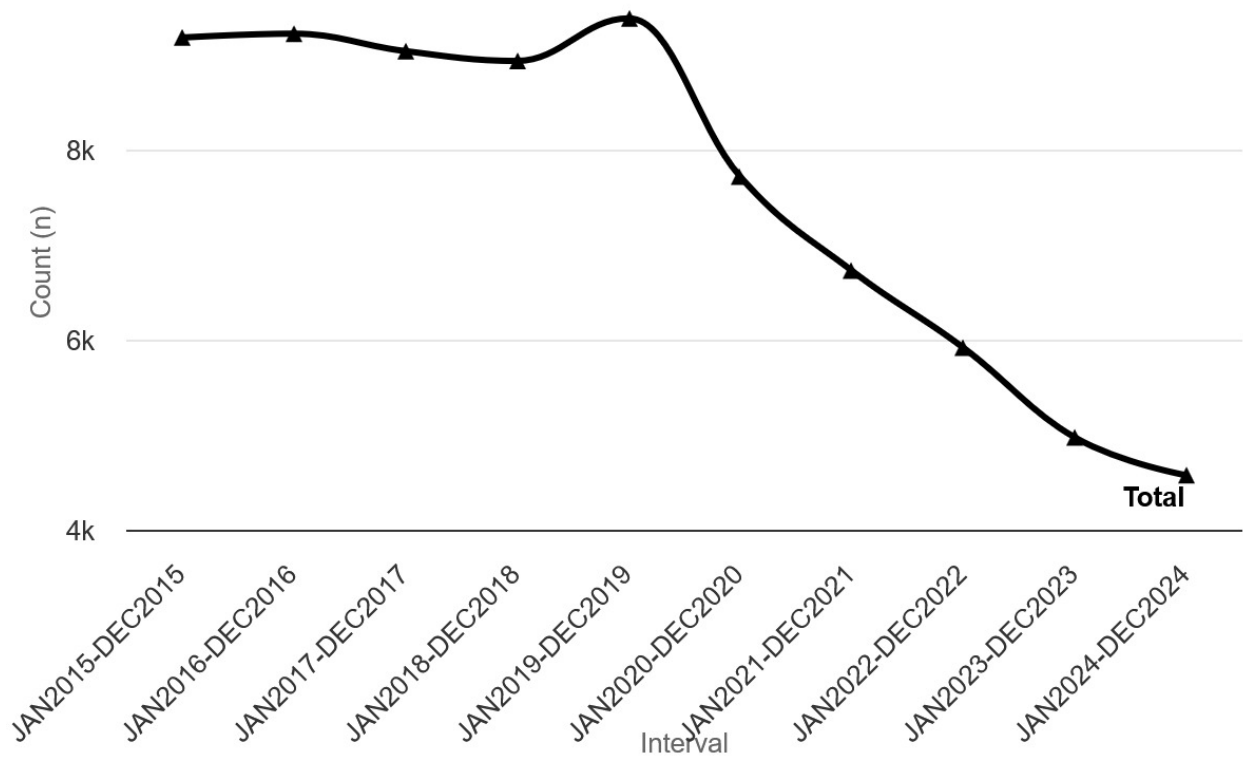


Figure 2. New Entries (from 9,200 to 4,576, 50% reduction)²⁹

In addition, total child fatalities due to abuse and neglect went down significantly from 70 in 2015 to 26 in 2025.³⁰

“In dozens of interviews, CPS (Child Protection Services) officials, attorneys, politicians, parents and advocates...all agreed...that to date, Los Angeles County has slashed its reliance on foster care removals, without a sizable uptick in child fatalities or reports of maltreatment after children leave foster care. Child welfare leaders here also agree that the dramatic decline in the foster care population is no temporary trend and instead reflects deliberate work to help families remain intact.”³¹

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ DCFS, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/resources/child-fatality-data/fatality-determinations/>

³¹ Jeremy Loudnbak, The Imprint, December 17, 2025, “The Number of Children in Los Angeles County Foster Care Has Plunged. *The Imprint* Set Out to Discover Why.”, <https://imprintnews.org/foster-care/the-number-of-children-in-los-angeles-county-foster-care-has-plunged-the-imprint-set-out-to-discover-why/269320>.

LACO has also fared better than the State and the country in general. From 2020 to 2024, children in foster care decreased by 19% across the country, 27% in California and 37% in Los Angeles County.³²

Population And Demographics

During a meeting with DCFS, the committee was informed that in 2025, the DCFS Child Protection Hotline received over 178,000 reports of child abuse and neglect. Of those reports, the specially trained children services workers assigned to answer calls made to the Hotline provided consultation on over 81,000 calls. The department completed about 29,000 child abuse and neglect investigations that year. As of February 2026, the department was serving over 5,500 children that were able to safely remain with their families and over 11,000 children in foster care.³³

Black and Hispanic children are disproportionately represented in foster care. In 2024, the population of Los Angeles County consisted of 49% Hispanics and 9% Blacks.³⁴ However, Hispanics made up 59% and Blacks made up 26% of the foster care population in 2025.³⁵

Organization

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

“DCFS promotes child safety and well-being by partnering with communities to strengthen families, keeping children at home whenever possible, and connecting them with stable, loving homes in times of need.”³⁶

DCFS oversees foster care in LACO. It provides temporary, protective family-based care for children who have been abused or neglected. Its primary goal

³² Ibid.

³³ DCFS Provided information March 16,2026.

³⁴ United States Census Bureau, Los Angeles County, July 1, 2024, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescountycalifornia/PST045224>.

³⁵ DCFS, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/DCFS-2025-FACTSHEET.pdf>.

³⁶ DCFS, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/>.

is to help children safely remain home, quickly reunite with their families, or find permanent homes for those who cannot reunite with their families through legal guardianship and adoption.³⁷

As of March 25, 2026, there are 9,117 employees at DCFS with 9,023 full-time and 94 part-time/temporary employees. There are 4,129 social workers, with 58% Hispanic and 24% Black, which closely mirrors the foster children demographics.³⁸

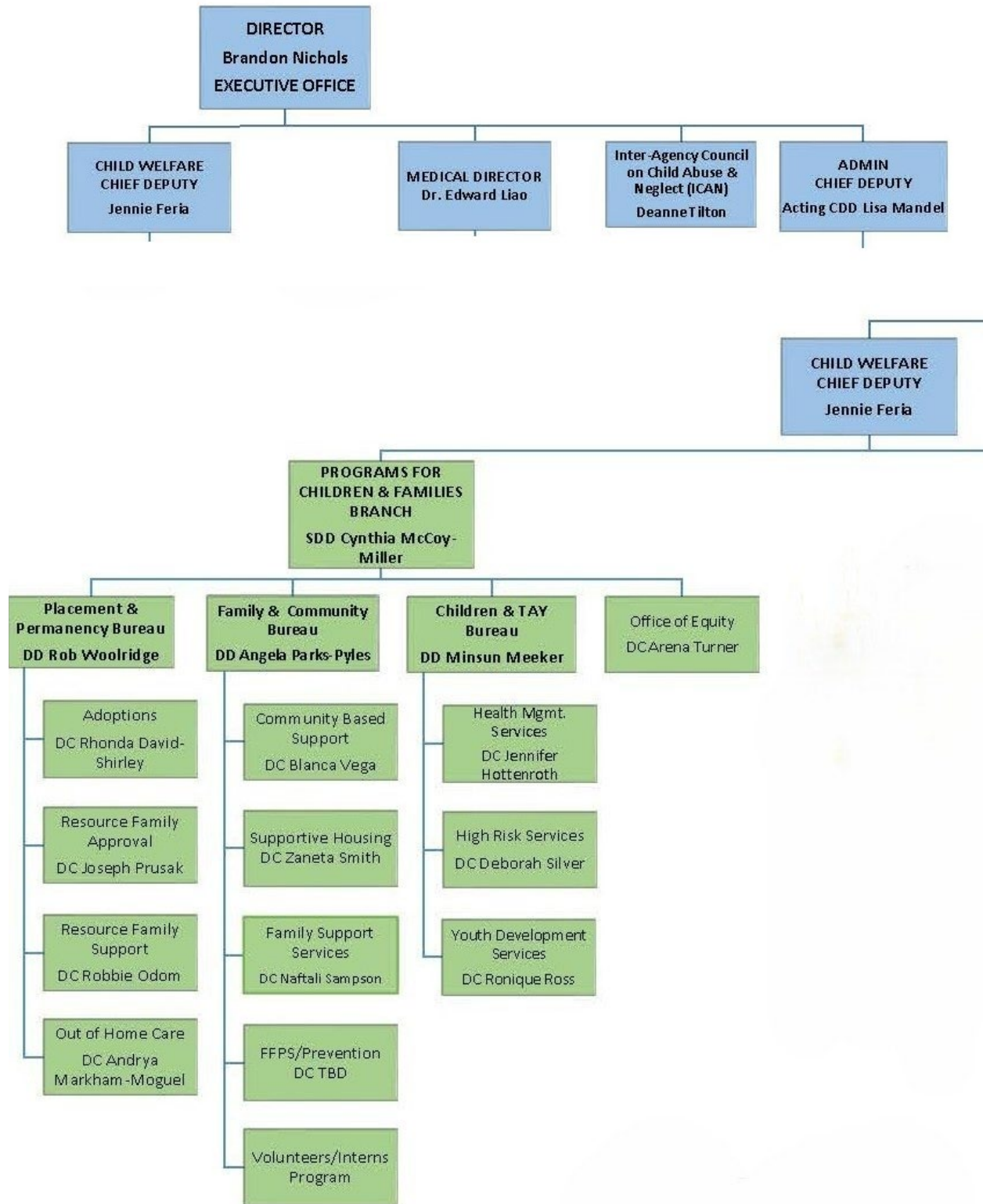
DCFS underwent its own organizational transformation through the years. It has been reorganized to better align with changes in foster care and to increase efficiency in providing services to children and families. It incorporated some recommendations from the “Report on Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services,” a programmatic and management audit of DCFS conducted in 2022.³⁹ The DCFS organizational chart, after its recent reorganization, is shown in Figure 3. It has been divided into three parts to improve readability.

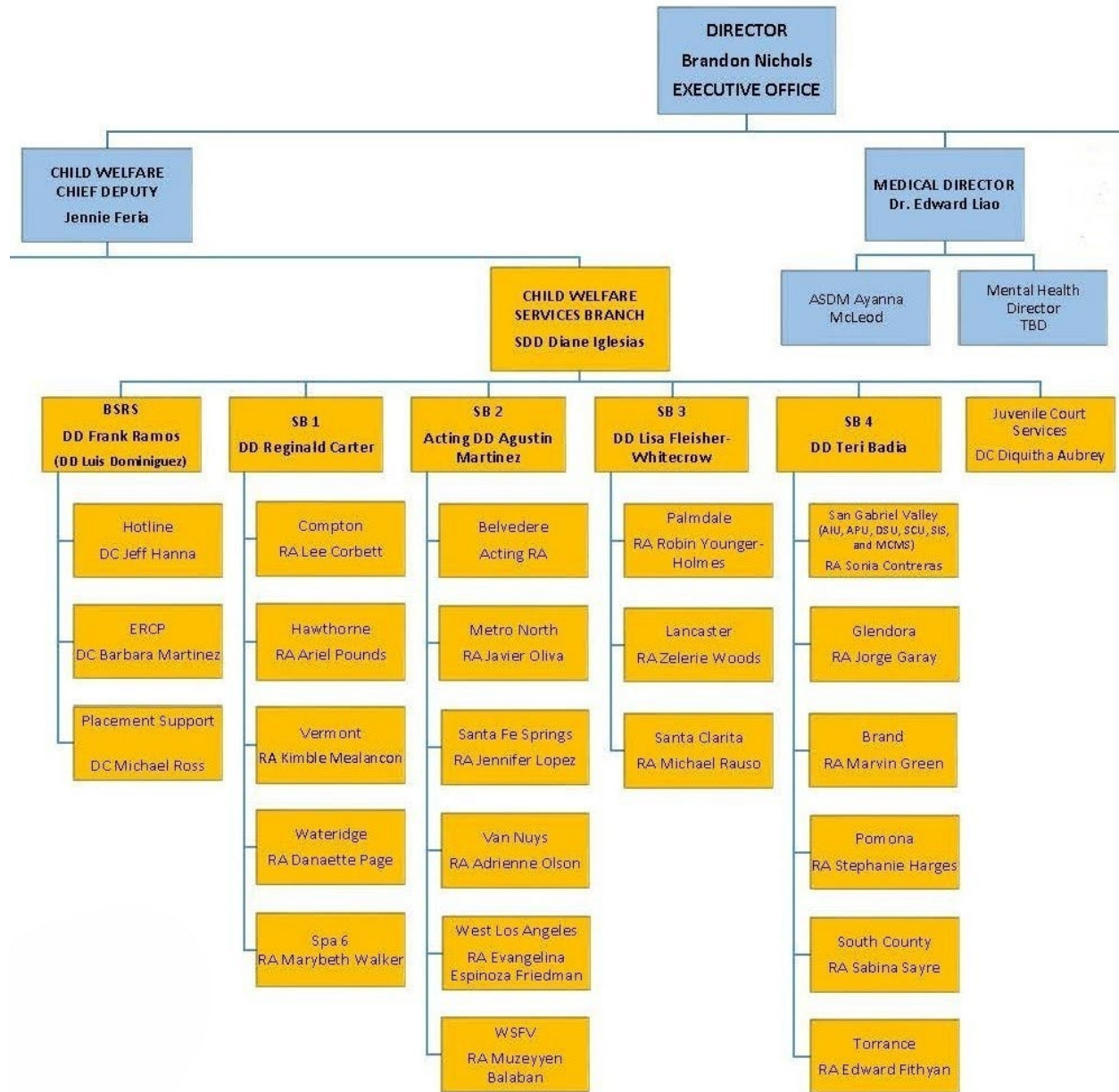
³⁷ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/advancingequity/>.

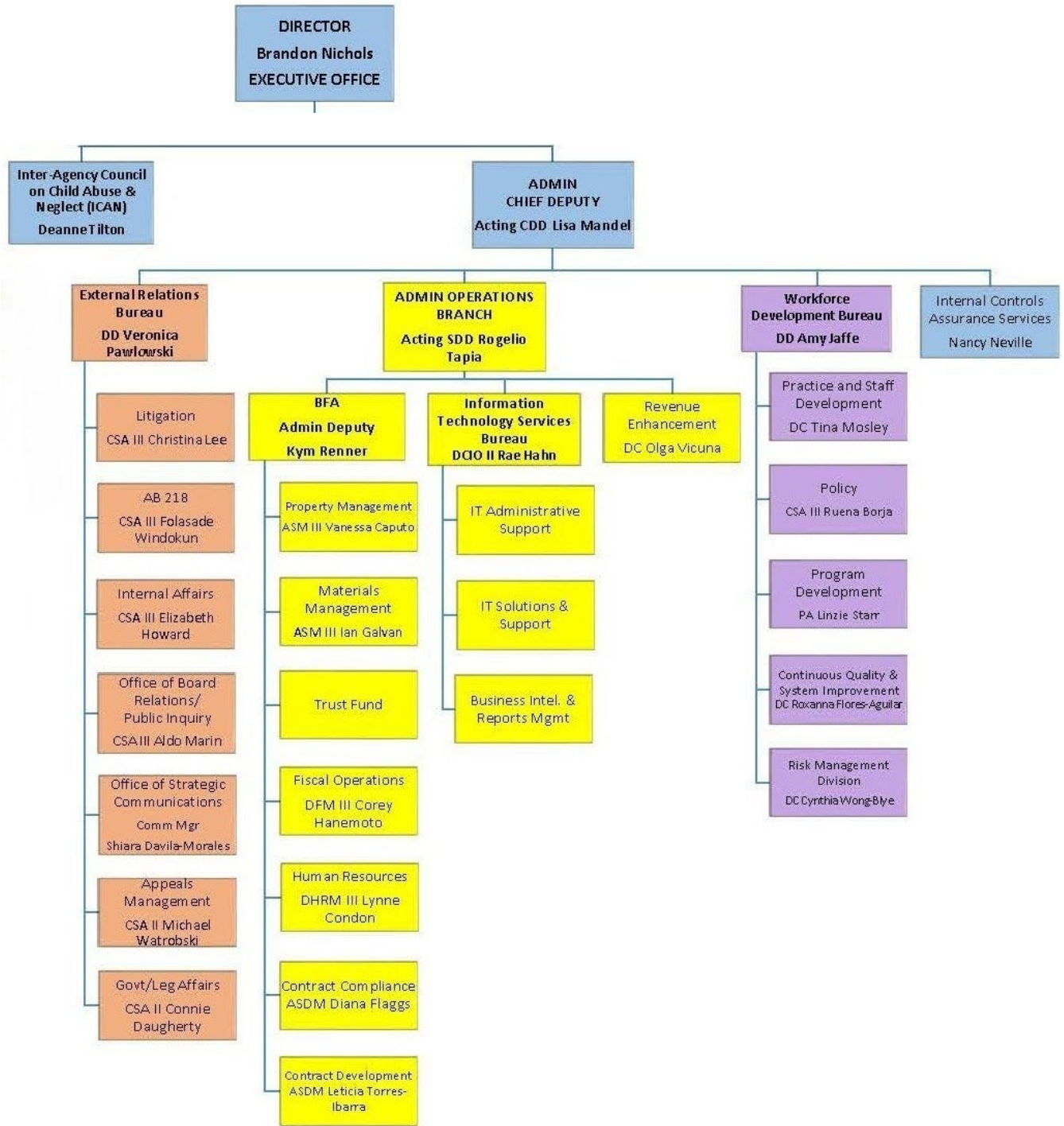
³⁸ DCFS provided data on March 25, 2026.

³⁹ Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office, Report on Assessing the Department of Children and Family Services (Item No. 39-H, Agenda of January 25, 2022), <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/179079.pdf>

Figure 3. Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services







One of the major organizational improvements was co-locating DCFS social workers, DMH mental health clinicians, and ultimately, Los Angeles County Office of Education teacher specialists in field offices to improve collaboration and hasten the delivery of mental health and educational services to children and families.^{40 41}

Another significant improvement is reducing the caseload of social workers down to a manageable number, 12 on average. DCFS added many social workers in 2015 and allowed them to have varied work schedules (i.e. 5 days/8 hours, 4 days/40 hours, 9 days/80 hours).⁴² These changes resulted in reduced stress, enabled social workers to spend more time on each case and with each child/family, contributed to better outcomes, and reduced social worker attrition down to 7.69%, including retirees.⁴³

In addition, the Family and Community Bureau's focus and investment in prevention and community-based support services significantly contributed to enabling children to stay at home with their families. The creation of its Continuous Quality and System Improvement Division attests to DCFS's commitment to quality, social work practice and continuous improvement.⁴⁴ These are just some of the many organizational changes that have made a positive impact on foster care.

⁴⁰[https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740915000961#:~:text=To%20this%20end%2C%20Los%20Angeles%20County's%20Department,of%20Mental%20Health%20\(DMH\)%20engaged%20in%20interagency.](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0190740915000961#:~:text=To%20this%20end%2C%20Los%20Angeles%20County's%20Department,of%20Mental%20Health%20(DMH)%20engaged%20in%20interagency.)

⁴¹ [https://www.lacoe.edu/services/student-support/foster-youth-services.](https://www.lacoe.edu/services/student-support/foster-youth-services)

⁴² Multiple Interviews DCFS staff October 2,2025; October 8,2025; November 7,2025; [https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/34084.pdf.](https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/34084.pdf)

⁴³ Multiple Interviews DCFS staff October 2,2025; October 8,2025; November 7,2025.

⁴⁴ [https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-welfare-program-improvement.](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-welfare-program-improvement)

Other Departments and Agencies involved in Foster Care

The LACO foster care system is made up of a complex network of State and County government agencies and community organizations that play vital roles in protecting and supporting children, who are neglected or abused, and their families. DCFS collaborates with these county departments and agencies in providing various services to children and families:

- Department of Mental Health (DMH) provides mental health assessments and services to children in the foster care system. They collaborate with social workers, third-party mental health service providers and foster parents to help children/families heal and thrive. Supervising clinicians oversee field clinicians who work directly with children in foster care. Parents and children who need mental health services are referred to third party providers.⁴⁵

Since the pandemic, many mental health clinicians have chosen to only provide treatments through telehealth and no longer provide in-person consultations and treatments. In addition, some mental health clinicians have left the profession due to the emotionally taxing nature of the job. As a result, finding mental health clinicians available to work with foster children has become a challenge, especially when treatment is required for complex mental health and developmental issues. There is also a shortage of mental health clinicians in certain locations such as Antelope Valley and the Inner City due to their location and/or more complex cases.⁴⁶

With fewer clinicians handling the number of cases in these locations, many may be saddled with high caseloads which can lead to burnout. It is more difficult to retain clinicians in these locations. Some

⁴⁵ <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/child-welfare-division/>.

⁴⁶ Multiple Interviews DMH staff January 21,2026 and February 20,2026.

clinicians leave after they have completed the hours needed to get their license or certification.⁴⁷

- California Department of Health Care Services “is the federally designated single state agency responsible for financing and administering the state's Medicaid program, Medi-Cal... Medi-Cal programs cover physical health, mental health, substance use disorder, services, pharmacy, dental, and long-term services and supports.”⁴⁸
- Department of Health Services operates Medical Hubs that provide coordinated healthcare to foster children, including medical assessments for suspected abuse, initial comprehensive exams for children entering care, and linkage to specialized care.⁴⁹
- Department of Public Health nurses work with social workers to ensure children in foster care receive medical, dental, and developmental care by coordinating and providing various health and support services.⁵⁰
- Child Support Services Department works with DCFS in managing the child support program in LACO. It locates the person responsible for paying child support and enforces child, medical and spousal support orders.⁵¹
- Department of Public Social Services sets up Medi-Cal for foster children and payments to foster families. It administers public assistance programs that provide services to help keep children at home, such as housing, food and employment support.⁵²

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ California Department of Health Care Services, <https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/Pages/AboutUs.aspx>.

⁴⁹ <https://dpss.publichealth.lacounty.gov.html>.

⁵⁰ <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov.html>.

⁵¹ Los Angeles County Child Support Services Department, <https://cssd.lacounty.gov/about-us/>.

⁵² <https://dpss.lacounty.gov/en/health.html>.

- Los Angeles County Office of Education partners with DCFS by placing Education Specialists in DCFS field offices. The Office of Education provides support services such as tutoring, transportation assistance, and data sharing to track and support student progress. They also coordinate with over 80 school districts and charter schools.⁵³
- Juvenile Courts preside over cases involving youth in three main areas: Juvenile Dependency, Juvenile Justice, and Adoptions. In Juvenile Dependency proceedings, the court appoints representation for a child through the Children’s Law Center and for parents through Los Angeles Dependency Lawyers.⁵⁴
- Probation Department supervises minors under the legal jurisdiction of DCFS. Under the Juvenile Dual Supervision Program, minors receive case supervision from both DCFS and Probation. DCFS is the lead agency responsible for planning and treatment, and Probation monitors compliance with conditions of probation.⁵⁵
- California Department of Social Services secures federal funding to support child welfare services programs. It provides a broad spectrum of support activities such as statewide "best practices" training for social workers, coordinates scholarships for social work students, helps formulate post-secondary social services curriculum, and provides some direct services such as adoption placements. It is also responsible for the oversight and administration of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), a statewide computer system to automate the case management, services planning, and

⁵³ Los Angeles County Office of Education, Foster Youth Services, <https://www.lacoe.edu/services/student-support/foster-youth-services>.

⁵⁴ <https://www.lacourt.ca.gov/pages/lp/juvenile-division>.

⁵⁵ <https://probation.lacounty.gov>.

information gathering functions of child welfare services.⁵⁶ Its Community Care Licensing Division is the state-level licensing agency for Resource Families (a.k.a. foster families).⁵⁷

- Office of Child Protection works to fulfill the Board of Supervisor’s charge of protecting children by collaborating with County agencies, the community, and other entities to identify problems affecting child safety and well-being and developing solutions that will improve how the system serves children and families.⁵⁸

Non-government Agencies and Organizations

DCFS contracts with several Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) and over 50 community-based organizations to provide supplemental care and support to foster children under the care of DCFS.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, disparities in salaries and benefits among FFAs, DCFS, school districts, hospitals and private clinics have led to challenges in hiring and keeping social workers in FFAs.⁶⁰

- Foster Family Agencies are organizations that contract with DCFS to recruit, license, and provide essential services to children and families in foster care, including services from social workers and mental health clinicians. Currently, there are 36 FFAs that support 1,012 children in LACO.⁶¹ The role of FFAs is in transition because of the success in keeping children with their families or placing them with relatives. DCFS is collaborating with FFAs to align their services with the

⁵⁶ California Department of Social Services, <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-welfare-services-case-management-system>.

⁵⁷ <https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/legislation-and-regulations/manual-letters/community-care-licensing>.

⁵⁸ Los Angeles County Office of Child Protection, Why We Exist, <https://ocp.lacounty.gov/why-we-exist>.

⁵⁹ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/?s=ffas>; <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/about/who-we-work-with/#:~:text=Community%20Based%20Organizations,Foster%20Family%2>.

⁶⁰ Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, February 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 17,2025.

⁶¹ Ibid.

changing needs in foster care, such as treating children with complex mental health and developmental needs.⁶²

FFAs are required, by contract terms with DCFS, to have liability insurance to work with foster families.⁶³ In 2024, the Nonprofit Insurance Alliance of California, which insures about 90% of FFAs throughout the State, announced it was not renewing plans starting October 1, citing a rise in litigation costs. Without liability insurance, these foster family agencies cannot operate foster homes.⁶⁴ “Since 2024, more than two dozen nonprofits that recruit, train and support foster parents have shuttered across 13 counties, according to the California Department of Social Services.”⁶⁵

California's budget, approved in July 2025, included a short-term "lifeline" to provide funding to help FFAs cover the dramatic increase in insurance costs. This is intended to give these agencies and the state more time to find a permanent solution.⁶⁶

- Community-based Organizations are nonprofit, community-based, and may be faith-based organizations that provide specific services to foster children/families. DCFS partners with over 50 community-based organizations across LACO to provide the tools and support families

⁶² Ibid.; Multiple Interviews DCFS staff October 8, 2025 and November 19, 2025.

⁶³ <https://insurancefor nonprofits.org/about/advocacy/foster-family-agency-accountability-act/#:~:text=FFAs%20are%20nonprofit%20organizations%20licensed,require%20FFAs%20to%20carry%20insurance>

⁶⁴ DCFS, *LAist*, 10/3/2024, “What’s next for foster families after an insurance shakeup threatens to upend thousands?”, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/whats-next-for-foster-families-after-an-insurance-shakeup-threatens-to-upend-thousands/>.

⁶⁵ Mihalovich, Cayla. *CalMatters*, March 11, 2026, “California’s foster care system is buckling under the weight of this unexpected cost”, <https://calmatters.org/justice/2026/03/foster-care-insurance-crisis/>.

⁶⁶ <https://imprintnews.org/top-stories/california-budget-provides-lifeline-to-private-providers-while-making-cuts-to-some-vital-child-welfare-programs/262337#:~:text=Last%20year%2C%20in%20the%20wake,teams%20and%20other%20nonacademic%20in terests>.

need to make the home safe and keep families together.⁶⁷ In addition, DCFS supplements these partnerships with programs such as Parents in Partnership which pairs parents with mentors who have successfully navigated the system,⁶⁸ and Community Cultural Broker Program to help connect parents with culturally relevant resources.⁶⁹

- Advocacy Groups work with DCFS to support their shared goal of protecting children in specific areas such as immigrant rights.⁷⁰
- Academic and Research Institutions collaborate with DCFS to determine ways to improve foster care in Los Angeles County.⁷¹

Based on research and multiple interviews with DCFS staff, the Committee created the following diagram (Figure 4) which shows how DCFS, other government agencies, and non-government agencies support foster children, their families and resource families (a.k.a. foster families).

⁶⁷ DCFS, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/>.

⁶⁸ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/parents/parent-resources/dcfs-parent-services/parents-in-partnership/#:~:text=Parent%20Partne.>

⁶⁹ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/advancingequity/#:~:text=DCFS%20partners%20with%20the%20Foster,in%20the%20child%20we.>

⁷⁰ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/about/who-we-work-with/>.

⁷¹ <https://www.csulb.edu/college-of-health-human-services/school-of-social-work/la-dcfs-and-ucla-academy-of-workforce/#:~:text.>

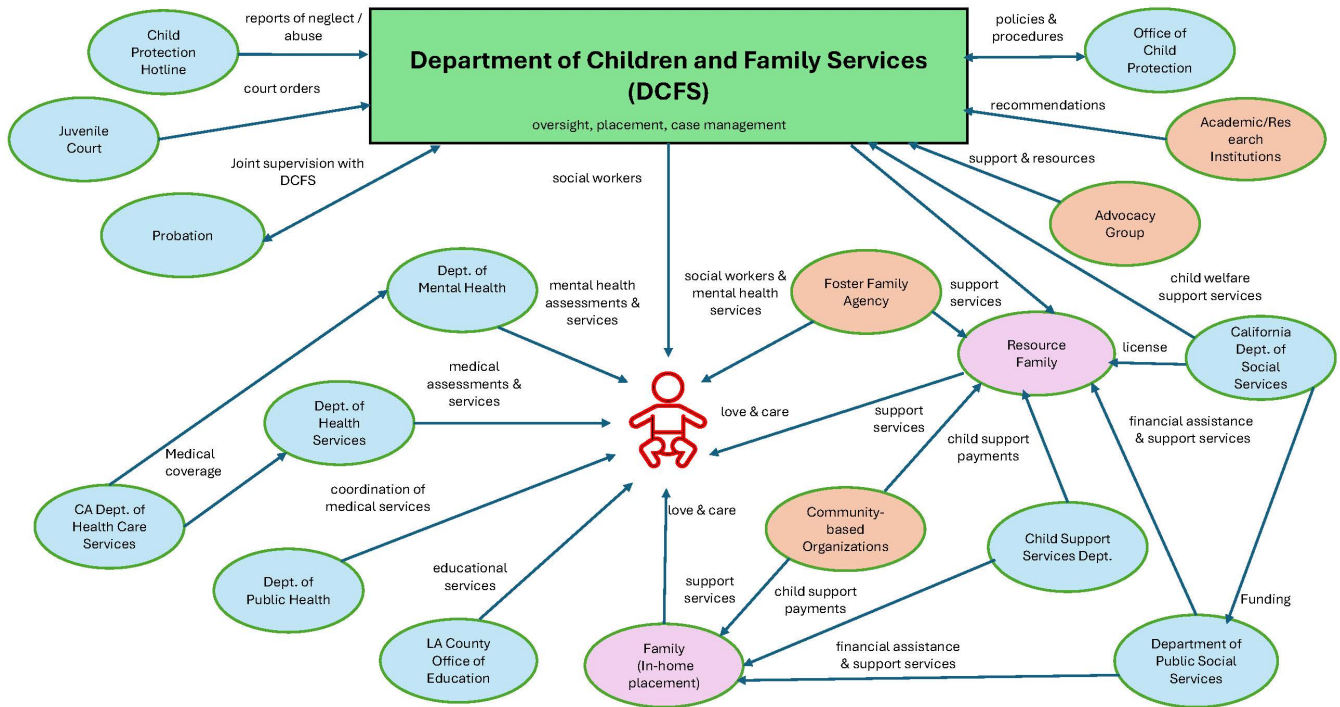


Figure 4. Departments and Agencies involved in Foster Care

Any given case may involve over 12 government agencies, numerous community-based organizations, an FFA, and multiple schools.

Foster Care Process

DCFS and its partners support children and families in crisis by focusing on three key areas: Safety, Well-Being, and Permanency.⁷² DCFS receives reports of alleged child abuse and/or neglect every day through the Los Angeles County Child Protection Hotline, the Child Abuse Reporting Electronic System (CARES) online reporting system, and the Suspected Child Abuse Reporting System (SCAR) for written reports.⁷³

Figure 5 illustrates the Child Protection Hotline intake process. A DCFS social worker evaluates the reports, determines the severity of the situation,

⁷² LACO DCFS, What We Do, <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/about/what-we-do/>.

⁷³ See Figure 5; <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/CPH-Graphic-2022.pdf>.

and categorizes them into one of the following scenarios with corresponding actions:

- If the situation is urgent and requires immediate investigation, an in-person investigation is carried out as soon as possible within 24 hours to ensure the safety of the child.
- If the situation is not urgent but requires an investigation, a social worker visits the child/family within 5 days to make an in-person assessment.
- If the situation does not require an investigation but the child/family needs support services, arrangements are made to provide the required services to the child/family.
- If the situation does not require an investigation and no support services are needed, no further action is taken.⁷⁴

⁷⁴ Ibid.

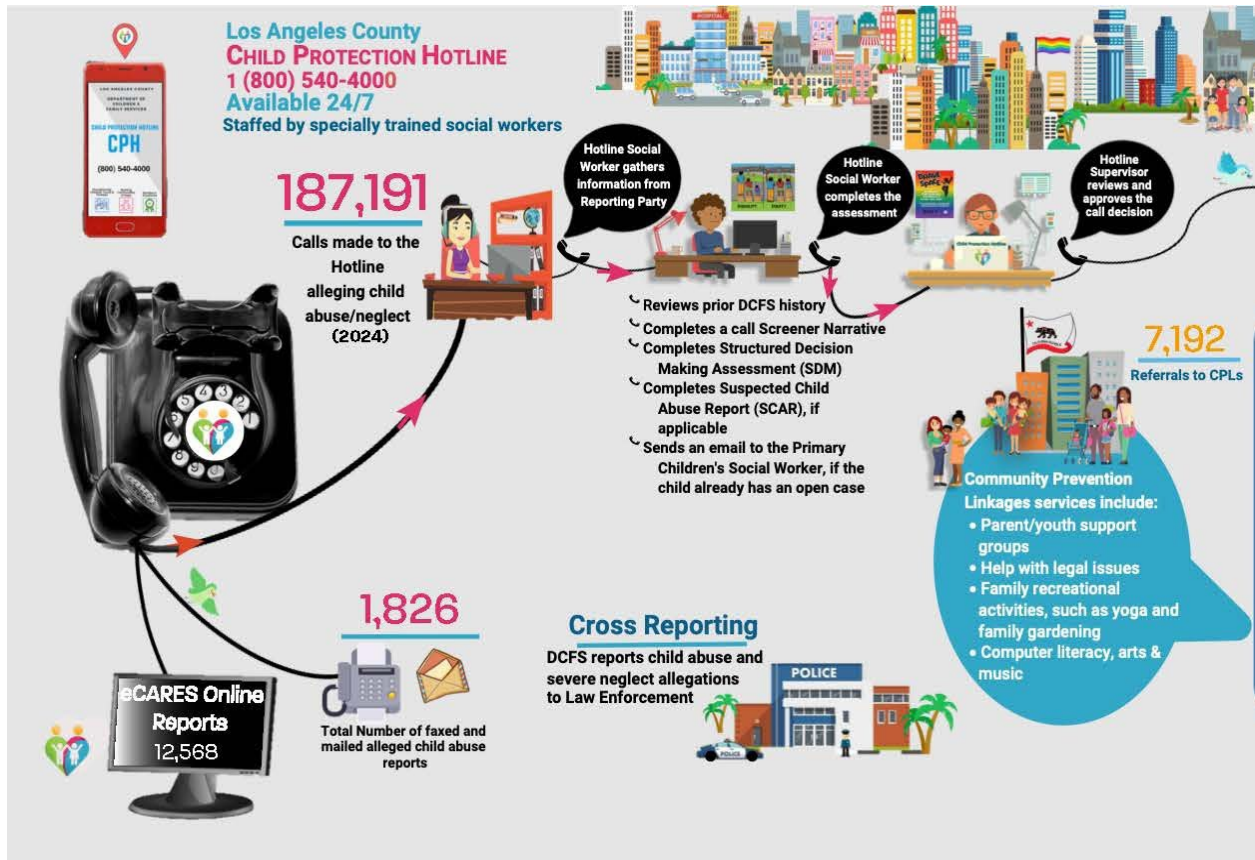


Figure 5. Child Protection Hotline Intake Process

When it is deemed safe for the child to stay at home and the child/family only needs support services such as food, tutoring, respite care, training in childcare and mental health therapies, the social worker coordinates with other agencies to provide these to the child/family.⁷⁵

When the reported situation requires further investigation, the child undergoes a medical assessment, and medical services are provided as necessary. A DMH clinician conducts a mental health assessment of the child and, if necessary, prescribes mental health treatments. A DCFS social worker convenes a Child and Family Team meeting that consists of the family, relatives, the DMH clinician, caregivers, neighbors, teachers, coaches and other adults who know the child/children/family well. The result of the meeting is a case plan that identifies the issues, describes the strategies and outlines the steps that will be taken to address those issues. The goal is to keep the child at home, or to eventually reunify the child with the family when the child's safety is no longer a concern.⁷⁶

Simultaneously, DCFS opens a court case with the Juvenile Court, and a hearing is scheduled for the judge to decide whether to keep the child at home or to remove the child.⁷⁷

Figure 6 is a high-level illustration of the Foster Care Process Roadmap. Figure 7 is the Foster Care Court Process.

⁷⁵ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/about/what-we-do/>.

⁷⁶ <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/child-welfare-division/>.

⁷⁷ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/parents/court-proceedings/>.

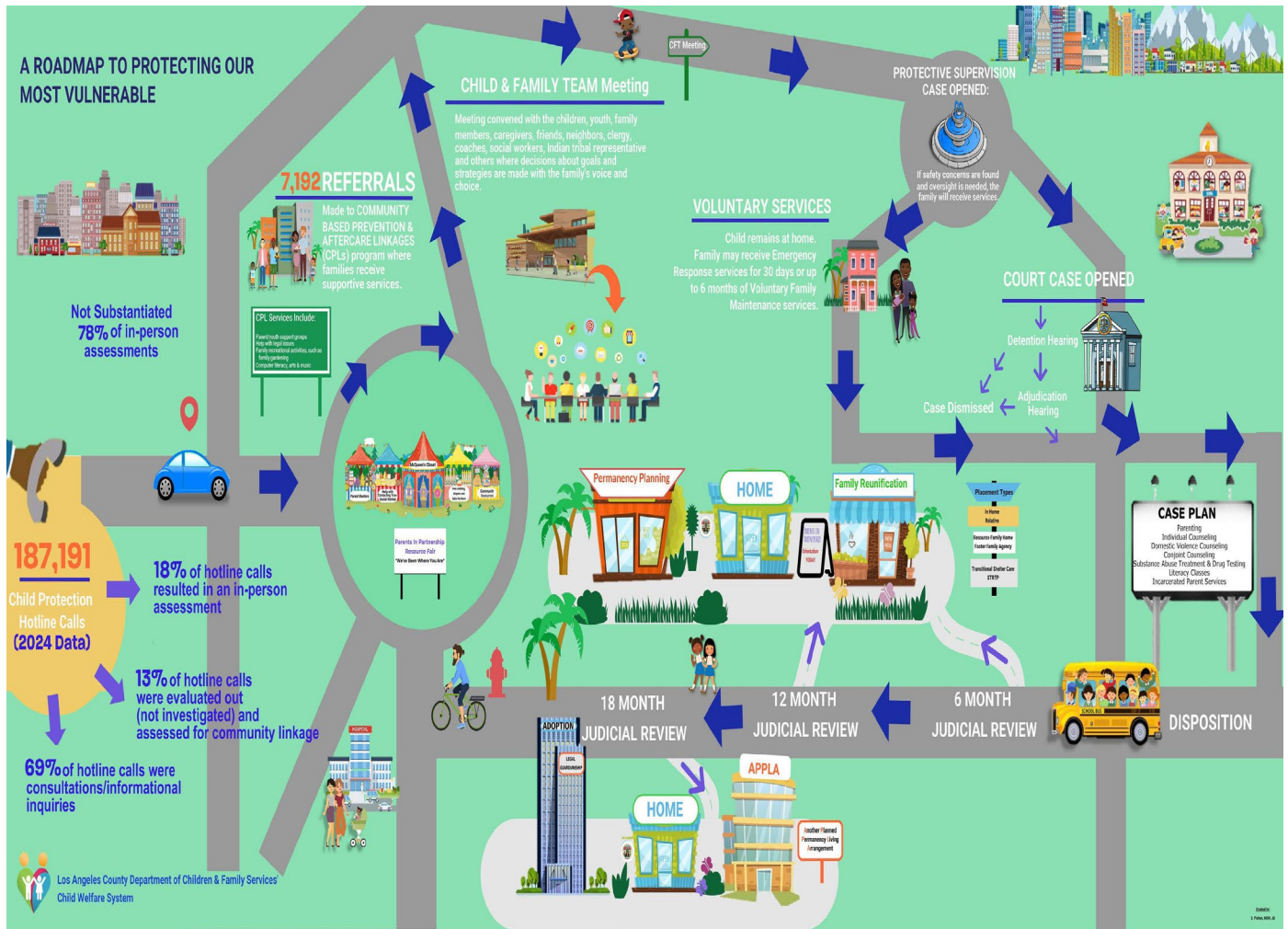


Figure 6. Foster Care Process Roadmap

Click on the following link to get to a more readable online version of the diagram: Foster Care Process Roadmap (<https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Child-Welfare-Roadmap-2022-Data.pdf>)

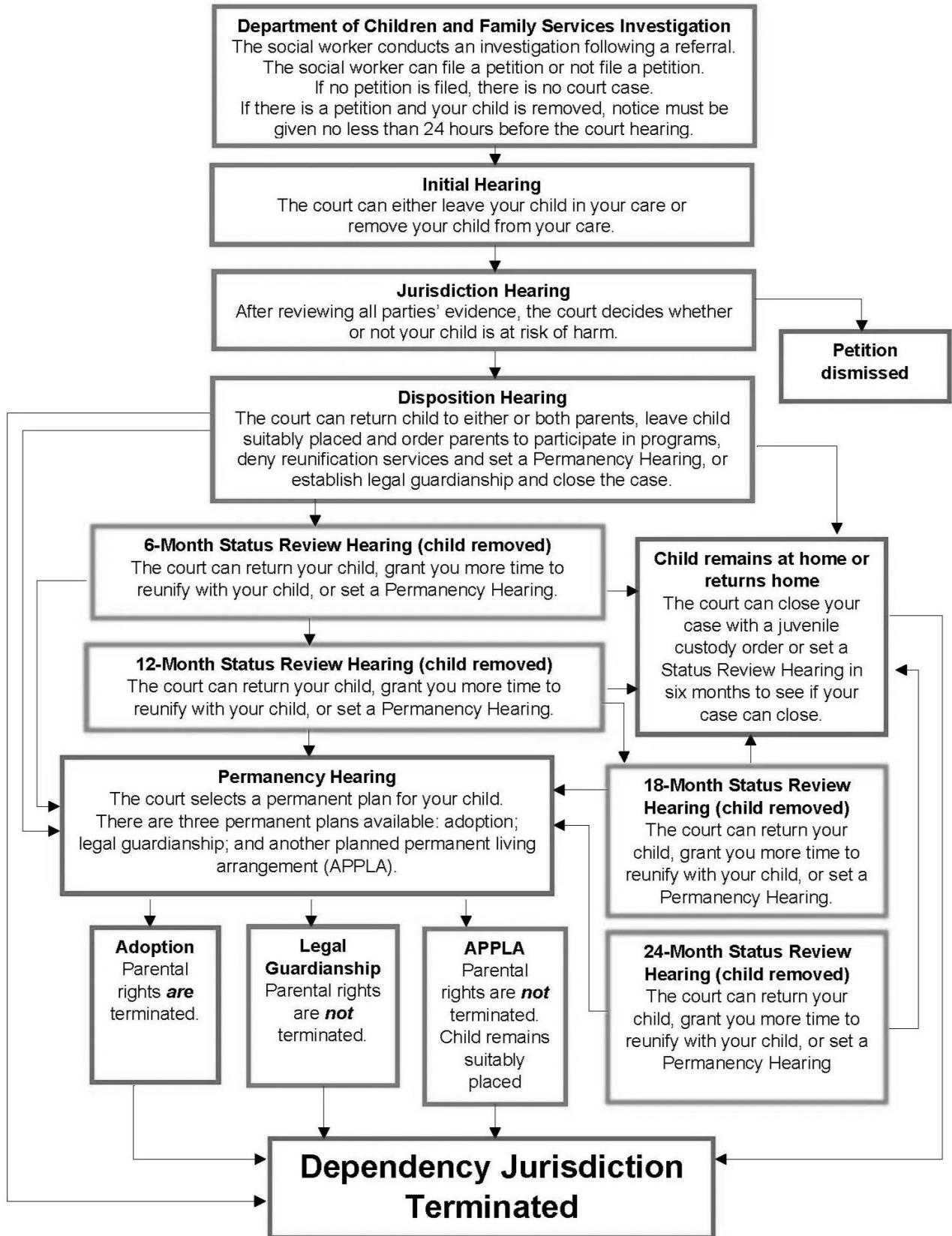


Figure 7. Foster Care Court Process ⁷⁸

Once the court order specifies the child must be removed, DCFS looks for a temporary placement for the child. In cases where the parents have separated, the priority is to locate the other parent and determine whether the child can live with him/her. If that is not a viable option, social workers reach out to close relatives such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, or an adult who knows and cares for the child such as a close family friend, teacher, or coach. If none is available, the social worker tries to place the child with a foster family in the same community to keep the child in the same school and close to friends and relatives. When this is not possible, the child may be placed with a foster family in another location.⁷⁹

When a child requires 24-hour supervision and treatment/therapy due to behavioral/mental issues, they are placed in a Short-Term Residential Therapeutic Program (STRTP). STRTPs are residential facilities, which replace group homes, that provide 24-hour supervision and behavioral/mental health treatment/therapy. The goal is to reduce the severity of the child's behavioral/mental health issues to enable reunification with the family or be placed with a foster family. STRTPs may only house up to 16 people in their facility and stays are limited to a maximum of six months, unless extended by the court, if necessary.⁸⁰

When a relative or a known adult chooses to provide foster care for a child, they must be State licensed as a resource family either through DCFS or an FFA. They complete an application and attend a minimum of 12 hours of

⁷⁸ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/parents/court-proceedings/>.

⁷⁹ <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/caregivers/relative-caregivers/>.

⁸⁰ Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025; [https://policy.dcfslacounty.gov/Policy?id=5928#:~:text=and%20their%20family-,Short-Term%20Residential%20Therapeutic%](https://policy.dcfslacounty.gov/Policy?id=5928#:~:text=and%20their%20family-,Short-Term%20Residential%20Therapeutic%20).

training, while DCFS determines their eligibility, runs a background check, interviews the family, and inspects the residence. While the resource family is being vetted, the child is placed in shelter care, which provides 24-hour care and temporary placement in emergency situations.⁸¹

Once the resource family has been approved, the child stays with the family until the court determines whether the child can be reunited with the family, adopted, or transferred to another suitable facility which cares for children with severe physical, mental or emotional needs.⁸²

When no relatives or other known adults are available to take the child in, DCFS tries to place the child with a DCFS resource family within the community. When none is available, DCFS reaches out to FFAs so they can try to place the child with their resource families. Both DCFS and FFAs try to place the child in the same community and with families of the same ethnicity.⁸³

Even with all these concentrated efforts some children remain difficult to place. Teenagers are a challenge because many foster parents prefer younger children. Special needs children with significant physical disabilities, mental health issues, educational challenges regardless of age, are difficult to place. Children suffering with Substance Use Disorder (SUD), sexual identity struggles including LGBTQ+, as well as social media addiction, are specific challenges for placement.⁸⁴

Another more recently encountered challenge involves youths who know how to work the system, presumably for their advantage, but which can have

⁸¹ Multiple Interviews DCFS staff November 7 and 19,2025; <https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/caregivers/become-a-foster-parent/>.

⁸² Multiple Interviews DCFS staff October 2 and 8,2025.

⁸³ Ibid.; Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025.

⁸⁴ Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025; DCFS Foster Moms December 23 & 30,2025; DCFS staff December 23,2025; DMH staff January 21,2026.

negative or unintended consequences for them. Upon entering the system, every child aged 10 or above is given a copy of the Foster Youth Bill of Rights to ensure they are aware of their rights in areas such as education, healthcare and visitation.⁸⁵ They talk to peers and are influenced by extensive use of social media. Older children can dictate where they want to be placed, refuse medication and/or treatment, and can refuse to have their person or belongings searched. False claims and accusations by foster youth may result in transfers from a stable placement to a less beneficial setting or multiple placements. Ultimately, this results in less stability for the child and disruption of services and treatment.⁸⁶

A child placed with a DCFS foster family gets monthly visits by a DCFS social worker, while a child placed with an FFA foster family may get weekly visits from an FFA social worker. These visits are intended to monitor progress and identify needs.⁸⁷

DMH clinicians or contracted third-party providers administer mental health treatments to the child either at home or in the office. When parents need mental health services, they are referred to third-party providers.⁸⁸

Some DMH clinicians utilize non-traditional therapies like Infant Massage, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy as well as art, music and play. These have been effective, especially with infants and young children who are unable to effectively express themselves verbally. There is a significant variance in its use among mental health clinicians, since not all clinicians are trained in

⁸⁵ LA County Foster Youth Bill of Rights, <https://layoutrights.com/>, March 6,2026.

⁸⁶ Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025. DCFS Foster Moms December 23 & 30,2025; DCFS staff December 23,2025; DMH staff January 21,2026.

⁸⁷ Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 25,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025. DCFS Foster Moms 1 December 23 & 30,2025; DCFS staff December 23,2025; DCFS staff December 23,2025.

⁸⁸ Multiple Interviews DMH staff November 10,2025; <https://dmh.lacounty.gov/our-services/child-welfare-division/>.

non-traditional therapies, which limits the effectiveness of mental health treatments.⁸⁹

Each child is assigned a DCFS social worker case manager who oversees the care of the child, coordinates with DMH and FFAs, and ensures all required documentation and court reports are submitted on time. For DCFS resource families, the case manager supervises the DCFS field social worker who makes monthly visits to the child/family and facilitates Child and Family Team meetings to develop safety and permanency plans for the child.⁹⁰

Our interviews revealed instances of disconnect between DCFS field social workers and their supervisors/managers, as well as DMH field clinicians with their supervisors. Both DCFS and DMH field workers are caring, dedicated professionals who are deeply vested in doing their best. However, some of their supervisors/managers are out of touch with the realities and challenges of field work. Consequently, the supervisors/managers are unable to empathize and provide adequate support to their respective field service providers.⁹¹ This causes frustration and limits the ability of the field workers to provide a higher quality of care for the child.

Another issue impacting high quality of childcare is the noticeable disparities in salaries and benefits among FFAs, DCFS, school districts, hospitals and private clinics. These have created challenges in hiring and keeping social workers in FFAs. This leads to higher caseloads and burnout which negatively affects the quality of care provided to foster children with FFA placements.⁹²

⁸⁹ Multiple interviews DMH staff January 21,2026; February 10,2026.

⁹⁰ Ibid.; DCFS staff December 23,2025; DCFS Foster Moms December 23 & 30,2025.

⁹¹ Multiple interviews DMH staff January 21,2026; February 10,2026; DCFS staff December 23,2025.

⁹² Multiple Interviews FFA CEOs and Managers, September 9,2025; October 17,2025; October 29,2025.
Multiple Interviews DCFS staff October 2 & 8,2025.

Technology

An underlying theme from our exploration into the foster care system is learning about a lack of coordination among workers/agencies involved in foster care. During our interviews, the Committee learned of instances when coordination was slow among DCFS, DMH and other agencies involved in foster care. For example, there have been delays in receiving services after the initial mental health assessment, accessing the social worker's report, receiving a child's school progress report, and getting Medi-Cal approval. These have resulted in delays in providing mental health and other services to children and families. Now in this last section we explore how technology can improve interactions, efficiency and care.

The California Department of Social Services is responsible for the oversight and administration of the Child Welfare Services/Case Management System (CWS/CMS), an application that links all 58 counties and the state to a common database. It is an online case management system that tracks each case from initial contact through termination of services.⁹³

DCFS social workers and support staff enter information related to foster care into the statewide CWS/CMS application system. The DCFS Information Technology Services Bureau extracts data relevant to LACO foster care from CWS/CMS into its own database called Data Mart. There are over 100 applications built around Data Mart to support DCFS and foster care. It is also used to share information with other agencies and provide business intelligence and reporting. DCFS and other agencies create a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that specifies the information, date and frequency the other agencies will receive from DCFS.⁹⁴

⁹³ Multiple Interviews DCFS Staff February 6,2026.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

CWS/CMS will be replaced with Child Welfare Services/California Automated Response and Engagement System (CWS/CARES) which is scheduled to be available in October 2026. Children/families, social workers and other workers in foster care will all benefit from the improvements built into the system such as:

- Emergency Response workers will be able to find and attach previous records about the alleged victims and perpetrators to a new referral.
- Supervisors will receive automated notification when a screening that needs immediate response is submitted for their approval.
- Timers will be used to remind staff how many days the child has been in care. It can also start the 14-day notice of intended placement change, when necessary.
- A mandated reporter can request to have the Emergency Response Notice of Disposition emailed to them.
- Auto-populating reports, forms and other documents from data entered by workers will improve accuracy and reduce workload.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Ibid.

FINDINGS

Finding 2.1

The public has a negative impression of the foster care system and DCFS, mostly driven by adverse and sensationalized media coverage of events and lawsuits.

Finding 2.2

DCFS, in partnership with other government agencies, has made great progress in improving the foster care system. Many organizations involved in child welfare, including DCFS, have taken a critical look at foster care. Several initiatives came out of these reviews resulting in significant improvements in the care and support of children, families and workers in foster care.

The Foster Care Committee commends the leadership of DCFS, DMH, and other government agencies in their efforts to provide more and better ways of keeping children safe at home and helping children and families in foster care heal and thrive.

Finding 2.3

Los Angeles County has been plagued by expensive civil lawsuits and remains vulnerable.

Plaintiff lawyers looking for ways to make money off the foster care system can look for a child who was in foster care, pay \$435 in filing fees, and have the possibility of receiving millions of dollars in compensatory and punitive

damages for their client and themselves.

Mass settlements of class action claims, covering years of alleged abuse, while intended to manage financial exposure, are fertile arenas for fraudulent or unsubstantiated claims. Los Angeles County has spent billions of dollars on settlements, diverting critical financial resources which could otherwise be used to benefit children/families in foster care and other county agencies.

Finding 2.4

FFAs' inability to pay expensive liability premiums may cause more closures.

Unless additional government funding is available to help FFAs pay for liability insurance, more FFAs may be forced to stop supporting resource families. When this happens, children placed with the FFAs' foster families will have to be transferred to another foster family or to a DCFS foster family, causing more trauma for the children and straining the foster care system.

Although FFAs are outside of this Committee's jurisdiction, our concern is that a critical link in the foster care system may be in jeopardy if the FFAs' inability to pay insurance premiums causes more FFAs to close their resource family operations.

Finding 2.5

Community-based organizations are helpful in keeping children at home. Children who would otherwise be sent to foster care are able to stay home with their families because of the additional help they provide. DCFS has effectively partnered with these organizations to provide support services needed by children and families in foster care.

Finding 2.6

Finding foster families for teenagers and children with special needs is a challenge. Infants and children up to pre-teen are usually placed with relatives, adopted or easily placed with foster families. Unfortunately, foster families are less willing to accept teenagers and children/youth with special needs, behavioral issues, dealing with substance abuse or identify as LGBTQ+.

Finding 2.7

Racial disparity poses a challenge, especially with Black and Hispanic children. Proportionately, there are more Black and Hispanic children in foster care than the relative share of the Black and Hispanic population in Los Angeles County. This creates a challenge in finding resource families, social workers and mental health clinicians of the same culture to care for and work with them.

When children are placed with foster parents who have no understanding of the child's culture, it makes the adjustment more difficult for both. Communication gaps and misunderstandings are more likely to occur. The same is true when social workers or mental health clinicians with no knowledge or exposure to the child's culture are assigned to work with them.

Finding 2.8

Child fatalities due to neglect or abuse still occur despite all the improvements in foster care. Although it is commendable that child fatalities have significantly gone down over the years, the number to strive for will always be zero; however, it's an unrealistic expectation that all human error, which may result in tragic consequences, can be eliminated. The Committee believes current and future improvements in foster care will continue to further reduce preventable child fatalities.

Finding 2.9

A number of today's youth in foster care are more knowledgeable of their rights. They may try to influence various aspects of their care and treatment which may result in unintended negative consequences.

Finding 2.10

Hiring and retention of social workers is a challenge among FFAs. This is not a problem with DCFS.

Finding 2.11

Some DCFS and DMH managers/supervisors cannot empathize with their field staff, which causes frustration and limits the ability of those workers to provide a higher quality of care for the child.

The job of working with children in foster care can be demanding and challenging for both DCFS social workers and DMH clinicians. Throughout the years, the demands and regulatory aspects of the job have changed significantly, and the attitudes and expectations of children/youths have

changed. Our interviews revealed that, in some instances, DCFS supervisors/managers who have not done field work in recent years may not fully understand what their staff face in the field. Similarly, supervising DMH clinicians, who have not done field work recently, could not relate to what field clinicians deal with every day.

Finding 2.12

DMH clinicians in Antelope Valley and the Inner City have higher caseloads and are more susceptible to burnout because of a shortage of field clinicians in these locations. Most clinicians prefer to work in other locations due to the distance of their homes from Antelope Valley, and they prefer fewer complex cases than the ones at Inner City offices.

Finding 2.13

There is limited knowledge and use of non-traditional therapies. Mental health clinicians typically use traditional therapies like Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT) in foster care. However, there is a significant variance in the use of non-traditional therapies because not all mental health clinicians are trained in such modalities.

Finding 2.14

While current technology is helpful, there remains a lag in the exchange of information regarding diagnoses, therapies, treatments, progress reports, and legal rulings. More efficient access to information and data exchange is still needed.

Finding 2.15

DCFS and DMH use too many acronyms in verbal and written communication with the public, which creates confusion, misunderstanding and frustration.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Significant improvements have made LACO foster care better than it has ever been. However, the work does not stop here. The Committee aims to contribute to DCFS's quest for continuous improvement in foster care through the following recommendations:

Recommendation 2.1

To improve the public's perception of DCFS and foster care, the Office of Strategic Communications of DCFS should implement a public communication strategy highlighting positive changes and outcomes in foster care, particularly personal success stories of children in foster care. Featuring success stories of celebrities and public figures who were in foster care either as a child or parent may serve to inspire children and families. Partnering with news agencies such as *Los Angeles Times* and *The Imprint* may ensure these positive stories get sufficient video and print coverage.

Recommendation 2.2

To prevent expensive lawsuits, protect itself against fraudulent lawsuits, and reduce settlement costs:

2.2.1. DCFS should ensure case managers receive timely notifications of events in their cases such as, but not limited to, court orders, new

diagnoses, therapy treatments, etc., so they can promptly review and make correct and timely decisions;

2.2.2. Social workers and clinicians assigned to a case should be given easy access to a uniform system of reports, updates, and related important data so that every worker, of every skill level and skill set is completing items that every other involved staff needs to know;

2.2.3. Social workers should ensure sufficient documentation of necessary information, establishing their due diligence and legal compliance.

Recommendation 2.3

To verify the accuracy of allegations in potentially fraudulent class action lawsuits and the validity of mass settlement claims:

2.3.1. The Litigation Department of DCFS should partner with the LACO District Attorney's office to create a credibility checklist identifying factors, conditions and circumstances to substantiate the validity of claims;

2.3.2. The credibility checklist should be shared with law enforcement agencies when fraud is evident.

Recommendation 2.4

To address the shortage of DMH mental health clinicians:

2.4.1. Have foster children receive treatment in field offices whenever it can be arranged, or through video/phone (telehealth) when telehealth can be as effective as in-person treatments, such as for

teenagers or youth. This allows clinicians to spend more time providing mental health services rather than driving to different locations;

2.4.2. Encourage more mental health clinicians to work in locations where there is a shortage by providing incentives such as higher pay, bonuses, subsidized transportation, and student loan payments;

2.4.3. Prevent burnout and reduce attrition by decreasing the number of caseloads per clinician and implementing a maximum number of assigned cases per clinician. This may require transferring cases to other offices, contracting with more third-party service providers or hiring more clinicians in certain locations.

Recommendation 2.5

To increase the effectiveness of mental health treatments, train DMH clinicians in the use of non-traditional therapies such as Infant Massage, Parent Child Interaction Therapy and creative arts therapies (i.e. art, music, play):

2.5.1. Assign DMH clinicians who are experienced in specific non-traditional therapies to train other clinicians in field offices that would benefit from it. For example, ask DMH clinicians with expertise in Infant Massage to train clinicians in offices with more infants in their care;

2.5.2. Hire outside experts in non-traditional therapies to provide group training or send clinicians to classes, potentially as part of their continuing education credit;

2.5.3. Make non-traditional therapy training available for clinicians to learn at their convenience;

2.5.4. Keep track of the relevance and effectiveness of non-traditional therapies to determine whether they should be part of standard training for clinicians, and to use as evidence of efficacy when asking for additional funds for training.

Recommendation 2.6

To encourage more resource families to care for teenagers and children with special needs:

2.6.1. Provide incentives and additional support to the families such as respite care, hosting local support group meetings, hosting teenagers' night outs and providing mentors for the parents;

2.6.2. When people apply to become foster parents, whether through DCFS or FFAs, let them know about the greater need for families to foster teenagers and children with special needs. Inform them of relevant incentives and additional support available for these types of placements;

2.6.3. Provide online foster family applicants with a means to indicate their willingness to foster teenagers and/or children with special needs.

Recommendation 2.7

To inform resource families' care for foster youth, include a section in their training on how to recognize and respond to youths who try to influence various aspects of their care and treatment which may result in unintended negative consequences. In addition, creating a local support group for foster parents of teenagers, or connecting them with one will provide those with an opportunity to share their experience and learn from each other.

Recommendation 2.8

To further benefit from community involvement in foster care, inform local organizations about specific needs in their area. Many city/neighborhood councils, local civic organizations (i.e. Rotary, Kiwanis, etc.) and local faith-based organizations may not be aware of these needs. Reach out to local organizations individually or invite them to events intended to inform and recruit their assistance and turn public concern into practical solutions.

Recommendation 2.9

To improve communication and understanding between all members of the resource family including foster youth and involved agency workers, DCFS, DMH, and to shorten adjustment periods when there is racial disparity between a child and the foster family, social worker or mental health clinician assigned to care for the child:

2.9.1. Create or purchase short cultural awareness training modules for each specific culture as it becomes more prevalent in foster care. Each training module should go beyond cultural sensitivity and include practical information about a given culture such as hair care for Black children, common foods and recipes, traditions, celebrated events and family dynamics. The short training modules may be added to standard training when necessary. They should also be available online so foster families, social workers and clinicians can learn at their convenience.

2.9.2. When foster families, social workers and clinicians have limited or no knowledge about the culture of the child in their care, they should be required to take the cultural awareness training.

Recommendation 2.10

To help supervisors and managers of DCFS and DMH support their subordinates more effectively:

2.10.1. DCFS managers and supervising social workers who have not done field work in recent years should be required to make periodic field visits in the company of a social worker. These field visits should include foster homes, FFAs and children in their parents' or relatives' homes. The experience will allow them to better empathize with social workers and be more effective in supporting them.

2.10.2. Similarly, DMH supervising clinicians who have not worked directly with a child in a long time should periodically take on cases or experience field service visits with clinicians they supervise. A better understanding of their clinicians' challenges will make them more effective in supporting them.

2.10.3. DCFS and DMH should conduct bottom-up or 360-degree performance reviews. Bottom-up reviews allow a subordinate to provide feedback about a superior's effectiveness as their boss. The 360-degree reviews extend it further to include reviews of peers and subordinates. These can be done formally or informally, as long as subordinates feel safe about giving their honest feedback without fear of backlash from their superiors.

2.10.4. Managers should solicit feedback from field workers about the level of support they receive from supervisors by holding informal and confidential one-on-one meetings with field workers.

Recommendation 2.11

To improve coordination between DCFS, DMH, and other departments, and to children and families in foster care:

2.11.1. Provide field social workers with mobile applications to search for support services in the area and coordinate with the organizations that supply it. For example, when a DCFS social worker determines that a family needs extra food to keep the child at home, they should be able to use their phone to find community-based organizations in a centralized and coordinated application with confirmed readily available resources in the area that can help and call them right away to schedule the food delivery or pick-up.

2.11.2. Identify instances in the foster care process where delays in sharing information with other departments affect a worker's ability to care for foster children/families and consider how technology can be used to facilitate information exchange.

Determine whether programs can be written to automatically notify and send the information, record, report or file entry to the person waiting for it in another department, rather than having department workers chase it down online. New MOUs may have to be entered for this to happen.

Recommendation 2.12

To improve the public's understanding of DCFS communications and services, materials used to train resource families, DCFS web pages, and verbal discussions with the public, avoid using acronyms unless they have been previously defined. For online materials, when an

acronym is used, provide the option of hovering over the acronym or clicking on the acronym to read the full name, description and its purpose.

COMMENDATIONS

The Committee would like to thank the management and staff of DCFS and DMH for taking time out of their busy schedules to meet with us, and for being patient and forthright in answering our questions.

The Committee would also like to thank the management and staff of FFAs for graciously hosting us during our site visits and for thoughtfully and candidly answering our questions.

Last but not least, the Committee would like to thank foster parents we interviewed for being open and honest in sharing their thoughts and experiences in foster care.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made no later than ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court.

All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 County of Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury must be submitted to:

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
 c/o Grand Jury Administration
 222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	2.1, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9.1, 2.9.2, 2.10.1, 2.10.3, 2.10.4, 2.11.1, 2.11.2, 2.12
Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services	2.1, 2.2.1, 2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.6.1, 2.6.2, 2.6.3, 2.7, 2.8, 2.9.1, 2.9.2, 2.10.1, 2.10.3, 2.10.4, 2.11.1, 2.11.2, 2.12
Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health	2.2.2, 2.2.3, 2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.3, 2.5.1, 2.5.2, 2.5.3, 2.5.4, 2.9.1, 2.9.2, 2.10.2, 2.10.3, 2.10.4, 2.12

Acronyms

CGJ	Civil Grand Jury
CWS/CMS	Child Welfare Services/Case Management System
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services
DMH	Department of Mental Health
FFA	Foster Family Agency
LACO	Los Angeles County
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
STRTP	Short-term Residential Therapeutic Program

Committee Members

Valerie Esguerra, Chair
Eva F. Brusa
Lisa Griffin
Tom Hutchinson
Gwen D. Morgan-Smith

**OUR MEDICAL EXAMINER'S
CHALLENGE**

**Providing State-Of-The-Art
Services In A Confined, Aging
Facility**



2025-26

Los Angeles County

Civil Grand Jury



Photo 16 Shortage of space at the LACO Medical Examiner's current building

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

While most counties in California have Sheriff-Coroners (52 of 58), the Los Angeles County (LACO) Board of Supervisors (BOS) established a Medical Examiner (ME) Office in 2023. County Code 2.22 defines the departmental authority and authorizes fees. ME Offices are independent agencies with an appointed Chief, while Coroner Units are a small part of an elected Sheriff's Department. Coroner Units are supervised by a Sheriff Deputy. Both Coroners and MEs supervise forensic pathologists who perform examinations or autopsies to find the causes and manners of deaths that are undetermined or suspicious. These findings obtain final approval from the

LACO ME, who is also a forensic pathologist. In a Sheriff-Coroner system this approval is just one of many Sheriff responsibilities.

Both entities strive to give next-of-kin quick responses to their questions about the death of their relative. The Medical Examiner Committee (Committee) of the Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury found an important difference among the goals cited by each agency. The Sheriff brings a law enforcement perspective and has as one of their goals the desire to determine if an **investigation** is needed to find a perpetrator and achieve justice. The LACO ME strives for a more **public health** focus with an important goal to inform relevant parties regarding manners of death to “prevent future premature deaths.”¹ The procedures the ME has developed to address this desired public health focus became a part of the Committee’s inquiry.

This inquiry began with a citizen’s complaint regarding missing property at the ME’s Office but expanded to encompass other significant issues. The Committee found that the property incident involved a theft. While gathering information about possible security problems, we discovered a more important issue of outdated and inadequate facilities. The lack of space in the facilities prevented the additional hiring of pathologists. The lack of a sufficient number of pathologists resulted in an increasing number of examinations and autopsies not being completed within the time frame required for accreditation (lost in 2016). This negatively impacted the public’s trust in the ME’s findings.

¹ Presentation by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, October 2, 2025.

Our Committee expanded the scope of this inquiry to address three issues impacting ME Office operations: accreditation and facilities, public misperceptions, and improving the security of decedent property.

Facilities

After an ME presentation, the inquiry's focus shifted to the struggles involving inadequate facilities and their effect on accreditation. Accreditation increases the perceived accuracy of identifying the cause/manner of death, raises next-of-kin comfort, strengthens legal credibility in court hearings, improves staff safety, and enhances public confidence.

We found that the ME staff worked tirelessly to find previously untried ways to make office procedures as efficient as possible, while maintaining industry standards. The time required to complete examinations has been greatly reduced, but the existing facilities will not meet the projected future demands of a growing and aging population. **Maintaining accreditation will require expanded, up-to-date facilities.**

New facilities are critically important to fulfill several key goals: timeliness, accuracy, compassion, reputation, and the reduction of stress. Comparing the size and spacing of the LACO ME examination facilities with those of several other counties demonstrates the inadequacy of the current facilities.

Public Misperceptions Effect on Operations

As part of the Committee's interview, the Medical Examiner expressed a concern that misperceptions on the part of the public had negative impacts on office operations. The Committee focused on two main areas:

- 1) Many next-of-kin come in with the misperception that the ME conducts autopsies on all cases. Pathologists must take time away from their work to explain that this is not true.

2) The public expects the ME to conduct investigations into manners of death for which someone or some entity (like a hospital) may be held responsible. The ME must explain that investigations are conducted by the Sheriff's Department. The time it takes to correct this misperception reduces the time needed by the ME to focus on his goal of working with other entities to prevent future premature deaths.

Property

The Committee's desire to address the initial complaint regarding missing property led to discovering that the ME staff never want to have missing property. Improvements have already been made, including setting up one area to catalog property, and utilizing the new digital case management system to track property. We commend the ME and its Chief of the Investigations Division for making these improvements.

BACKGROUND

The inquiry began with issues surrounding the securing of a decedent's personal property. This damaged the reputation of the ME's office and led to a loss of trust by relatives in the ME's ability to keep valuables safe.² The securing of personal property is included on the accreditation checklist of the National Association of Medical Examiners (NAME).³ The property issue

² "LA County medical examiner's office investigator charged with stealing from deceased," ABC7 Los Angeles News, November 3, 2025.

³ "NAME Inspection and Accreditation Checklist, *National Association of Medical Examiners*, Adopted November 2018 <https://www.thename.org/assets/docs/NAME%20Accreditation%20Checklist%202019%20-%202024.pdf>.

came to the attention of the Civil Grand Jury through a citizen's complaint concerning a missing bag of collector coins.

Subsequently, it was found that property was missing from two decedents.⁴ This led to a decision by the Committee to determine how often the issue of missing property occurred, and if there were procedures that needed to be changed to prevent future occurrences. The missing property problem would involve procedural issues, including:

- 1) The cataloging of property at the place of death.
- 2) The transportation to and logging of the property at the ME's office.
- 3) Access to areas where the property is secured.

Loss of Accreditation

As the inquiry progressed, the loss of accreditation and the importance of reacquiring it became recognized as a prominent concern of the Medical Examiner and, in turn, of our ME Committee. The LACO ME's Office lost its accreditation with NAME in 2016.⁵ Accreditation is considered desirable for the status attributed to the relatively few medical examiner's offices able to achieve it. Accreditation conveys that a medical examiner's office meets high-quality standards by ensuring competent policies, procedures and facilities. It verifies that the office operates with qualified personnel, follows rigorous ethical protocols, and acts as an endorsement of the office's environment and operational competence.⁶ Like a doctor posting his academic credentials on an office wall, accreditation indicates to the next-of-kin competence in the ME's conclusions. Even more importantly, trial

⁴ <https://lacounty.gov/2023/11/08/medical-examiner-investigator-charged-with-stealing-from-the-deceased/>

⁵ Presentation by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, October 2, 2025.

⁶ <https://www.thename.org/inspection-accreditation>.

juries are more likely to view the testimony by the ME staff as highly credible and authoritative.

Since 2016, the Office has been unable to meet some of the key criteria needed to reapply for accreditation.⁷ The most important of these was the ability to perform 90% of autopsies and basic external examinations within 48 hours from the time that medical examiner jurisdiction is accepted (a level 1 criterion), or even within 72 hours (a level 2 criterion).⁸ The inability to determine the cause and manner of death within the timeframes required was the most important factor causing the inability of the Office to reapply.⁹

An Aging Facility

The inability to meet the accreditation timing criteria was the inadequacy of the ME's current facilities. "Does the office have sufficient space, equipment, and facilities to support the jurisdiction's volume of medicolegal death investigations?"¹⁰ The current facilities severely limit the number of workstations and the number of persons who can perform examinations at the same time.¹¹ The workload is such that more staff is desperately needed, but the Office cannot hire them because there is no room for them to work.

This lack of staff and workspace leads to missed deadlines and having the existing staff perform the required examinations and autopsies under pressure and amid stressful conditions.¹²

⁷ Presentation by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, October 2, 2025.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "NAME Inspection and Accreditation Checklist, *National Association of Medical Examiners*, Adopted November 2018 <https://www.thename.org/assets/docs/NAME%20Accreditation%20Checklist%202019%20-%202024.pdf>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Presentation by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, October 2, 2025.

¹² Presentation by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, October 2, 2025.

Efficiencies

In the past year, the ME's Office has made several critical changes.

"*Workarounds*" were developed, including working with hospitals, to create a way for the ME to certify the means of death of many patients via direct communication, avoiding the need to transport the body to the ME's Office for examination.¹³

Improvements have made the procedures of the reduced number of examinations more efficient. The acquisition of funds to hire additional toxicologists and to purchase Rapid DNA Technology machines¹⁴ allowed toxicology tests to be completed in a few weeks rather than months. These changes allowed the ME's Office to reapply for accreditation, with the support of the BOS.¹⁵

At the ME's presentation of a proposed budget to the BOS, he was heartily congratulated for achieving this accreditation.¹⁶ When asked about progress towards a new facility, the County Chief Executive Officer noted the focus was first on completing the existing repairs needed, including seismic and others. The BOS has already agreed to fund a feasibility study regarding new, expanded (and mostly forensic) facilities.¹⁷

Facilities

The current facilities include one building constructed in 1927 and another in 1974. Neither facility can be expanded nor can they be remodeled to meet the infrastructure needs of new, more energy-intensive forensic equipment. A currently available and suitable building space that is geographically

¹³ Interview with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors meeting, February 17, 2026. Discussion of Proposed 2026-27 Department Budgets

¹⁷ Interview with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025.

centrally located and near the existing offices has been tentatively identified as a possible new facility by ME office staff.¹⁸

Public Misperceptions Effect on Operations

With the work on developing new facilities on hold, the Committee looked at another concern expressed by the ME: misperceptions on the part of the public had a negative impact on office operations.¹⁹ The Committee focused on two main areas.F

The first area concerned the impact of misperceptions on the ME's attempt to provide compassionate care to the next-of-kin of decedents. Many relatives come in with misperceptions from television shows and media reports that the ME conducts autopsies on all cases. They also often expect the ME Office to conduct investigations to determine if some party is responsible for the death and needs to be brought to justice. The Medical Examiner noted in our interview that forensic pathologists must spend additional time away from pending examinations to explain the ME processes from determining jurisdiction to the fact that investigations are not part of the ME's purview.

If a death occurs in a hospital, some relatives seek to blame the hospital for causing the death and they want to be able to sue for malpractice. The ME staff determines the cause of death, but not what hospital practice, if any, led to that happening.²⁰

The ME also is under pressure to quickly respond to publicized deaths, often called "celebrity deaths", because of the attention from the media.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

All these explanations take understaffed pathologists away from pending time-sensitive examinations and have them return to these exams even more time pressured. These misperceptions impact the important focus the ME wants to give to prevent future premature deaths.

One example involves wanting to work with the Department of Public Health to get out information regarding a new, toxic drug before more people wind up hospitalized or dying. A second example involved child deaths in auto accidents and the lack of car seats which led to working with hospitals to provide them to parents who could not afford them.²¹

METHODOLOGY

Following a presentation to the entire Civil Grand Jury, valuable information about these issues was obtained from interviews with members of the Medical Examiner's Office, including people from the Investigations Division. Another source of information came from the Department of Medical Examiner's 2023 Annual Report.²² Finally, a "Live from LA County" podcast expanded on some of the information provided by the initial presentation.²³

The requirements for national accreditation, especially timing requirements, were understood after a detailed review of the NAME Accreditation Checklist.²⁴

²¹ Ibid.

²² Department of the Medical Examiner, 2023 Annual Report, 2023 <https://me.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2023-Annual-Report.pdf>.

²³ Live from LA County, *Interview with Dr. Odey Ukpo*, podcast, episode 13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AHCPcSQH66o>.

²⁴ <https://www.thename.org/assets/docs/NAME%20Accreditation%20Checklist%202019%20-%202024.pdf>.

To give context to the facility needs and to see if the procedures of other counties could suggest possible procedural improvements for the LACO ME's Office, officials in neighboring counties were contacted and asked questions like those posed to LACO ME staff. Interviews were held with the Medical Examiners of San Diego and Ventura Counties. These calls/interviews included requests for additional information, especially for pictures of the examination and autopsy facilities and the secured property area. Additional information was received from the Sheriff-Coroner of San Bernardino County.

DISCUSSION

The initial phase of the inquiry focused on the issue of missing personal property, and the procedures for determining what property should be brought back to the ME's Office, how property was logged and secured, and the chain-of-custody procedures that were followed. This issue could impair the reputation of the ME's Office and affect the level of trust next-of-kin might have regarding the security of their relative's property.

The committee discussed the inadequacy of the LACO Medical Examiner's facilities and some of the steps taken by the new Medical Examiner to make the ME's Office both more efficient and more responsive. The "workarounds," especially with hospitals, and efficiencies, such as adding new toxicology equipment and additional toxicology staff enabled an application to be submitted to re-acquire national accreditation. Maintaining accreditation will require more staff and a larger forensic facility.

While still considering the missing property issue, the committee decided that the scope of the inquiry needed to be expanded to focus more on the inadequacy of the current ME facilities and the plans to expand to a new, larger space. It was hoped that our recommendations would prompt the

Board of Supervisors and the public to be more aware of the challenges that the ME faces: the urgent need to expand and improve facilities and increase staff.

This expansion also has implications for accreditation. Through several well thought out changes in hospital interaction, acquisition of specific toxicology staff and equipment, and other procedural adjustments, the ME Office has succeeded in re-establishing national accreditation despite its serious facility issues. However, new and expanded facilities will be needed to maintain the standards necessary to keep accreditation, especially as the county's aging population increases and new forensic issues arise.

Facilities

Information regarding present and hoped-for facilities was obtained through interviews with members of the Los Angeles County ME's staff. Information was requested regarding the size of the existing facilities relative to the size of the workload. Photographs were obtained that illustrated how crowded the working conditions are in the LACO ME's examination area.

To better determine how inadequate the current LACO ME facilities are, comparisons with the workload and facilities of other counties were needed. Interviews with the San Diego County Medical Examiner (October 23, 2025) and the Ventura County Medical Examiner (January 29, 2026) provided good comparative information. Documents from the San Bernardino Sheriff-Coroner provided some additional comparative information (January 19, 2026). The table below reflects the workload differences between Los Angeles and the other counties.

Workloads by County

	All Deaths	Referred to ME	Examinations
Los Angeles ME ²⁵	75,000	20,359	12,315
San Diego ME ²⁶	24,114	9,741	4,158
Ventura ME ²⁷	6,798	1931	702
San Bernardino Coroner ²⁸	--	8,698	2,512

The LACO ME handles three times the number of examinations as San Diego County, over three times that of San Bernardino County, and more than seventeen times the case load of Ventura County.

²⁵ me.lacounty.gov, 2023 Annual Report.

²⁶ <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me.html>; Deaths- Interview with San Diego Medical Examiner October 3, 2025.

²⁷ <https://www.sandiegocounty.gov/content/sdc/me.html>; Deaths- Interview with San Diego Medical Examiner October 3, 2025.

²⁸ Response to a Public Records Act request, received February 27, 2026.

Staffing by County

	Total	Examination	Investigation	Records/ Property
Los Angeles ME ²⁹	250	32	100+	4 (property)
San Diego ME ³⁰	85	28	28	13
Ventura ME ³¹	12	3+ techs	7	2 (admin)
San Bernardino Coroner ³²	--	21	29	--

The LACO ME's Office has three times the overall total staff and investigators as San Diego and about twenty times those of Ventura, which matches the number of cases processed by each county. Processing the numbers in the above tables show that the Records/Property staff of Los Angeles County and San Diego County are of comparable size (not three times as large as with investigators). Los Angeles County has less than ten times the staff of Ventura County (versus 17 times the cases).

However, the comparable situations regarding examination staff are very different. The number of examination staff for Los Angeles County and San

²⁹ Interview with the LA Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025; Records/Property

³⁰ Interview with the San Diego Medical Examiner, October 3, 2025

³¹ SharePoint documents sent by Ventura County, February 24, 2026.

³² Response to a Public Records Act request, received February 17, 2026.

Diego County are roughly the same even though San Diego has about a third of the workload of Los Angeles. The San Bernardino County Coroner has about two-thirds the examination staff as Los Angeles County but only about 40% of the workload. **These differences between counties derived from the workload and staffing tables highlight the shortage of examination staff in Los Angeles County to effectively handle its workload.** This staff shortage was noted by the Medical Examiner in his presentation to the LACO CGJ (October 2, 2025) as due to a lack of space in the ME's limited, aging facilities.

The inadequacy of the LACO facilities is perhaps best seen by comparing the square footage and number of examination workstations in LA to those of other counties.

Following our interviews, each county provided additional information regarding their examination spaces. The San Diego County ME's main examination room contains 11 workstations in 2,530 square feet – **230 sq. ft. per station.** San Diego has a total of **17** examination stations in three different rooms. The Ventura County ME's facilities encompass **three** workstations in a 7,883 square foot room. San Bernardino County's examination area has six workstations. While no square footage number was available, Photo #6 shows that the space is comparable to San Diego County's space.

Combining the workload and spacing figures calculated from the tables and documents gives us figures for the number of workstations and space needed by Los Angeles County to have stations and space similar to the adequate spaces of other counties. To accommodate its much larger workload, the Los Angeles ME facilities should encompass at least 51 workstations (three times San Diego's seventeen) in an area of about 11,500 square feet (51 times 230 square foot per station). The current facilities

consist of just 21 workstations in about 4,000 square feet, about 40% of the number needed and with just **190.5 square feet** per station.

Photo #1 on the opening page and Photo #2 illustrate much more effectively than the numbers just how crowded the conditions are in Los Angeles County.



Photo 17 Wider view of the crowded LACO ME examination room

Photo #3 displays a facility in Minnesota which LACO ME considers to be an ideal examination space.



Photo 18 Desired layout and space for the new LACO ME's facility

This "ideal" examination facility is only slightly more spacious than the actual spaces of San Diego, Ventura and San Bernardino Counties, as seen below.



Photo 19 San Diego County ME's 11 Station Main Examination Room



Photo 20 The Ventura County Medical Examiner's Autopsy Suite (2 stations)



Photo 21 San Bernardino County Coroner: three of the six examination workstations

Operations and Misperceptions

With a current focus on repairs and seismic upgrades to the existing facilities, the Medical Examiner is focused on re-imagining the existing facilities and has not yet begun work on the BOS-approved feasibility study. The Committee shifted its regard to issues that affect ME operations that could be immediately addressed.

The first issue is the amount of time that pathologists have to spend away from examinations to address concerns of distraught next-of-kin regarding the determination process, especially autopsies.³³ Many relatives believe that autopsies are always performed and don't believe they are necessary for their loved one. It seems possible that a brief description of the examination, testing, and (possible) autopsy process, either as a paper handout or a short video, would free up a large amount of pathologist time to conclude their examination work within accreditation standards.

The second issue was how misperceptions by the public affect office operations through the inability of the ME and Public Information Officer to have the time to adequately address the ME's desire to work with others to prevent future premature deaths. As mentioned in the Facilities section above, the ME has made pretty much all the adjustments possible to operations and procedures to meet accreditation timelines. Until new facilities are available, the ME office must try to work with hospitals and other LACO agencies to keep the number of deaths requiring ME intervention as close as possible to current levels, focusing on preventing future premature deaths.

Television crime shows most often depict "The Coroner" as an independent medical professional who not only performs autopsies but also investigates

³³ Interview with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025.

suspicious death. Media reports of high profile (i.e., newsworthy) deaths often refer to “the Coroner”, then focus on Sheriff deputy or police investigators. This leads to public perceptions that the role and goals of the LACO ME are the same as that of a Sheriff-Coroner which focuses on doing law enforcement-type investigations to determine who might be at fault in an unexplained death to bring them to justice.

The goals of the ME’s staff of counties who were interviewed (San Diego and Ventura) differ significantly from this law enforcement-focused perspective.³⁴ Both ME’s focus more on the compassionate care of next-of-kin and the desire to positively impact public health. The goals of the San Diego County ME included developing data to submit to the Public Health Department.³⁵ The Ventura County ME goals focused on timeliness and compassion, both for next-of-kin and to the public.³⁶ One of the main goals of the LACO ME combines the above concepts by desiring to work with hospitals and county agencies, such as the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, to prevent future premature deaths.³⁷ This would reduce the caseload of the ME Office and the need for additional resources that the county has no money to provide.³⁸

The LACO Medical Examiner has only himself and a Public Information Officer available to work on countering these public misperceptions. While they seek out opportunities to address groups, their time to do so is very limited because of their other responsibilities. On the other hand, the acquisition of accreditation and the enthusiastic support of the Board of Supervisors puts the Office in an ideal situation to more broadly deal with the Office’s goal of

³⁴ Interviews with San Diego County ME, October 3, 2025, and Ventura County ME, January 29, 2026.

³⁵ Interview with San Diego County ME, October 3, 2025.

³⁶ Interview with the Ventura County ME, January 29, 2026.

³⁷ Interview with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025.

³⁸ Ibid.

using the findings of current examinations to positively impact public awareness and behaviors to decrease future early deaths.

An example that has already captured broad public attention is the ability to more quickly determine some recent celebrity deaths, thanks to the improvements to operations already described. In January 2023 Lisa Marie Presley died, and it took several months to make a definitive determination of the cause and manner of her death.³⁹ In particular, the improvements to toxicology testing led to a significant reduction in the amount of time determined the cause and manner of deaths. This meant conclusions regarding the deaths of Matthew Perry, Celeste Rivas Hernandez (the body found in the trunk of David's car), and Rob and Michele Reiner were made in just a couple of weeks.⁴⁰

While the project to expand the LACO ME facilities will not commence in the foreseeable future, the intervening time can be well spent on formulating and implementing plans to inform the public of the ME's focus on public health. Unfortunately, the ME's Office lacks the means to create ways to inform broad areas of the public. Adding a staff person with expertise in this area would greatly help develop and then distribute the necessary materials to have a positive effect on preventing deaths and keep the number of deaths low enough for the ME to continue to meet accreditation time standards.

Securing Property

The third issue addressed by the LACO Medical Examiner Committee concerned apparent problems with securing decedent property. In investigating a complaint by a decedent's relative about missing valuable

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

property, the committee discovered that an ME investigator had been arrested regarding the theft of property belonging to two decedents, including the complainant's relative. Interviews with the Medical Examiner and the head of the ME Investigative Division revealed how this person was able to steal the property.⁴¹ Changes have now been made to make the chain of custody for property and the property storage room more secure.

A digital case management system replaced paper records. The new system includes an increased ability to track personal property as it moves from place to place. This includes noting to whom the property was eventually delivered.⁴² This ability decreases the likelihood that property could be lost or wind up missing. This decrease could be conveyed to the Board of Supervisors and the public by adding a property section to an annual report.

A more important improvement was to move the logging of property from each individual investigator's desk to one central area. Not only did this consolidate where the property was described, counted and boxed, but the process was videotaped by security cameras and overseen by a supervisor.⁴³

The photos below display the initial storage bin for logged in property brought to the ME's office, the locked cage and sign out sheet for property needing more immediate access, and one of the more permanent storage rooms or vaults (Photos 6-9 inclusive). It should be noted that these areas do not have security camera recording.

⁴¹ Interviews with the Los Angeles County ME, November 25, 2025; LCACO ME head of Investigative Division, February 23, 2026.

⁴² Interview with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner, November 25, 2025.

⁴³ Ibid.



Photo 6 Initial Property Log in

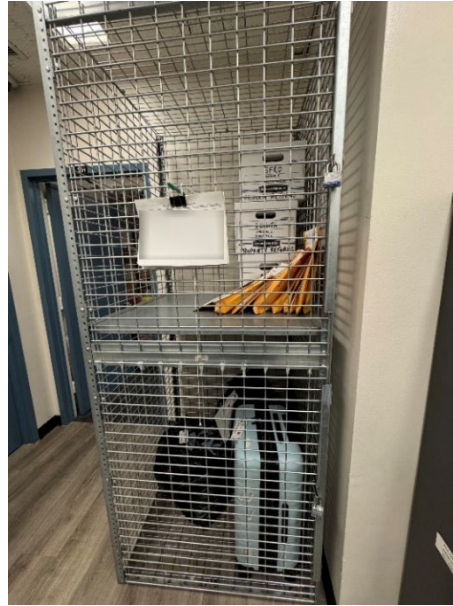


Photo 7 Caged property



Photo 8 Locked vault



Photo 9 Vault 1 of 4

Acknowledgements: We thank the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner for supplying photographs 1-3 and 6-9. We thank the San Diego County Medical Examiner for sharing photograph 4 and the Ventura County Medical Examiner for supplying photograph 5.

FINDINGS

Finding 3.1

The Medical Examiner creatively developed “workarounds” and (toxicology) efficiencies which allowed him to apply for and achieve national accreditation.

Finding 3.2

The examination/autopsy facilities of the LACO Medical Examiner are inadequate compared to those of other counties and located in an outdated 1974 building. The inadequacy issues lead to an inability to increase forensic staff, resulting in increasing delays in processing, which will only become more extensive as workloads increase. The lack of adequate numbers of pathologists leads to existing staff being overworked and stressed

Finding 3.3

While larger facilities are critical, the existing LACO ME facilities cannot be expanded. Creating sufficient space capable of handling caseloads and modern equipment will require building a new facility or extensively renovating an existing county building. The Board of Supervisors has approved a study to determine if remodeling an existing building is feasible.

Finding 3.4

Currently the LACO CEO is working on necessary repairs to the existing building, delaying the feasibility study regarding new facilities that have been authorized by the Board of Supervisors.

Finding 3.5

The LACO ME's office has taken several key measures to tighten the safeguards of decedent personal property. A more secure inspection area and the implementation of a digital case management system improved the ability to keep tabs on property. Questions concerning the security of the bin, cage and vaults remain.

Finding 3.6

The digital case management system decreases the likelihood of property going missing.

Finding 3.7

There is no public report that accounts for the personal property items logged and disposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 3.1

The Board of Supervisors should continue to express its support for acquiring and maintaining national accreditation of the ME's office and budget for additional pathology staff to effectively and efficiently process an increasing number of cases.

Recommendation 3.2

The BOS should acknowledge that expanded facilities are essential to maintain accreditation standards.

Recommendation 3.3

The Board of Supervisors should instruct the CEO to conduct a feasibility study to modernize the ME facilities.

Recommendation 3.4

The Medical Examiner should add support staff to increase pathologist efficiency.

Recommendation 3.5

The Medical Examiner should add support staff to address the expected additional premature and undetermined deaths.

Recommendation 3.6

Security cameras should be installed that monitor the property bin, cage area and the doors to the vaults.

COMMENDATIONS

The 2025-26 Civil Grand Jury commends the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner for his effort in developing efficiencies and workarounds to allow for the completion of examinations and the reporting of the causes and manners of deaths in a matter of weeks rather than months, enabling the Office to apply for national accreditation for the first time in ten years.

The 2025-26 Civil Grand Jury wishes to commend the ME Investigations Division for their efforts to make the number of incidents of missing decedent property decrease from "rare" to zero.

The 2025-26 Civil Grand Jury wishes to commend the staffs of the San Diego and Ventura Counties Medical Examiner Offices and the San Bernardino County Sheriff-Coroner for their extensive work in assisting us in making our report more informative and complete.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b). All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	3.1,3.2,3.3
Los Angeles County Medical Examiner	3.1,3.2,3.3,3.4,3.5,3.6

Acronyms

BOS	Board of Supervisors
LACO	Los Angeles County
ME	Medical Examiner
NAME	National Association of Medical Examiners

Committee Members

Michael S. Stefanko, Chair
Susan Hale Gidlow
Lisa Griffin
Michelle M. Wilson

**YOUR LOS ANGELES ZOO
NEEDS YOU**



**2025-26
Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From its humble beginning 140 years ago to its current international standing, the Los Angeles Zoo has woven a legacy tapestry of animal care, species preservation, and habitat conservancy. The Los Angeles Zoo has been a constant civic institution since the early 20th century. With the initial help of an \$8 million bond approved in the 1960s, and additional municipal financing in the 1990s, the Zoo was able to construct its current facility in Griffith Park, where it continues to serve the people of Los Angeles.

The Zoo currently operates as a department of the City of Los Angeles (City) and has an exemplary record in animal care, conservation, and education. Its mission is clearly defined and consistently carried out. The Zoo generates sufficient revenue to cover its basic operating expenses. However, it lacks the resources needed to adequately maintain its aging infrastructure or to develop new and modern exhibits without substantial additional funding.

The City is unable to provide the level of investment required to bring the Zoo up to contemporary expectations. As a result, private donations, particularly from major donors, are essential. Yet, the Zoo faces significant challenges in attracting major philanthropic support while it remains a City department. Over time, deferred maintenance and unmet capital needs continue to grow, while the City's capacity to address those needs continues to decline. Inevitably, the needs of the Zoo will succumb to the demands on the City budget for public health, welfare, transportation, and safety services.

Although the City has considered substantive changes to the Zoo governance structure several times over the past 40+ years, it has never consummated the effort. It is now time for the Los Angeles Zoo to make the transition to an independent organizational structure. Under this model, the City

continues to retain ownership of the land in Griffith Park, and the Zoo will be operated and additionally funded by partnership with a dedicated nonprofit organization. This structure will allow the Zoo to attract the level of private funding necessary to sustain its facilities, enhance its exhibits, and fully realize its mission for generations to come. With this governance change, the Zoo wins, and the community continues to enjoy its benefits.

METHODOLOGY

The Zoo Committee relied on interviews with key former and current personnel at the Los Angeles Zoo, observations by committee members during visits to the Zoo, and public records of Zoo finances and operations. The Committee attended a board meeting of the Los Angeles Zoo Commission and interviewed members of the Zoo Commission. In addition, the Committee interviewed City of Los Angeles administrators and managers whose purview includes the Zoo. We compared the Los Angeles Zoo with a dozen zoos in large American cities with respect to governance and sources of funding. We also conducted online research regarding zoo governance, best practices, benefit and burden analyses, including current trends in the industry.

We examined the financial records of the Zoo, initially focusing on the years following COVID-19 (2020) when a crisis loomed. By reviewing media coverage, City officials' communications, annual reports, minutes and agendas of council and commission meetings, we learned that governance and funding issues surfaced as far back as the 1980s. The pandemic and related developments prompted a renewed look at this old problem. The challenges facing the Zoo go back much farther and are much more complex than just simple financial management of the Zoo Department. This is how and where we focused our investigation.

BACKGROUND

The Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) year began just as the Los Angeles Zoo became topical news. The Zoo and its purported partner, the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) had squared off in court. The *Los Angeles Times* ran a long article about the Zoo and the litigation which raised the specter of the Zoo in such poor condition that it was in danger of losing accreditation by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA).¹ At about the same time, the Zoo announced it would transfer elephants, Tina and Billy, to the Tulsa Zoo in Oklahoma, causing loud protests to erupt from groups including Defense of Animals, the Nonhuman Rights Project, and Los Angeles for Animals.² Previously, the last African lions were euthanized in 2020, leaving no big cats,³ and the last American black bear was euthanized in 2022.⁴ There seemed to be no good news about the Zoo.

We believe a great community like Los Angeles deserves a great zoo; we formed a committee to investigate our locally famous and internationally respected Los Angeles Zoo.

The committee visited the Zoo several times. With an eye to observing the Zoo exhibits, we prepared by studying the AZA Inspection Guide and

¹ Noah Goldberg. "Inside the L.A. Zoo's messy \$50-million breakup." *Los Angeles Times*. July 1, 2025.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-01/inside-the-l-a-zoos-messy-50-million-breakup>.

² <https://ktla.com/news/animal-advocates-rally-at-la-zoo-call-for-elephants-billy-and-tina-to-be-moved-to-sanctuary/#:~:text=News->

,Animal%20advocates%20rally%20at%20LA%20Zoo%2C%20demanding%20sanctuary%20for%20elephants, facilities %20are%20inadequate%20for%20elephants, Accessed March 25, 2026.

³ Longtime African Lion Couple at LA Zoo Euthanized Due to Declining Health. July 30, 2020.

[https://abc7.com/post/longtime-african-lion-couple-at-la-zoo-](https://abc7.com/post/longtime-african-lion-couple-at-la-zoo-euthanized/6344280/#:~:text=PETS%20&%20ANIMALS-)

euthanized/6344280/#:~:text=PETS%20&%20ANIMALS-

,Longtime%20African%20lion%20couple%20at%20LA%20Zoo%20euthanized%20due%20to,zoo%20said%20in%20a %20statement, accessed March 3, 2026.

⁴ LA Zoo Mourns the Loss of Iconic American Black Bear Ranger. [https://lazoo.org/2022/02/black-bear-](https://lazoo.org/2022/02/black-bear-ranger/#:~:text=25%20Year%20Old%20Ranger%20Spent,Minnesota%20Department%20of%20Natural%20Resources)

ranger/#:~:text=25%20Year%20Old%20Ranger%20Spent,Minnesota%20Department%20of%20Natural%20Resources, accessed March 27, 2026.

Inspector's Handbook. What we found was a well-cared for animal collection and a park with worn infrastructure and many signs of disrepair.⁵

So, What Is The Problem Today?

The City of Los Angeles has provided the Zoo with enormous benefits and resources, and the City has been a supportive steward of its Zoo. This was best exemplified by the City's support of the Zoo during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Zoo closed, and the City paid for the Zoo operations.⁶

Nonetheless, the City is prone to the ravages of outside forces far beyond its own capacity to control. Primary amongst them is its revenue resources. It is clear from the Zoo Annual Reports that the Zoo attendance plummeted in 2020 and 2021.⁷ The Zoo Commission Meeting Minutes show that the membership numbers have fallen in recent years.⁸

Zoos are unique businesses, as they typically feature special animals that have very distinct needs in captivity. The economics of zoos are heavily muddled.⁹ A community zoo needs consistent nourishment to flourish. For a zoo, besides significant volunteer participation, the nourishment is money. The money generator is often a wealthy benefactor or non-profit organization.¹⁰ Until recently the Los Angeles Zoo believed it had such a resource in GLAZA.¹¹ When that belief turned into litigation, our Zoo's future became imperiled.

⁵ CGJ visits on October 9, November 26, and December 8, 2025.

⁶ Interview, Zoo Personnel, October 17, 2025.

⁷ LA Zoo. Annual Report 2020-21. <https://lazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/AnnualReport2020-21-1.pdf>.

⁸ LA Zoo Commission Minutes. <https://lazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Zoo-Commission-Minutes-APPROVED-4.152025.pdf>.

⁹ <https://smartasset.com/taxes/the-economics-of-zoos>, Accessed February 5, 2026.

¹⁰ Ibid, Interview, zoo consultants. February 26, 2026, and March 4, 2026.

¹¹ https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-01-09/editorial-greater-los-angeles-zoo-association#:~:text=GLAZA%20has%20responded%20that:%20*%20There%20was,wants%20at%20least%20that%20much%20in%20damages.

As we began the 2025-26 budget year, the City of Los Angeles faced an approximate \$1 billion shortfall.¹² As we head into the 2026-27 fiscal year, the City contemplates continued shortfalls.¹³ The local news is rife with stories describing the gravity and impact of the financial woes confronting Los Angeles: lost federal funds impacting health care and homelessness; the apocalyptic fires and recovery efforts; and public safety. The budget demands are supremely challenging.¹⁴

What Are The Options?

Memberships and revenue have fallen steadily since the end of the pandemic. The number of membership households dropped from 36,914 in April 2025 to 28,440 in February 2026.¹⁵ This represents a loss of 8,474 memberships, or a 23% drop in less than one year. In July 2025, membership visits accounted for 28% of visits.¹⁶ These numbers represent declining revenue streams, imperiling the sustainability of the Zoo.¹⁷ Yet, closing it is not an option.

The strategic and human considerations concerning the myriad species requiring new places to live, and the cost of making that happen, would be formidable.¹⁸

¹² David Zahniser, "L.A. city budget shortfall grows to nearly \$1 billion, with layoffs 'nearly inevitable'". March 19, 2025, Updated 4:30 PM PT. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-03-19/los-angeles-city-budget-shortfall-gets-much-worse>.

¹³ Jack Humphreville. "River of Red Ink Leads to LA City Service Bankruptcy." *CityWatch*. November 11, 2025. <https://www.citywatchla.com/la-watchdog/31869-river-of-red-ink-leads-to-la-city-services-bankruptcy#:~:text=LA%20WATCHDOG%20%2D%20The%20Mayor's%20Proposed,the%20Fire%20and%20Police%20Departments>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ LA Zoo Commission Minutes, February 2026. <https://lazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/2-Zoo-Commission-MINUTES-02.17.2026.pdf>

¹⁶ LA Zoo Commission Minutes July 2025. <https://lazoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2-Zoo-Commission-MINUTES-7.15.2025-APPROVED.pdf>

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Intradocglobal. <https://intradco-global.com/exotics-transport/zoo-transport/>.

Our study of the Los Angeles Zoo and the governance model of successful, thriving zoos became the focus. Its relationship with GLAZA now lies in ruins, crashed on the rocky shore of a major lawsuit in the Los Angeles Superior Court.¹⁹ We hope our report can finally provide the impetus to join other 21st century zoos preserving flora and fauna while educating, and inspiring Angelenos and visitors.

¹⁹ December 20, 2025, Los Angeles Superior Court Case No.: 24SCTV33753, entitled City of Los Angeles vs Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association, a California Non-Profit Corporation, Et. Al.

DISCUSSION

A Brief History Of The Zoo

LA's first city-owned zoo opened in 1885 as Eastlake Park, later renamed Lincoln Park, along Mission Road. The zoo featured an alligator farm and an ostrich farm.²⁰ It closed in 1912, and its animals moved to the new Griffith Park Zoo. In 1966 the Griffith Park Zoo closed, and the nearby Los Angeles Zoo was born, funded with a \$6.6 million bond measure passed by voters. The Los Angeles Zoo and Botanical Gardens, sitting on 133 acres of donated land, opened on November 28, 1966. The opening day ceremonies were headlined by Mayor Sam Yorty, a United States Army color guard, and the Los Angeles Symphonic Band.²¹ Our Zoo has marched forward ever since.

In its early years, the Los Angeles Zoo was well supported by the brightest stars in Hollywood. The first fundraising gala was held on September 24, 1971.²² The Primate Ball, co-chaired by actor Jimmy Stewart's wife, Gloria, was so named because its goal was to raise money for a planned primate village.²³ Television personality Ed McMahon was master of ceremonies, and guests included stars Lucille Ball and Gregory Peck.²⁴ The following year, the event was christened the Beastly Ball, a name that has continued until today.²⁵ With plenty of donors, big and small, the Zoo enjoyed its place in the sun, and the people of LA loved their zoo.

For 60 years the Los Angeles Zoo has been a popular attraction for families of Los Angeles County and visitors to the area.

²⁰ Los Angeles Magazine. <https://lamag.com/lahistory/colorful-history-los-angeles-zoo>.

²¹ LA Zoo. <https://lazoo.org/about/los-angeles-zoo-history/>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

A Bureaucratic Jungle

When the Zoo opened in 1966, it had a non-profit partner, the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA). Since its founding in 1963, GLAZA worked with the Zoo to bring the plans for a new zoo to fruition.²⁶

The Los Angeles Zoo is owned and operated by the City of Los Angeles. For nearly five decades, GLAZA assisted the Zoo by funding exhibits, plant and animal species conservation, capital projects, and education and community outreach programs.²⁷ The Los Angeles Zoo became an international leader in the preservation of endangered species and a conservation center for the care and study of wildlife.²⁸ GLAZA was the Zoo's main partner, handling fundraising, special events, membership, publications, volunteers and sponsorship.²⁹

The 2002 Master Plan was the genesis for much of the Los Angeles Zoo's current physical site. The Zoo obtained funding for those projects from several sources: County Propositions A-1 and A-2; GLAZA; the Zoo's Enterprise Trust Fund; and Proposition K. In November 1998, the voters of the City of Los Angeles approved Proposition CC, a City bond measure. Together these funding sources formed the Los Angeles Zoo Bond and Capital Improvement Program, also referred to as the Zoo Program.³⁰

²⁶ Editorial Board. "How can the L.A. Zoo and its fundraising arm end their feud?" Los Angeles Times. January 9, 2025. https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-01-09/editorial-greater-los-angeles-zoo-association#:~:text=GLAZA%20has%20responded%20that:%20*%20There%20was,wants%20at%20least%20that%20much%20in%20damages.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ <https://laist.com/shows/airtalk/greater-la-zoo-association-terminates-contract-talks-to-operate-los-angeles-zoo.>

²⁹ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-01/inside-the-l-a-zoos-messy-50-million-breakup.>

³⁰ City of Los Angeles, Bureau of Engineering. Los Angeles Zoo Bond & Capital Improvement Program. <https://engineering.lacity.gov/zoo.>

The Zoo Program was governed by the Zoo Bond Oversight Committee (ZBOC) which consisted of the City Administrative Officer (CAO), the Chief Legislative Analyst (CLA), the Zoo Director, and a designated Deputy Mayor. It is readily apparent the bureaucracy of City government may not be well-suited to the management needs of a zoo.

The City Organization

The City of Los Angeles is a Mayor-Council-Commission form of government, as defined in the City Charter. The charter became effective July 1, 1925, and was reaffirmed by a new Charter, effective July 1, 2000.³¹ A Mayor, City Controller, and City Attorney are elected by City residents every four years. Fifteen City Council members represent 15 unique districts. Council members are elected by the people for four-year terms and may serve a maximum of three terms.³² Members of Boards and Commissions are generally appointed by the Mayor, subject to the approval of the City Council. There are approximately 44 departments and bureaus in the City of Los Angeles, headed by General Managers who are appointed by the Mayor and subject to confirmation by the City Council.³³ Most employees of the City are subject to the civil service provisions of the City Charter.³⁴ The new City Charter, effective July 2000, provided for the creation of a citywide system of Neighborhood Councils. The goal of the Neighborhood Councils is to promote public participation in City governance to create a government more responsive to local needs.³⁵

³¹ <https://controller.lacity.gov/audits/greater-transparency-accountability-at-l-a-zoo>.

³² Elected Officials. City of Los Angeles. <https://lacity.gov/government/elected-officials>.

³³ Neighborhood Councils. City of Los Angeles. <https://lacity.gov/government/neighborhood-councils>, accessed April 8, 2026.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ <https://lacity.gov/government/city-charter-rules-and-codes>, accessed February 5, 2026.

Where The Zoo Fits In

When the Zoo opened at its current site, it was a part of the Recreation and Parks Department. On July 1, 1997, the Los Angeles Zoo became its own City department.³⁶ Policymakers added Los Angeles Administrative Code (LAAC) §22.700 by ordinance, which created a separate Council-controlled Zoo Department. This code section prescribes that the Zoo Department “shall operate, manage, maintain and control” the Zoo.³⁷

The Los Angeles Zoo Commission was formed to provide oversight. The five Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor.³⁸ The Zoo Commission serves solely in an advisory role to the Zoo Director.³⁹ In its early years the Commission had star power; Betty White was one of the first Los Angeles Zoo Commissioners, serving from 1997 to 2005.⁴⁰ The Zoo Commission meets monthly with Zoo Department management.⁴¹

Early Decisions, Long Term Consequences

As well-intentioned as they were, these governmental layers enmeshed the Zoo within the public sector bureaucracy. These choices paved the road to where the Zoo finds itself today.

In 1997, when the Zoo became a City department, the City entered into an Operating Agreement with GLAZA that officially defined its relationship with the Zoo Department.⁴² That agreement expired in 2022. According to this

³⁶ Los Angeles Zoo History. <https://lazoo.org/about/los-angeles-zoo-history/>, accessed April 1, 2026.

³⁷ Los Angeles City Charter. Section 22.700. Creation of the Department and Purpose. https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/laac/0-0-0-53512, accessed April 2, 2026.

³⁸ General Information on City Commissions. City of Los Angeles. 2016. <https://clerk.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph1491/files/2021-02/City%20Commissions%20General%20Information.pdf>.

³⁹ General Information on City Commissions. City of Los Angeles. 2016. <https://clerk.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph1491/files/2021-02/City%20Commissions%20General%20Information.pdf>

⁴⁰ Los Angeles Zoo History. <https://lazoo.org/about/los-angeles-zoo-history/>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁴¹ About the Los Angeles Zoo Commission. <https://lazoo.org/about/zoo-commission/>, accessed April 1, 2026.

⁴² PROPOSED INTERIM AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE GREATER LOS ANGELES ZOO ASSOCIATION. Los Angeles City.

agreement, the “Zoo Director shall be exclusively responsible for the administration and management of the Zoo within the policy guidelines set forth by the Mayor and City Council.”⁴³ GLAZA’s primary responsibility was “to seek and provide financial support to the Zoo and to fund the Zoo’s capital improvements.”⁴⁴ Further, “GLAZA was responsible, under the terms of the agreement, to raise an amount, negotiated yearly, of the Zoo’s annual operating budget and funding needs for capital improvements.”⁴⁵ GLAZA provided this support through:⁴⁶

- Fundraising
- Membership
- Special events and travel programs
- Production of publications
- Coordination of one of the largest zoo volunteer programs in the country
- Administration of the contract for visitor services and concessions within the Zoo
- Support of community relations and public relations

Under the City umbrella, and with support from GLAZA, the Zoo managed to grow and thrive for many years.⁴⁷

https://gcc02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fcityclerk.lacity.org%2Fonlinedocs%2F2023%2F23-1128_rpt_ZOO_10-11-23.pdf&data=05%7C02%7CGrandJury12%40lacourt.org%7C321572a1fad1448d3cd108de96626e90%7Cdc94c3c7bb4840ff9305e473fd6f6a16%7C0%7C0%7C639113546691344049%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMilslkFOljoiTWFpbCIsIlldUljoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=vvHEAFuv%2BYdcmtPgxNPKhfukAKTCD%2BWriTShd7cyfE%3D&reserved=0

⁴³ Greater Transparency and Accountability at the L.A. April 25, 2018. <https://controller.lacity.gov/audits/greater-transparency-accountability-at-l-a-zoo>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁴⁴ Greater Transparency and Accountability at the L.A. April 25, 2018. <https://controller.lacity.gov/audits/greater-transparency-accountability-at-l-a-zoo>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Interview, Zoo Personnel. January 21, 2026.

The Zoo has been accredited for more than 25 years by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)⁴⁸. This organization is recognized as requiring “the highest standards of animal management and husbandry, while also focusing on animal management for conservation, education, scientific inquiries, and guest services.”⁴⁹ The Zoo has received multiple awards and bred several rare animals during this time. In 2017, the AZA re-accredited the Zoo for another five years, and the AZA visiting committee indicated they were particularly impressed with numerous programs of the Zoo.⁵⁰

In addition, the AZA noted the ongoing, close-working relationship between the Zoo Department and GLAZA has been instrumental in the success of the Zoo.⁵¹

Nonetheless, the relationship between the Zoo and GLAZA deteriorated. A case was filed on Dec. 20, 2025, in Los Angeles Superior Court, Case No.: 24SCTV33753, entitled City of Los Angeles vs Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association, a California Non-Profit Corporation, Et. Al.

Neither the merits of the complaint, nor the factual disputes, nor any monetary claims are the subject of this report.

This report notes the long relationship between the Zoo and GLAZA. Accreditation of the Zoo for 50 years is testament to hard work and effort by both entities.

How Are Other Zoos Governed?

It has become increasingly apparent within the zoo community that the Public-Private Partnership, often called the “P3 model,” affords the greatest

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ <https://www.aza.org/>, accessed April 9, 2026.

⁵⁰ Interview, Zoo personnel. October 31, 2025.

⁵¹ Ibid.

opportunities for success on virtually all levels of zoo endeavor.⁵² The model generally relies upon a non-profit philanthropic organization acting as both revenue generator and private management, buttressed by public assets and support pursuant to express contractual agreements.⁵³ According to a recent study of the AZA, more than 80-percent of accredited zoos are non-government managed, and most are operated by not-for-profit entities.⁵⁴

Governance Issues Over The Years

A succinct review of the City's ownership reveals multiple attempts to reform the Zoo's governance system.

1984. City Chief Administrative Officer Calls For Change

The City's Chief Administrative Officer's review in 1984 pointed out that the Zoo could benefit if its management and control were transferred from the City to a private, non-profit zoo society.⁵⁵ It already was clear the lack of coordinated operation and development between the City and GLAZA was problematic. These issues and more were reported in the *Los Angeles Times*.⁵⁶

The suggested P3 governance is how virtually every well-known municipal zoo in the country is run, including the San Diego Zoo and the Bronx Zoo in New York City.⁵⁷

⁵² Interview, zoo consultant, February 26, 2026.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Los Angeles Controller. Greater Transparency & Accountability at L.A. Zoo. April 25, 2018.

<https://controller.lacity.gov/audits/greater-transparency-accountability-at-l-a-zoo>, accessed March 27, 2026.

⁵⁵ Los Angeles Zoo Is Faulted. New York Times. November 11, 1984. <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/11/11/us/los-angeles-zoo-is-faulted.html>.

⁵⁶ Noah Goldberg. "Inside the L.A. Zoo's messy \$50-million breakup." *Los Angeles Times*. July 1, 2025.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-07-01/inside-the-l-a-zoos-messy-50-million-breakup>.

⁵⁷ Zoo: Go for the Best. 08/06/1986. *Los Angeles Times*. <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-08-06-me-1568-story.html>.

1991. The Civil Grand Jury Reports On The Zoo

The Civil Grand Jury reported on the Zoo in a 1991 investigation that examined the Zoo's operations.⁵⁸ The report concluded that:

- There were transparency problems between GLAZA and the City.
- Contracts between the two entities were murky and unclear.
- There were no audit mechanisms in place.

GLAZA was not handing over donations or concession profits in a timely fashion.⁵⁹

2011. City Council Seeks A New Zoo Partner

Fast forward to August of 2011, the City Council voted to explore obtaining a partner to operate the Zoo. At the same time the Council asked the City CAO to prepare a plan to keep the Zoo under City management.⁶⁰ Local news station NBC Los Angeles reported the story and the conflict. According to the CAO, the Zoo was unable to keep up with rising salary, pension, and health care costs, and suggested staffing cuts would make it harder for the Zoo to stay open.⁶¹ It was hoped a new partnership agreement would be in place by July 2012.⁶²

A consultant retained by the City indicated that a non-government managed arrangement could reduce the Zoo's costs and increase revenues through a

⁵⁸ Final Report, Los Angeles County Grand Jury, 1990-91.

<https://grandjury.co.la.ca.us/Final%20Grand%20Jury%20Report/1990-91%20Final%20Report.pdf>, accessed April 3, 2026.

⁵⁹ Relationship between the Greater Los Angeles Zoo Association (GLAZA) and the Concerned City Agencies Charged with Zoo Management. Final Report, Los Angeles County Grand Jury, 1990-91.

<https://grandjury.co.la.ca.us/Final%20Grand%20Jury%20Report/1990-91%20Final%20Report.pdf>, accessed March 17, 2026.

⁶⁰ Scott Weber. "City Votes to Consider Privatizing L.A. Zoo." NBC Los Angeles. August 12, 2011.

<https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/city-votes-to-consider-privatizing-la-zoo/1905142/>.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

combination of increased flexibility, increased fundraising opportunities, and the gradual transition of City employees to not-for-profit employees through attrition. Thereafter, the City issued a Request for Proposal to have a non-government entity manage the Zoo; GLAZA's proposal received the highest score.⁶³ However, efforts for the Zoo to transition to non-government management ceased when the CAO identified several obstacles, including certain regulations preventing the supervision of City employees by a non-City supervisor.⁶⁴

The effort failed. GLAZA and the Zoo terminated negotiations as "the amount of autonomy a private non-profit operator would have in running the zoo" could not be resolved.⁶⁵

2018. The Most Forceful Recommendation Yet

Finally, in 2018 a comprehensive report was put forth by City Controller Ron Galperin. This Special Review of the Governance Arrangement between the Zoo and GLAZA is entitled Greater Transparency & Accountability at the Los Angeles Zoo.⁶⁶ This report made it clear that problems of governance, contractual arrangements, oversight, and funding plagued the Zoo. He identified a plan to address these concerns. "Further, based upon discussions with Zoo department and GLAZA management, the public is less willing to donate to the Zoo because it is part of City government."⁶⁷ In our conversation with a recognized consultant in the field of zoo governance, it

⁶³ Greater Transparency & Accountability at L.A. Zoo. Ron Galperin, Los Angeles Controller. April 25, 2018. <https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/lacontroller-2b7de.appspot.com/o/audits%2F2020%2Faudit-2018-LA-Zoo.pdf?alt=media&token=67cc4ae0-20ea-4218-9786-3a4ed5f1ea0e>. Accessed March 11, 2026.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Greater Transparency & Accountability at L.A. Zoo. Ron Galperin, Los Angeles Controller. April 25, 2018. <https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/lacontroller-2b7de.appspot.com/o/audits%2F2020%2Faudit-2018-LA-Zoo.pdf?alt=media&token=67cc4ae0-20ea-4218-9786-3a4ed5f1ea0e>, accessed March 11, 2026.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

was reiterated that donors are hesitant to give large contributions to a government entity.⁶⁸

We researched the governance arrangements of zoos throughout the nation and cultural institutions in Los Angeles County. We learned that the Los Angeles Zoo is unique among these organizations in being a City department. The 2018 special review identified governance as the primary cause for concern. The Zoo continues to experience many of the same challenges it has in the past, including Zoo Department staffing shortages, and infrastructure and maintenance shortcomings.⁶⁹

2026. Civil Grand Jury Issues A Clarion Call

The Los Angeles Zoo is one of the 240 American zoos accredited by the AZA.⁷⁰ The Los Angeles Zoo is the last major American zoo governed by a city department.⁷¹ Not one P3 zoo has failed or transitioned back to a city run model.⁷²

Simply stated, to keep these important educational institutions afloat, almost all zoos across the United States have turned to Public-Private Partnerships.

Time For A Change

A local zoo provides education and entertainment for visitors of all ages. American zoos are visited by more than 200 million people every year, a number that exceeds the combined attendance of all professional baseball,

⁶⁸ Interview, Zoo consultant. March 4, 2026.

⁶⁹ Greater Transparency & Accountability at L.A. Zoo. Ron Galperin, Los Angeles Controller. April 25, 2018. <https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/lacontroller-2b7de.appspt.com/o/audits%2F2020%2Faudit-2018-LA-Zoo.pdf?alt=media&token=67cc4ae0-20ea-4218-9786-3a4ed5f1ea0e>, accessed March 11, 2026.

⁷⁰ AZA. Accreditation. <https://www.aza.org/inst-status>.

⁷¹ Interview, zoo consultants. February 26, 2026, and March 4, 2026.

⁷² Ibid.

football, basketball and hockey games.⁷³ According to the AZA, nearly all its accredited zoos are non-government managed - and largely operated by not-for-profit entities.⁷⁴

With a nod to Ron Galperin, this report identifies what's needed to achieve this long-sought-after goal. Besides the credit due to Mr. Galperin, the prior efforts of the 2011 Los Angeles City Council, hours of internet research, and interviews with several zoo directors as well as consultants, the recipe to create "P3 soup" is straightforward, yet rife with details requiring collaborative, rather than adversarial, negotiation.

Paramount to achieving success in such a complex contractual relationship is the manifest good faith and fair dealing pursuant to a mantra of "what is best for the Zoo." The Zoo transition is extremely complex, involving chain of command, authority, management, supervision, labor, utilities, maintenance, construction, finances, and animal care (acquisition, exhibits, and disposition).⁷⁵ Every participating agency, director, and manager must understand this is not a "win-win" situation, but rather a question of "What is best for the Zoo?"⁷⁶

How Does A Public-Private Partnership Work?

There is not a single P3 model for zoos. There are as many available templates as there are zoos now utilizing a P3 structure. Moreover, there are excellent examples of other P3 organizations in the Zoo's neighborhood that have successfully transitioned their governance arrangements and become more prosperous organizations. For example, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) is run by a not-for-profit under a 99-year contract

⁷³ <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1120142/total-sports-attendance-by-league/?srsltid=AfmBOor90jGHSAF5PxCF2V5253OXeneFFXyXcJLnZyT0i1hXOjzpuffJ>

⁷⁴ <https://www.aza.org/>

⁷⁵ Interview. Zoo consultant. March 4, 2026.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

with the County. The LACMA director remains a County employee and is also the Chief Executive Officer of the not-for-profit.⁷⁷ The Natural History Museum (NHM) is run by a nonprofit with some of its leadership appointed directly by the County Board of Supervisors.⁷⁸

According to an article entitled “Characteristics of a World-Class Zoo or Aquarium in the 21st Century,” government administrative bureaucracy can be stifling, and government-run zoos may find it difficult to become “world-class.”⁷⁹ The book indicated that modern zoos and aquariums need flexibility to:

- Recruit and hire the best personnel
- Remove unproductive personnel more easily
- Speed up decision-making processes
- Take more risks
- Be less subject to the vagaries of government funding and political cycles.⁸⁰

Here Is What We Have Learned

The Los Angeles Zoo provides superior care for its animal collections, having now nearly 50 years of uninterrupted accreditation from AZA.⁸¹ The Los Angeles Zoo is respected internationally for its work in animal species

⁷⁷ Greater Transparency and Accountability. <https://controller.lacity.gov/audits/greater-transparency-accountability-at-l-a-zoo>.

⁷⁸ Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County. <https://nhmlac.org/about-us/corporate-governance>.

⁷⁹ Hutchins, M. and Smith, B. (2003), Characteristics of a world-class zoo or aquarium in the 21st century. *International Zoo Yearbook*, 38: 130-141. <https://zslpublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1748-1090.2003.tb02073.x>.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ AZA. Accreditation. https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2332/qcaward_fullpage_revised.pdf.

survival, habitat preservation, and conservancy.⁸² Where the Zoo is challenged is in maintaining its local park and infrastructure.⁸³

The Zoo generally has sufficient revenue from admissions and operational ventures, like merchandise, concessions, and special events sales, to cover its operational costs. Except in very rare circumstances, the Zoo receives no monies from the City's general fund.

The Zoo Shows Its Age

Several committee members jointly visited the zoo as one of the initial steps in preparing its report. In hand during this visit were copies of the AZA's checklist and inspection item topics for our reference. We did not have access beyond what everyday patrons enjoy but did at the conclusion have a meeting in administration offices and interviews with several members of the executive office. Following are conditions we observed and learned about.⁸⁴

- Much of the Zoo's signage is old, thus seriously worn, sometimes identifying animals that are no longer in the Zoo.⁸⁵
- The Zoo's physical campus and majority of exhibits, structures, and hardscape have served the visiting public for many years. Without sufficient maintenance effort to maintain a fresh appearance, exhibits show the wear and tear of long service. Currently there is no established scheduled maintenance and repair program.⁸⁶
- Without sufficient funding, ordinary maintenance is deferred until a crisis occurs. Then triage attention is needed.⁸⁷

⁸² Los Angeles Zoo. <https://lazoo.org>.

⁸³ Interview with City Official, November 26, 2025.

⁸⁴ Zoo visit and multiple interviews with executive staff October 9, 2025

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Interview, Zoo personnel. October 9, 2026

⁸⁷ Ibid.; Interview Bureau of Engineering staff December 5, 2025.

The Zoo lacks sufficient funding for deferred maintenance and capital projects, with no foreseeable major revenue stream in the immediate future. New funding is not likely to come from the City, nor is it likely the public will embrace new bonds or taxes to pay for major repairs, upgrades, or new construction for the Zoo.⁸⁸ The Zoo, being a City department, is not attractive to major donors who generally do not contribute to government entities.⁸⁹

The existing governance model is not conducive to meeting the unique needs of a 21st century zoo, particularly in the harsh economic realities of public government currently. The Zoo's governance is the major factor that prevents it from addressing maintenance, development, and fundraising issues.⁹⁰

The inadequacy of the Zoo's governance structure has existed and been acknowledged for over 40 years by various City agencies, offices, and officials.⁹¹

How far can the Zoo infrastructure slide before the City has to consider closing it? Closing the Zoo would be a profoundly unpopular move which would carry extreme expenses of its own. Closing the Zoo is not an option.

There is a path to success with a transition to a P3 governance structure. Many zoos have taken this path, and all of them have become stronger as a result. There is no doubt that the transition is complex, but it can be done.

⁸⁸ Interview, Zoo Personnel. October 9, 2025, and December 22, 2025.

⁸⁹ Interviews, Zoo consultants. February 2, 2026, March 4, 2026.

⁹⁰ Greater Transparency & Accountability at L.A. Zoo. Ron Galperin, Los Angeles Controller. April 25, 2018. <https://firebasestorage.googleapis.com/v0/b/lacontroller-2b7de.appspot.com/o/audits%2F2020%2Faudit-2018-LA-Zoo.pdf?alt=media&token=67cc4ae0-20ea-4218-9786-3a4ed5f1ea0e>, accessed March 11, 2026.

⁹¹ Ibid.

The City has individuals who can craft the necessary contracts and agreements needed to forge a new governance structure. ⁹²

A critical component of a successful transition is a suitable benefactor/nonprofit organization to support the Zoo with financial acumen and resources.⁹³ This strong outside partner will provide a champion and sponsor for the transition to a newly energized Zoo.⁹⁴

In our many interviews with people knowledgeable about the Zoo, one statement reflected a sentiment about the City that was repeated regularly:

“Love your Zoo enough to set it free.”⁹⁵

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Interviews, Zoo consultants. February 26, 2026 & March 4, 2026.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Interview, City Official, December 22, 2025.

FINDINGS

Finding 4.1

Closing the Zoo is not a solution if the deterioration continues.

Finding 4.2

The Zoo's physical campus and majority of exhibits, structures, and hardscape seem tired and worn. Much of the signage is old, with the subject matter out of date. Signs identify animals that are no longer in the Zoo.

Finding 4.3

There is neither a scheduled repair nor maintenance program.

Finding 4.4

The Zoo lacks sufficient funding for deferred maintenance.

Finding 4.5

The Zoo lacks sufficient funding for capital projects.

Finding 4.6

The Zoo is special, a community asset with naturalistic exhibits, conservation initiatives, animal interaction, and in-depth programming. Providing such a meaningful experience takes money, lots of it. The City of Los Angeles today can no longer tolerate or sustain that burden on its budget.

Finding 4.7

The City allotted budget usually does not provide any direct funds for Zoo operations, most of which are generated from Zoo admissions and operational income sources.

Finding 4.8

The Zoo, due to its City ownership, is not attractive to major donors who generally do not contribute to government entities.

Finding 4.9

The Zoo's governance is unique. The existing governance model is not conducive to meeting the needs of a 21st century zoo, particularly in the harsh economic realities of public government currently.

Finding 4.10

The Zoo has a heavy bureaucratic burden, working with the Zoo Commission plus the Mayor, Council Members, Neighborhood Councils, City Attorney, City Controller, and several other City departments.

Finding 4.11

City bureaucracy is not designed, flexible, or creative enough to operate and manage a modern day zoo.

Finding 4.12

The inadequacy of the Zoo's governance structure has existed and been acknowledged for over 40 years by various City agencies, offices, and officials.

Finding 4.13

Together the Public and Private components of the P3 model can safeguard the Zoo operations and continue the legacy of the Los Angeles Zoo for years to come.

Finding 4.14

The Los Angeles Zoo needs a suitable benefactor/non-profit organization to come forward and engage with it to create the governance structure needed to safeguard its operations and continue its legacy into the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 4.1

By April 1, 2027, the Mayor's Office, in conjunction with the Zoo Director, should develop a Request for Proposal (RFP) to identify a contractor/expert with experience in the P3 model of zoo governance to assist in the transition of governance.

Recommendation 4.2

By June 17, 2027, the Mayor's Office, the City Administrative Officer (CAO), the City Council, the Office of City Attorney (OCA), and the Zoo Department shall designate staff members to join a working group, the Zoo Organization Transition Team (ZOTT), specifically to participate in the P3 governance transition.

Recommendation 4.3

By July 1, 2027, the ZOTT team members shall hold an initial meeting.

Recommendation 4.4

By October 1, 2027, the Mayor's Office, in conjunction with the Office of City Attorney, the Zoo Director, and with the Retained Expert's report, as well as any additional needed Retained Expert input, shall specify and list further information, talking points, and negotiable contract terms the City needs to address prior to entering partnership negotiations with a suitable non-profit entity.

Recommendation 4.5

By November 1, 2027, Los Angeles City should issue an RFP for a non-governmental, non-profit entity to manage and fundraise for the Los Angeles Zoo.

Recommendation 4.6

The Zoo Director, in conjunction with the City Bureau of Engineering (CBoE) assigned engineer, should create a prioritized schedule of maintenance and repair projects, even if current funding does not allow for work to be done.

Recommendation 4.7

As soon as funds allow the Zoo Director and the CBoE assigned engineer should update, restore, remove or replace faded, worn, and obsolete signs.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b).

All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
c/o Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendations
Los Angeles Zoo Director	4.1, 4.3, 4.6, 4.8, 4.9
Los Angeles City Mayor	4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, 4.7
Los Angeles City Attorney	4.4, 4.5, 4.6
Los Angeles City Chief Administrative Officer (CAO)	4.4, 4.5
Los Angeles City Council President	4.4, 4.5
Los Angeles City Department of Public Works	4.8, 4.9

Committee Members

Carina H. Lister, Chair
 Susan Hale Gidlow
 Tom Hutchinson
 Jenalea Smith
 Victor H. Vidal

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PREPAREDNESS FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES



2025-26

**Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report focuses on the City of Los Angeles Emergency Management Department (**City EMD**), which is responsible for preparing for, responding to and recovering from large-scale emergencies and disasters for the City of Los Angeles; and the County Office of Emergency Management (**County OEM**), responsible for emergencies impacting Los Angeles County.

The City and County of Los Angeles have a high risk profile when it comes to disasters, whether natural or human caused. A major catastrophic event or multiple emergencies occurring at the same time could overwhelm the ability of these departments to respond effectively.

In 2025, devastating wildfires broke out in the hillsides of Los Angeles City and County, killing 31 people and destroying over 16,000 structures. Moreover, 2025 saw the Los Angeles City Council declare a state of fiscal emergency, and Los Angeles County faced a similar budget crisis. The challenge of rebuilding the Palisades and Altadena communities, while dealing with severe budget shortfalls, diverts the City's and County's attention and takes away resources from their emergency management departments.

The City EMD and County OEM departments are seriously underfunded and understaffed in the event of another serious convergence of disasters such as the January 2025 wildfires. Both are ill-equipped to carry out their missions to coordinate the City's and County's emergency management efforts for major events such as the 2028 Olympic Games.

Our conclusion matches that of the McCrystal After-Action Report which said, “compared to OEMs in jurisdictions of similar size (although not as large or complex), Los Angeles County’s OEM has significantly less staff, budget, and autonomy over its operating capabilities.”¹ For both the City EMD and the County OEM, the status quo is unacceptable.

BACKGROUND

Emergency management preparedness involves:

1. Planning: Creating and reviewing Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs),
2. Resource Management: Coordinating equipment and personnel,
3. Public Information: Educating the public and providing alerts,
4. Administration: Applying for funding and managing grants,
5. Coordination: Acting as the primary communication hub, and
6. Mass Care: Preparing and implementing measures to feed, shelter and provide short-term housing and meet other immediate needs for possibly thousands of individuals.²

Emergency management is not well understood by the public and is often confused with “911” first responder agencies. Another misperception is that the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will provide quick and long-lasting relief. One expert says that “emergency management has a

¹ McCrystal Group, “After-Action Review of Alert Notifications Systems and Evacuation Policies for the Eaton and Palisades Fires,” <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/207915.pdf> page 57, Accessed April 2, 2026.

² Interview with American Red Cross, Los Angeles region on January 23, 2026

brand identity issue.”³ The involvement of multiple agencies - local, state, federal, non-profit and private sector - makes it difficult to understand who is responsible for doing what.⁴

A former senior emergency services coordinator for the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services made these recommendations which apply particularly to Los Angeles City and County:

- “Local elected officials must provide investment in local emergency management programs as much as possible, understanding the many **competing financial priorities** [emphasis added] in their budgets.
- Local officials must embrace the whole-of-community model for disaster management in their community.”⁵

Emergency/disaster management in the USA dates to the early 19th century, when Congress enacted laws to address emergencies on a case-by-case basis. In 1802, a major fire destroyed Portsmouth, New Hampshire. To support the community, the Congressional Act of 1803 suspended bond payments for affected merchants—marking the first legislative act of federal disaster relief.⁶

Examples of historic-to-current volunteer efforts in emergencies include Civil Defense, the Military Auxiliary Radio Systems (MARS), and Community Emergency Response Teams. The MARS network harnessed the talents of amateur radio operators as an emergency communications backup system,

³ Justin Graney, “PERSPECTIVE: Emergency Management Is Not Broken – The Investment Is,” *HomeLandSecurityToday.US*, April 26, 2025. <https://www.hstoday.us/featured/perspective-emergency-management-is-not-broken-the-investment-is/>

⁴ Madeline Craig-Scheckman, et al., “State, market, or community? Exploring public perceptions of disaster management strategies,” *Natural Hazards Research*, Volume 5, Issue 4, December 2025, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2666592125000423>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.fema.gov/about/history>

based in part on surplus military transmitters. Many older people remember Civil Defense from the Cold War times, including air raid shelters, public safety campaigns and duck-and-cover drills at schools.⁷ During World War II, Civil Defense programs shifted the focus from ad hoc response to organized emergency preparation. During the Cold War era (1950s–1980s), Los Angeles County maintained a vast network of roughly 250 air raid sirens.⁸

On April 1, 1979, President Carter signed Executive Order 12127, establishing FEMA as a centralized agency dedicated to coordinating disaster response across jurisdictions.⁹ President Carter subsequently gave FEMA a dual mission: emergency management and civil defense.¹⁰ Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was founded to integrate emergency management into a broader national security framework.¹¹

Los Angeles Area Risk Profile

The National Risk Index compiles extensive data to provide a “holistic” view of community-level risk, by incorporating multiple natural hazards with socioeconomic and environmental risks.¹² Some of the information used in these calculations includes:

- Risk level of experiencing 18 different natural hazards,
- The vulnerability of populations based on age, income, living conditions, and education – and overlaying that with information on

⁷ A Civil Grand Juror remembers being given a Department of Defense ID card as part of his employment that would have authorized him to direct traffic in an evacuation necessitated by a disaster.

⁸ <http://www.wirechief.com/sirens/>

⁹ <https://www.fema.gov/about/history>

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ali Sahabi, “Los Angeles County tops FEMA disaster risk list,” February 14, 2021.

<https://www.optimumseismic.com/earthquake-resilience/los-angeles-county-tops-fema-disaster-risk-list/>

the number of hospitals, fire stations and other public infrastructure and services available to those populations, and

- Historical data on natural disasters of the past.

Using these calculations, FEMA has ranked Los Angeles County most at-risk in the entire nation, with a community-level risk rank of 100.¹³

- 1. Los Angeles County (Score: 100)¹⁴**
2. Bronx County, New York (Score: 85.63)
3. New York County, New York (Score: 69.91)
4. Miami-Dade County, Florida (Score: 58.25)
5. Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania (Score: 57.72)
6. Kings County, New York (Score: 56.52)
7. Riverside County, California (Score: 55.80)
8. San Bernardino County, California (Score: 52.56)
9. Dallas County, Texas (Score: 52.45)
10. St. Louis County, Missouri (Score: 52.35)

Disasters Of 2025: Wildfires

In January 2025, wildfires broke out in the hillsides of Los Angeles City and County, killing 31 people and destroying more than 16,000 structures.¹⁵ The

¹³ Ron Brackett, "FEMA Tool Calculates Risk for Every County in the Nation; Los Angeles Is at the Top," January 6, 2021, <https://weather.com/news/news/2021-01-04-fema-national-risk-index-riskiest-counties-in-the-us-los-angeles-new-york>

¹⁴ Ibid. The same article says: "Los Angeles County's expected annual loss is very high, and its social vulnerability is relatively high while its community resilience is relatively low. Because of its population of nearly 10 million people and property value of more than \$950 billion, any natural hazard can be costly."

¹⁵ The Los Angeles Regional Fire Safe Council, "Wildfires in Los Angeles County," <https://www.wildfirela.org/history/>, Accessed April 2, 2026.

Palisades, an affluent coastal enclave overlooking the Pacific Ocean, was part of Los Angeles City.¹⁶ The community of Altadena, situated against the San Gabriel Mountains, is an unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County.¹⁷

Fire Name	Area	Fire Dates	Acres Burned	Structures/Fatalities
Palisades Fire	Pacific Palisades	Jan. 7-8, 2025	23,448	6,837 structures destroyed, 12 fatalities
Eaton Fire	Altadena	Jan. 7-8, 2025	14,021	9,418 structures destroyed, 19 fatalities ¹⁸

The circumstances surrounding the fires have been a source of much study and controversy. On the one hand, one author has stated, “the real problem with fighting the fires [...] was high winds, which grounded planes and helicopters, not a lack of water supply — which was confirmed by a state analysis of the response and by firefighters on the ground.”¹⁹

On the other hand, a *Los Angeles Times* article said, “during the first days of the January firestorms, Los Angeles became a case study in what can go wrong with emergency alerts and evacuations.”²⁰

To quote another article from *The Guardian*:

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Jim Newton, “Political leaders aren’t to blame for LA fires, but what about the recovery?” CalMatters, January 8, 2026. <https://calmatters.org/commentary/2026/01/la-fires-bass-leaders-california/>

²⁰ Jenny Jarvie, “Failed emergency alerts during L.A. firestorms eroded public trust. How to fix a broken system?” *Los Angeles Times*, December 17, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2025-12-17/failed-emergency-alerts-during-la-fires-eroded-trust-how-to-fix-it>

“The firestorm overwhelmed municipal water systems and outpaced elite firefighting crews. Frantic evacuations slowed to a crawl along winding roads. Emergency alerts failed to reach thousands of people as flames bore down on them. [...] The extreme conditions that aligned here were rare; but the dangers are only increasing. Los Angeles will have to prepare itself, even as the metropolis undergoes the arduous challenge of climbing out from under this catastrophe.

The lack of coordination and leadership from federal agencies hollowed out by the Trump administration, a complicated and costly matrix of permits and approvals and the steep financial cost of rebuilding, especially for people who are under or uninsured, have all added burdens for survivors still processing loss and trauma.”²¹

Another Kind Of Disaster: 2025 Fiscal Crises

The **Los Angeles City** Council declared a state of fiscal emergency in 2025 in response to decreased revenue and rising liabilities.²² The declaration authorized the city to take steps to address a roughly \$1 billion deficit.

The **Los Angeles County** 2025-26 budget also reflected a structural deficit driven by over \$1 billion in wildfire recovery costs, rising labor agreements, and declining property tax growth.²³

²¹ Gabrielle Canon, “The Los Angeles wildfires were ‘the perfect storm.’ Is the city ready for the next one?” *The Guardian*, January 7, 2026. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/07/los-angeles-ca-wildfires-prevention>

²² “LA City Council OKs resolution declaring fiscal emergency amid \$1B deficit,” *Los Angeles*, June 24, 2026. <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/la-city-council-oks-resolution-declaring-fiscal-emergency-amid-1b-deficit/3731660/>

²³ Chief Executive Office, “LA County Unveils 2025-26 Recommended Budget Reflecting Unprecedented Financial Challenges.” <https://lacounty.gov/2025/04/14/la-county-unveils-2025-26-recommended-budget-reflecting-unprecedented-financial-challenges/>, Accessed April 2, 2026.

LA County BUDGET CRISIS IN THE MAKING

Due to the budget cuts approved by the Board, the County's budget is solvent and it will require fiscal discipline to remain that way.

COSTS	KNOWN	FUTURE	POTENTIAL IMPACTS
Federal	Roughly \$1.1 billion in Big Bill impacts alone by 2027-28.	Other federal cuts, including additional Medicaid cuts +\$400-900 million more in ongoing funding lost.	Big Bill cuts in health care, nutrition, green resilience. Possible facility closure(s) and potential estimated 5,000 layoffs in next five years.
AB 218	\$4 billion tentative settlement is just the start.	2,900+ additional cases pending.	3% cuts already imposed; 30 vacant positions eliminated; some programs reduced.
Labor	\$2 billion (\$778 million in NCC) to fund COLAs and bonuses.	36 tables actively negotiating. Unions continue to bring proposed salary increases to the tables.	5.5% cuts imposed in Supplemental will cut and close numerous programs to fund COLAs and bonuses some layoffs anticipated.
Fires			
Probation Receivership			

LA County BUDGET CRISIS

Due to the budget cuts approved by the Board, the County's budget is solvent and it will require fiscal discipline to remain that way.

3% CUTS

To help pay for AB 218 settlements

Parks & Recreation

- Shorter park hours, reduced swim season, and cutbacks in the Parks After Dark program

Justice, Care & Opportunities

- Ends College and Careers programs at two community colleges, reducing support for justice-involved individuals

5.5% CUTS

To fund cost of negotiated labor agreements

Parks & Recreation

- Shortens swim season to 10 weeks
- Cancels Parks After Dark summer program
- Closes regional parks and lakes every Monday and Tuesday

Probation

- Closes Santa Monica and Valencia offices, increasing travel burden

Beaches & Harbors

- Less frequent beach cleaning and shorter restroom hours due to staff cuts

Animal Care & Control

- Slower animal adoptions due to loss of care center staff
- Slower response to resident complaints due to fewer enforcement positions

Economic Opportunity

- Cuts about 100 youth jobs for vulnerable populations (e.g., foster homeless, LGBTQ)

Public Health

- Cuts staffing for disease control and prevention

FEDERAL CUTS

Including the Big Bill Strategies to Reduce Costs and Maintain Balanced Budget:

- Hiring Freeze
- Furloughs
- Layoffs
- Merging Departments
- Facility Closures

4/5

Acting Chief Executive Officer Joseph Nicchitta provided a budget update on November 25, 2025, that noted massive deficit drivers including:

- The AB 218 child sexual assault settlement,
- The January wildfire costs,
- A 41% decline in home sales affecting tax revenue, and
- Over \$1.5 billion in potential federal funding cuts through 2027-28.

The challenge of rebuilding the Palisades and Altadena communities, while dealing with severe budget shortfalls, diverts the City's and County's attention and takes away resources from their emergency management departments.

METHODOLOGY

After the devastating fires in Los Angeles County in early 2025, the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) decided to investigate Los Angeles City's and County's emergency preparedness for the next major disaster. We researched the parameters of emergency management in the literature, reviewed documents received from government departments, and interviewed officials from the following agencies and groups:

- The Los Angeles City Emergency Management Department (City EMD)
- The Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management (County OEM)
- The Los Angeles County Fire Department
- The Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation
- The Los Angeles Mayor's Office
- The American Red Cross Los Angeles Region

We attended the Cyber Security Training Exercises Seminar organized by the City EMD. We also interviewed several people from community, nonprofit, faith-based and other non-governmental groups.

DISCUSSION

Our discussion focuses on the City EMD and the County OEM.

We will not discuss the complex topics of the City's and County's emergency evacuations, fire department and law enforcement responses during the Palisades and Eaton fires, recovery and rebuilding efforts of those communities, nor litigation resulting from the fires.

Los Angeles Emergency Management Department

The City EMD coordinates preparedness, hazard mitigation, emergency response and recovery among City departments. The agency acts as liaison between the City, the County of Los Angeles, the California State Office of Emergency Services and FEMA.²⁴

The City EMD is a planning and coordinating agency for other organizations. In the event of a local emergency, it provides public information to broadcast and print media, such as emergency phone numbers and information about the location of temporary shelters and disaster assistance centers for immediate services and long-term assistance.²⁵

The City EMD is responsible for coordinating the City's emergency planning, training, response, and recovery efforts as documented in the Base Emergency Operations Plan.²⁶ Complementing that master plan are important documents (hazard-specific and functional annexes) and

²⁴ <https://emergency.lacity.gov/about/eoc>.

²⁵ <https://211la.org/services/Hx4a58kEAS4p4wENco3rXbetQjJvEq/city-offices-of-emergency-services>

²⁶ https://emergency.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph1791/files/2023-10/Emergency%20Operations%20Base%20Plan_2023.pdf

appendices that provide supporting material (protocols, procedures, details, tools, formats, logistics and cross-references).²⁷

The City EMD operates the Emergency Operations Center (EOC), which is the focal point for coordination of the City's emergency planning, training, response and recovery efforts. The EOC's processes follow the National All-Hazards approach to such major disasters as wildfires, earthquakes, weather emergencies, acts of terrorism, cyberattacks and large-scale events within and/or affecting Los Angeles.²⁸



Emergency Operations Center. Photo provided by the City EMD.

Also co-located in this state-of-the-art, 84,000 square feet, two-story, seismically base-isolated facility, are the EMD administrative offices, a Fire

²⁷ <https://emergency.lacity.gov/strategic-plan>.

²⁸ Ibid.

Department Dispatch and Operations Center, and the Los Angeles Police Real-Time Analysis and Critical Response Division and Operations Center.²⁹

EOC survivability features include perimeter fencing, blast-resistant exterior surfaces, video surveillance system, 24-hour on-site guards, emergency back-up generators, a centralized uninterrupted power source, and more.³⁰ Despite these advanced features, the City EMD officials said the EOC Facility Security Video Management System is very inadequate and needs to be upgraded.³¹

The City EMD has an Alternate Emergency Operations Center (A-EOC) located in the Westchester area of Los Angeles, but that redundant site is ill-equipped to serve in an actual emergency.³² The City EMD submitted a special budget request in late 2025 seeking very modest funding to upgrade the IT infrastructure for the A-EOC.³³

The City EMD has an online Ready Your LA Neighborhood Program, which provides easy to use tools to help people prepare for disasters.³⁴ The City EMD also has a social media presence on at least four sites listed below. We note that its Facebook page has only 15,000 followers, compared to 70,000 followers for the New York Office of Emergency Management.³⁵

- [X/Twitter.com/ReadyLA](https://twitter.com/ReadyLA)
- [Facebook.com/ReadyLA](https://facebook.com/ReadyLA)
- [Instagram.com/ReadyLA](https://instagram.com/ReadyLA)
- [Threads.net/@ReadyLA](https://threads.net/@ReadyLA)

²⁹ <https://emergency.lacity.gov/about/eoc>

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Memorandum "The Path Forward," provided to the CGJ by the EMD.

³² Interviews with City EMD officials on January 13, 2026.

³³ Document provided to the CGJ by City EMD officials.

³⁴ <https://ready.lacity.gov/>.

³⁵ New York City OEM Facebook site, Accessed April 2, 2026.

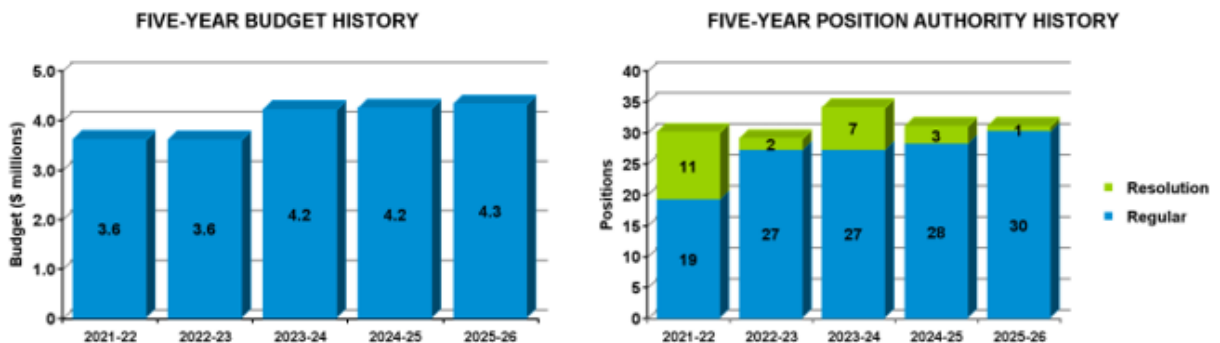
The City EMD’s Funding Inadequacy

The City’s EMD’s number one problem is that it has struggled for years with a lack of funds. Their budgets have resulted in inadequate staff, difficulties in hiring new staff, and challenges in retaining existing staff.³⁶ Its operating budget has not exceeded \$4.5 million, nor has its staff had more than 31 positions in the previous five years.³⁷

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

2025-26 Proposed Budget

FIVE-YEAR HISTORY OF BUDGET AND POSITION AUTHORITIES



SUMMARY OF 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET CHANGES

	Total Budget		General Fund			Special Fund					
	Regular	Resolution	Regular	Resolution	Regular	Resolution	Regular	Resolution			
2024-25 Adopted	\$4,237,798	28	3	\$4,120,940	97.2%	27	3	\$116,858	2.8%	1	-
2025-26 Proposed	\$4,320,437	30	1	\$4,200,165	97.2%	29	1	\$120,272	2.8%	1	-
Change from Prior Year	\$82,639	2	(2)	\$79,225		2	(2)	\$3,414		-	-

A *Los Angeles Times* article quoted an expert as saying: “That department could be the world leader in emergency management, and it could be the

³⁶ Interviews with City EMD officials on September 22, 2026.

³⁷ <https://sites.google.com/lacity.org/department-budget-requests/home>.

standard for the rest of the country, but with a third of the staff and a tenth of the budget that they need, that’s not possible”³⁸

In a 2022 audit by then-City Controller Ron Galperin, the Controller wrote: “San Diego (\$2.46), Long Beach (\$2.26) and San Francisco (\$7.59) all spent more per capita on emergency management than L.A., which then spent \$1.56 per resident. Whereas L.A. has a staff of roughly 30, New York, with more than double the population of L.A., has 200 people in its emergency management team, and Philadelphia, with a population less than half of L.A.’s, has 53.”³⁹

The chart below refers to the City EMD FY 2026-27 budget request.⁴⁰

City	Population (2020)	Operational Period	Size in Square Miles (On Land)	Full Time Emergency Management Departmental Staff	Full Time Staff/ # of Residents
Los Angeles	3,898,747	Duty Officer	469	33 filled	1 Full Time Staff / 105,371 people
New York City	8,804,190	24/7 Operations	300	203 filled (241 positions)	1 Full Time Staff / 36,531 people
San Francisco (City/County)	873,965	Day: Watch Center Night: Duty Officer	47	Emergency Services- 26 UASI Grants-26 Total- 52	1 Full Time Staff / 16,807 people
Washington DC	689,545	24/7 Joint All Hazards Operations Center	68	Finance- 10 Admin- 31 Public Safety- 76 Preparedness- 29 Total- 146	1 Full Time Staff / 6,630 people (Public Safety and Preparedness only)
Philadelphia, PA	1,603,797	Regional Integration Center	143	40 EM + 9 RIC (from count of staff list)	1 Full Time Staff / 32,730 people
Chicago, IL	2,746,388		234	28 (Emergency Management staff only)	1 Full Time Staff / 98,085 people

Note- LA County Alerting AAR published September 2025 has significant errors in its calculations of emergency management office size. This chart attempts to do an “apples to apples” comparison of staff in similar roles.

The City EMD officials told us they could use 60 staff positions to rotate assignments and prevent employee burn out. They want to bring in

³⁸ Matt Hamilton, “Funding for L.A.’s emergency management unit, vital to Palisades recovery, remains static,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-05-27/funding-for-la-emergency-management-unit-vital-to-palisades-recovery-remains-static>.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ <https://sites.google.com/lacity.org/department-budget-requests/home>.

specialists, such as dedicated staff to coordinate and work with community-based organizations. They want to improve messaging that explains what the City EMD does. They seek a dedicated Recovery Team - a small, specialized team handling large-scale recovery, with a focus on building a culture of preparedness for future events.⁴¹

In May 2025, the City Administrative Officer (CAO), Matthew Szabo, wrote that the City could *not support* at this time a proposed three-phase expansion of the City EMD, saying “any available funding should first be used *to restore positions* that could trigger layoffs.”⁴²

As of this report, the City Council had not yet approved a budget for 2026-27. Mayor Karen Bass issued a budget policy letter in October 2025 directing all City departments to propose scenarios for 5% reductions to their base budgets for FY 2026-27.⁴³ Los Angeles remains on shaky financial ground with increased liability costs and revenue shortfalls forcing it to dip into its reserves, according to a report released on February 18, 2026.⁴⁴

If funding were to be available, the CAO would have requested this expansion:

*Phase 1: Implementation of the Recovery and Reconstruction Division
FY 2025-26*

*Phase 2: Expansion of Core Missions and Response Capabilities FY
2026-27*

Phase 3: Preparation for the Events FY 2027-28

⁴¹ Interviews on September 22, 2025, and January 13, 2026.

⁴² City Administrative Officer, “Emergency Management Department – Phased Approach to Respond to Emergencies and Panned Events,” Memorandum of May 8, 2025.

⁴³ <https://mayor.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph2066/files/2025-10/20251006%20Mayor%27s%2026-27%20Budget%20Letter.pdf>.

⁴⁴ “LA is on perilous financial footing, city controller says in new report,” *Laist.com*
<https://laist.com/news/politics/la-is-on-perilous-financial-footing-city-controller-says-in-new-report>.

Regarding upcoming events, the CAO noted “there is **no external funding anticipated** [emphasis added] from sponsoring organizations, such as the 2028 Olympics and Paralympic Games, 2026 FIFA World Cup, or state or federal partners, to fund the Department’s requested positions. As such, the General Fund is the only available funding source for this budget item.”⁴⁵

AS PART OF ITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR ADVANCED EVENTS PLANNING, EMD IS PREPARING FOR THE 2028 LOS ANGELES OLYMPICS.

EMD is coordinating with departments and determining the technology, facilities, and personnel needed to ensure the safety of Los Angeles residents, visitors, and athletes while the City is on the world stage.

UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS



ANNUAL EVENTS

- Academy Awards
- Emmy Awards
- Grammy Awards
- LA Marathon

MEGA EVENTS

- 75th NBA All-Star Weekend
- U.S. Open Women's Golf
- World Cup
- Super Bowl LXI
- Olympic Games
- Paralympic Games
- 131st U.S. Open Championship

<https://emergency.lacity.gov/sites/g/files/wph1791/files/2024-10/EMD-strategic-plan-2024-2027.pdf>

The City EMD’s General Manager proposed a budget package for FY 2026-27 requesting “critical resources to enable the Department to adapt to the evolving threat landscape and ensure the City's readiness to host the world

⁴⁵ CAO memorandum of May 8, 2025.

for the upcoming mega-events; while responding to short-to-no-notice disasters and other planned events.”⁴⁶ The specific requests included:

- A second Assistant General Manager, to meet the Department’s rapidly expanding operational, administrative, planning, policy, and recovery responsibilities,
- Eleven Positions to provide a consistent, well-defined recovery structure led by EMD. Response staff cannot reasonably carry recovery responsibilities as collateral duties while simultaneously carrying out other mandates and frequent responses, and
- Five Positions included with the formal transfer of the Climate Emergency Mobilization Office to the City EMD. This investment is essential to the City’s long-term resilience and ability to address rising climate hazards.

County Office Of Emergency Management

The County OEM has the responsibility of comprehensively preparing and planning for, responding to, and recovering from large-scale emergencies and disasters that impact the entire geographic area of the County. Its website says, “OEM’s work is accomplished in partnership and collaboration with first response agencies, as well as non-profit, private sector and government partners.”⁴⁷

The challenges of emergency management at the County level are even greater than for the City. The County OEM’s responsibilities include:

1. Maintaining and managing the County’s Operational Area Emergency Operations Center (EOC),

⁴⁶ Document provided us by a City EMD official.

⁴⁷ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/emergency-management/>

2. Staffing the Watch Center Duty Officer program to provide 24/7/365 coverage,
3. Issuing Emergency Alert and Warning messages to inform the public of a hazardous situation,
4. Facilitating the Unified Coordination Group meetings and activities during incidents, and
5. Deploying agency representatives to field Incident Command posts to maintain situational awareness.⁴⁸

We learned that the County OEM's overriding need was a greater number of specialized employees. The current structure uses the "lean and mean" and "pooled employee multi-tasking" models.⁴⁹ Specialization would give the County OEM the ability to "broaden its messaging" beyond dealing with life-threatening and safety-crisis events. We were told, "75% of the time OEM is responding to or recovering from events,"⁵⁰ leaving little time for maintenance, upgrades, preparedness and additional training; and that "the status quo is not sustainable."⁵¹

Like the City EMD, the County OEM has its Ready.LACounty.gov website, which offers a free alert notification system that enables the Sheriff's Department to provide essential information during emergencies and disasters.⁵² Its Facebook page has only 2,800 followers.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Interviews with OEM officials on January 8, 2026.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² <https://ready.lacounty.gov/>.

After-Action Report For The Fires

On September 25, 2025, an independent After-Action Report (AAR), known as the McChrystal Report, was released.⁵³ The Report described “a series of outdated policies, weaknesses and system vulnerabilities that hampered emergency notifications and evacuation orders during the deadly Eaton and Palisades wildfires [...]”⁵⁴



The AAR analyzed the roles and actions of various County departments, including the County OEM, the Los Angeles County Fire Department and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department. It focused specifically on the County’s emergency notification systems and evacuation policies and processes. The responsibility to issue evacuation orders was split among three agencies, with no single platform on which to coordinate communications. The Report noted shortfalls in these areas:

1. Ambiguity in authority for issuing emergency alerts,

⁵³ <https://lacounty.gov/aar/>.

⁵⁴ City News Service, “After Report on Fire Response, LA County Looks to Bolster Emergency Management,” *Pasadena Now*, October 1, 2025. <https://pasadenanow.com/main/after-report-on-fire-response-la-county-looks-to-bolster-emergency-management>.

2. Training and staffing guidelines,
3. Resource and staffing shortfalls,
4. The lack of coordinated tools and systems for communications, and
5. Fragmented community engagement and public information procedures.

The AAR said the current County OEM staffing model “has proven fundamentally inadequate for Los Angeles County’s complex emergency management needs.” The AAR said, “compared to OEMs in jurisdictions of similar size (although not as large or complex), Los Angeles County’s OEM has significantly less staff, budget, and autonomy over its operating capabilities. The table below provides a comparison for reference.”⁵⁵

Emergency Management Staffing and Funding for Population-Comparable Counties and Cities			
Location	Population	Staffing Level	Budget*
Los Angeles County	10,000,000	37	\$15 Million**
New York City	8,500,000	200+ (current) 93 (2026 Preliminary) ⁴³	approx. \$88 Million (FY26 Preliminary) ⁴⁴
Cook County, IL	5,183,000	54	\$131,653 Million ⁴⁵
San Diego County⁴⁶	3,300,000	43	\$12.3 Million
City of Chicago⁴⁷	2,600,000 ⁴⁸	815	Approx. \$110 Million

The Acting CEO presented to the Board of Supervisors its “Integrated Feasibility and Status Report on Implementation of After-Action Report (AAR) Recommendations,” which summarized the County OEM’s current staffing.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ McChrystal Group, “After-Action Review of Alert Notifications Systems and Evacuation Policies for the Eaton and Palisades Fires,” <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/207915.pdf> page 57, Accessed April 2, 2026. The Report notes “Some of these comparison budgets and staffing levels may include functions and responsibilities not currently included in L.A. County’s OEM functions or responsibilities.”

⁵⁶ Chief Executive Office, “Implementing After Action Report Recommendations for the January 2025 Eaton and Palisades Fires (Item No. 54-A, Agenda of September 30, 2025.” December 15, 2025.

OEM POSITIONS	Budgeted	Filled	Vacant	
Senior Manager, CEO	1.0	1.0	0.0	
Manager, CEO	1.0	1.0	0.0	
Supervising Emergency Management Coordinator	5.0	6.0	(1.0)	*
Emergency Management Coordinator III	13.0	15.0	(2.0)	*
Emergency Management Coordinator II	11.0	11.0	0.0	
Emergency Management Coordinator I	4.0	3.0	1.0	
Management Secretary IV	1.0	1.0	0.0	
Senior Typist Clerk	1.0	1.0	0.0	
Total Positions	37.0	39.0	(2.0)	

*A negative value indicates that OEM’s staff includes a temporary loaned, unbudgeted item.

The Acting CEO wrote about the Emergency Operations Center:

“Constructed in the early 1990s, the facility was designed for a different era of emergency management and is not configured to support contemporary, large-scale, multi-jurisdictional operations. The facility lacks the infrastructure and physical design needed to effectively integrate advancing technologies, real-time data systems, and modern communications platforms. As a result, the County EOC requires modernization to ensure it can meet current and future operational demands and support Countywide resilience.”⁵⁷

The County OEM officials likewise said its current County EOC facilities were out-of-date and not up to current standards for emergency management. They supported the idea of a new facility located on property currently occupied by the Sheriff’s Department, keeping the existing facility as a back-up redundant EOC and training center.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Interviews with OEM officials on January 8, 2026.

The City EMD’s & County OEM’s Three-Year Expansion Plans

Agency	City EMD	County OEM
Plan Author	City Administrative Officer (CAO)	Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
Phase 1	Implementation of the Recovery and Reconstruction Division FY 2025-26	Operational Capability Build-Out FY 2026-27
Phase 2	Expansion of Core Missions and Response Capabilities FY 2026-27	Build Administrative & Support Infrastructure FY 2027-28
Phase 3	Preparation for the Events FY 2027-28 ⁵⁹	Structural & Governance Changes FY 2028-29 ⁶⁰

A Recent Development

On March 17, 2026, the media outlet *CBS Los Angeles* published a video announcement that Los Angeles County officials released plans to address staffing concerns at its Office of Emergency Management Department following a whistleblower complaint.⁶¹ The CBS LA web site posted this statement from a County spokesperson. The CGJ welcomes the fact that the County appears ready to address these vital citizens’ issues.

⁵⁹ City Administrative Officer, “Emergency Management Department – Phased Approach to Respond to Emergencies and Panned Events,” memorandum of May 8, 2025.

⁶⁰ Measure G, approved by the voters in November 2024, includes several key provisions designed to enhance governance in the County, with notable milestones set for 2026, 2028, and beyond.

⁶¹ <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/video/la-county-releases-plan-to-address-staffing-concerns-at-emergency-management-department/>, Accessed April 2, 2026.

OEM STAFFING

"IN ADDITION TO GROWING OUR STAFF, WE ARE STRENGTHENING ALERT AND WARNING CAPABILITIES, ENHANCING COORDINATION WITH FIRST RESPONDERS AND PARTNER AGENCIES, EXPANDING TRAINING AND STAFFING, AND MODERNIZING HOW WE PREPARE FOR, RESPOND TO, AND RECOVER FROM DISASTERS."

LA COUNTY SPOKESPERSON

<https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/video/la-county-releases-plan-to-address-staffing-concerns-at-emergency-management-department/>

Conclusion

The City EMD and County OEM departments are seriously underfunded and understaffed in the event of another serious convergence of disasters such as the January 2025 wildfires. Both are ill-equipped to carry out their missions to coordinate the City's and County's emergency management efforts for disasters or major events such as the 2028 Olympic Games.

Our conclusion matches that of the After-Action Report which said, "compared to OEMs in jurisdictions of similar size (although not as large or complex), Los Angeles County's OEM has significantly less staff, budget, and autonomy over its operating capabilities."⁶²

If the inadequate funding for the City EMD and County OEM is not corrected, the City and the County are likely to face the risks of lawsuits from parties impacted by disasters, and businesses and homeowners are likely to face higher property insurance costs. Worse yet, people will suffer without

⁶² <https://lacounty.gov/aar/>

adequate help. As an OEM spokesperson told us, “the status quo is not sustainable.”⁶³

FINDINGS

Finding 5.1

The City EMD’s and County OEM’s responsibilities are not well understood by some elected officials, making it difficult for these departments to secure adequate funding and staffing.

Finding 5.2

The City EMD’s and County OEM’s functions are not well understood by the public, making it difficult for some to know what resources are available and what to do in the event of an emergency.

Finding 5.3

The City EMD’s and County OEM’s budgets and staffing are inadequate, limiting their ability to carry out their missions effectively.

Finding 5.4

The City EMD and County OEM do not have sufficient funding to prepare for major events such as the 2028 Olympic Games, resulting in inadequate emergency preparedness.

⁶³ Interviews with OEM officials on January 8, 2026.

Finding 5.5

The City EMD and County OEM do not have a fully functional Alternate Emergency Operations Center, resulting in a lack of operational effectiveness and redundancy should the primary EOC be unusable.

Finding 5.6

During the 2025 fires, the responsibility to issue evacuation orders was split among several agencies, including the City EMD and the County OEM, resulting in an uncoordinated emergency response.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 5.1

The City EMD and the County OEM should develop an *upwards* communications strategy to better inform officials about the vital missions of these two departments.

Recommendation 5.2

The City EMD and County OEM should seek funding for a social media consultant to develop an *outwards* communications strategy to better inform the public on what the departments do and what people should do in the event of an emergency.

Recommendation 5.3

The City EMD's and the County OEM's operating budgets and staffing should be increased to the point where they can effectively accomplish their mission and responsibilities.

Recommendation 5.4

The City EMD and the County OEM should redouble their efforts to obtain funding from the Los Angeles Organizing Committee for the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games, the Federal Government, and any other available funding sources

Recommendation 5.5

Both the City EMD and the County OEM should make plans and obtain funding to have fully functioning Alternative Emergency Operations Centers.

Recommendation 5.6

The City EMD and the County OEM should work with the City and the County to establish a single point of communications to the public for future catastrophic events.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b). All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles City Mayor	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
Los Angeles City Council President	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6
Los Angeles County Chief Executive Officer	5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6

Acronyms

AAR	After Action Report
A-EOC	Alternate Emergency Operations Center
CAO	City Administrative Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CGJ	Civil Grand Jury
EMD	Emergency Management Department
EOC	Emergency Operations Center
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
LASD	Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
OEM	Office of Emergency Management

Committee Members

James Bukowski, Chair
Jenalea Smith, Vice-Chair
Donald A. Gonzales

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**DISASTER PREPAREDNESS &
SAFETY LOS ANGELES COUNTY
PORTS & HARBORS**



2025-26

**Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**



Photo 22 San Pedro Bay Port (Courtesy of Port of Los Angeles)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Los Angeles County's (County) ports and harbors play a vital role in the region's economy and marine recreation. This County's unique geography makes it prone to potential disasters: from mother nature or human caused disasters. The ports and harbors must prepare for unforeseen emergencies to protect residents and maintain public confidence. This report examines two ports and three harbors in Los Angeles County. It outlines port and harbor authorities' actions on personnel training, environmental and

operational issues, and processes in-place to strengthen port safety and resilience.

Port, harbor, fire, and law enforcement personnel maintain high skill levels through extensive training. They work collaboratively, utilizing a Unified Command (UC) emergency management system to enable swift prioritization of life-saving actions and efficient restoration of operations during emergencies. Personnel have regular drills, joint exercises, and protocol reviews to ensure that all areas have the depth of multiple personnel, with requisite knowledge, ready to adapt to evolving, multiple and simultaneous threats. Real-world incidents during 2025-26 demonstrated how this preparation saved lives.

A large portion of Los Angeles County is situated in a basin, with mountains to the north and ocean to the south and is home to ten million people. Los Angeles faces multiple and significant disaster risks, of which an earthquake is just one. A major earthquake could disrupt critical infrastructure, impede the delivery of essential supplies, and cause mass displacement. Operators and port authorities continue to invest in reinforcing infrastructure against potential hazards which protect continued maritime commerce. The U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) Captain of the Port (COTP) manages maritime emergencies across a broad jurisdiction, supported by federal, state, and local resources, and interagency coordination. For example, port authorities, operators, workers, and all parties involved in the ONE Henry Hudson cargo ship fire on November 21, 2025, in the Port of Los Angeles (POLA) successfully responded with professionalism, dedication, and care for employees, staff and the lived experience of nearby residents.

Port authorities and operators continue investing in infrastructure reinforcement across three fronts:

1. Incorporate seismic standards in capital projects such as Port of Los Angeles (POLA) Terminal 500 development and the new Cruise Terminal, and the Port of Long Beach (POLB) doubling capacity by 2050.
2. Implement the City of Los Angeles 2025 Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP).
3. Continual improvement and infrastructure alignment according to seismic standards by terminal operators.



Photo 23 Battleship Iowa and Norwegian Cruise Ship at the Port of LA (Courtesy Port of Los Angeles)

BACKGROUND

We live in a time when risk from disasters is a constant part of our existence. Are our ports vulnerable? We lacked sufficient information, which led us to author this report. In response to significant risks and heightened public concern following recent wildfire disasters, residents of Los Angeles' Cities and County have emphasized the importance of coordinated emergency response among multiple agencies. We found that a collaborative approach is crucial for safeguarding the harbors, ports, and surrounding coastal communities. The ports must continue to function after a disaster, or we could find ourselves in a cascading shuttering of many industries that depend on supply chains, and just-in-time manufacturing to provide much of what we take for granted.

During emergencies, maritime and port staff coordinate through a UC command structure. They collaborate with government agencies, private businesses, staff, and workers through information sharing with pre-coordinated, situationally defined actions. Port personnel are tasked with maintaining safe and essential maritime operations. The ports must continue operating after a disaster.¹

Trust Granting Pola To City Of Los Angeles

POLA and POLB are both located in the San Pedro Bay Port Complex which will be described subsequently and have different governance.

The legal document by which the state of California transferred the harbor tidelands that comprise the POLA to the city of Los Angeles is commonly known as "the harbor tidelands trust grant and legal governance of the port of Los Angeles, California legislature, statutes of 1911, chapter 656." this grant was enacted on May 1, 1911. in the context of port governance and California coastal law, this legal document is officially titled: "an act granting to the city of Los Angeles the tidelands and submerged lands of the state within the boundaries of the said city." the city holds in trust for the people of California the tidelands and submerged lands under the public trust doctrine. the city acts as trustee of the state tidelands, not as outright owner. the core "trust language" in the statute clearly states that the city of Los Angeles does not own the tidelands. instead, the city holds them in trust for the benefit of all Californians to be used solely for public purposes. ²

¹ Interview with POLA employee August 20, 2025.

² California State Legislature, Chapter 656, Statutes of 1911 --

https://slcprdwordpressstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpressdata/2023/07/S1911_Ch656_acc.pdf.

Additionally, the law states:

- 1. Port authorities shall expend all money derived for harbor purposes.** The port operates and manages its facilities as a proprietary and self-supporting entity, generating revenue through fees for shipping services such as dockage, wharfage, pilotage, storage, property rentals, royalties, and other port services. The Port's jurisdiction, referred to as the Harbor District, includes property in San Pedro, Wilmington, and Terminal Island. As a landlord port, POLA leases its property to tenants, and those tenants operate their own facilities.³
- 2. Trust Ownership:** The tidelands legally belong to the State of California, with the City of Los Angeles acting as trustee, managing state-owned tidelands for specific public purposes.⁴
- 3. Revenue Lock:** POLA cannot transfer its revenues to the city's general fund because of the California Public Trust Doctrine. Harbor revenues must be reinvested for harbor-related purposes and cannot be diverted for general city expenses.⁵
- 4. Oversight Authority:** The California State Lands Commission oversees how the City manages the trust. To fulfill these requirements, the City established a separate administrative body. POLA is operated by the Los Angeles Harbor Department, which is overseen by the Board of Harbor Commissioners. This arrangement helps keep harbor revenues separate from the City's general funds and ensures adherence to the trust's legal obligations.⁶
- 5. Broader Public Purpose Language:** The language for the Los Angeles trust originally applied exclusively to harbor operations.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Today the difference in trust language is narrower than it once was, as Los Angeles received similar flexibility decades later through legislative amendments, specifically:

1. 1970 (allowed visitor-serving uses e.g., Ports O'Call redevelopment)⁷,
2. 1985 (allowed expanded redevelopment authority),
3. 2015 (clarified public access uses).⁸

These amendments to the trust have changed how the Port of Los Angeles is used such as:

- The Los Angeles Waterfront redevelopment
- Cruise terminal expansion
- Public promenades and parks
- San Pedro Public Market⁹

Trust Granting POLB To City Of Long Beach

POLB operates under the authority of a legislative trust grant issued by the State of California to the City of Long Beach. The act, officially titled "An Act granting to the City of Long Beach the tidelands and submerged lands of the State of California within the boundaries of said city, through Chapter 676 of the California legislature." This trust grant was enacted on May 18, 1911, and provided the legal foundation for POLB's operations. In 1925, this trust was amended to broaden the scope of permissible uses for these lands, thereby enhancing the City's ability to develop and manage the waterfront:

- Commerce and Navigation
- Recreation

⁷ <https://sanpedro.com/la-waterfront/ports-o-call-village/>

⁸ <https://portoflosangeles.org/about/history/public-trust-doctrine>

⁹ Ibid.

- Public Resorts¹⁰
- Parks and Public Assembly

This broader language gave Long Beach legal flexibility for waterfront redevelopment, enabling projects such as the:

- Long Beach Waterfront Tourism District
- Shoreline Village
- Aquarium of the Pacific
- Rainbow Harbor

This foundational decision allowed the port to grow and become a major center for maritime commerce in the region. ¹¹

¹⁰ https://slcprdwordpressstorage.blob.core.windows.net/wordpressdata/2023/07/S1911_Ch676_acc.pdf

¹¹ Interview with POLB Staff, Long Beach Port on Mar 6, 2026.

METHODOLOGY

We Evaluated The Emergency Preparedness And Readiness Of Two Ports And Three Harbors In Los Angeles County

- Port of Los Angeles
- Port of Long Beach
- King Harbor – Redondo Beach
- Avalon Harbor – Catalina Island
- Marina del Rey - Harbor

The review team conducted multiple site visits and met with port authorities, administrators, police, and fire personnel. Additional discussions focused on responsibilities related to emergency training, rapid response execution, command protocols during emergencies, maintaining essential port operations in crisis situations, and developing strategies to mitigate future risks. These engagements clarified roles in the mission areas of prevention, protection, response, and recovery. The review team examined in detail:

- **Prevention** – Identifying threats, reinforcing infrastructure, and minimizing vulnerabilities.
- **Protection** – Securing facilities, waterways, and critical systems.
- **Response** – Implementing rapid, coordinated actions to save lives, protect property, and stabilize operations.

- **Recovery** – Restoring port operations, supply chains, and economic activity as efficiently as possible.

DISCUSSION



Photo 4 Container Ship at the Port of Los Angeles (courtesy photo from the Port of Los Angeles)

San Pedro Bay Port Complex

San Pedro Bay Port Complex is an unusual port structure.

A critical chokepoint by virtue of its economic size, it is:

- the largest container port complex in the Western Hemisphere
- responsible for nearly 40% of the U.S. containerized imports

- critical to national supply chains
- adjacent to dense urban populations and energy infrastructure¹²

San Pedro Bay Port Complex consist of the two ports: POLA and POLB.

The ports operate under a landlord business model, leasing terminal facilities to commercial operators who are responsible for unloading and transporting goods. The ports' financial operations are sustained by lease revenues.¹³

Although located adjacent to each other, the ports function independently, as they each are governed by their respective Boards of Harbor Commissioners, and, due to historical legislative trust decisions and economic factors, this fosters competition that improves service and efficiency.¹⁴

Despite their separate management, both ports collaborate on issues related to safety, training, and the environment, and mutual support in emergency response. Their strategic locations, along with strong rail connections, have made them the largest port complex in North America and a vital link for trade between the United States and Asia.¹⁵

¹² <https://portoflosangeles.org/about>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.



Photo 5 Container Lift at the LA Port (Courtesy Port of Los Angeles)

Key Facts About The San Pedro Bay Port Complex

- The San Pedro Bay Port Complex is responsible for handling almost 40% of all container traffic entering the United States.
- The two ports contribute to the creation of 2.5 million jobs nationwide. In the greater Los Angeles area, one out of every eight jobs is linked to activities at this complex.
- More than half of the port workforce resides within five miles of the port, and nearly three-quarters within ten miles.
- The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers constructed three stone breakwaters 8.5 miles across the bay to protect the San Pedro Bay Port Complex. Constructed between 1899 and 1949, these

breakwaters provide two entrances: Angels Gate, with a depth of 82 feet, and Queens Gate, with a depth of 77 feet.

- The San Pedro Bay Port Complex covers a total area of 25 square miles.
- The two neighboring ports, POLA and POLB, operate 47 terminals and utilize 157 ship-to-shore cranes.
- Over the past year, the complex managed 3,800 vessel arrivals, processed twenty million containers, and managed distinct types of cargo, including crude oil and bulk goods.
- Active cruise operations are also part of the ports' activities. In 2025, POLA hosted 241 cruise calls and welcomed 1.6 million passengers, generating more than \$300 million in economic benefits.¹⁶

Critical Infrastructure

Rail: The San Pedro Bay Port Complex features an intermodal (multiple modes - rail, ship, truck - to move goods in standardized containers without handling the freight itself) rail network called the Alameda Corridor, a 20-mile-long freight rail expressway. This corridor is the primary link for cargo train traffic between the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach and the transcontinental rail network. Around one-quarter of all containerized cargo is shipped by rail, mostly transferred directly from ship to on-dock rail using double-stacked rail cars. Each week, approximately 60 cargo trains transport cargo from the San Pedro Bay Port Complex, reducing about 400 truck trips daily.¹⁷

¹⁶ Interview with POLA Staff on August 20, 2025.

¹⁷ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTRSP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document page 63 of 173, dated January 2020

Union Pacific and Norfolk Southern are now removing artificial barriers to establish America's first true coast-to-coast railroad. This unified network will connect nearly every major port, industrial region, and population center nationwide. Transit times will be reduced by up to two days under a single contract and billing system, offering end-to-end visibility. By shifting freight from trucks to rail, the network will decrease highway congestion, minimize infrastructure wear, and lower emissions, while eliminating bottlenecks in markets like Chicago, St. Louis, Kansas City, and New Orleans. In Chicago alone, over 1,000 trucks move freight daily from one railroad to another.¹⁸ This transformation strengthens every link in the national supply chain.¹⁹

Petroleum Storage: Southern California's petroleum infrastructure and distribution system includes refineries, pipelines, distribution terminals, marine facilities, and retail stations at the San Pedro Bay Port Complex.²⁰ Southern California's petroleum infrastructure is separate from Northern California's, with distinct crude oil and petroleum product asset. There are five advanced petroleum refineries in Southern California that produce gasoline and diesel fuel, meeting the State's strict specifications. Southern California refiners rely on marine terminals, receiving about 1.2 million barrels per day of crude oil by marine tanker from Alaska and foreign sources.²¹ Refineries typically maintain only 7 to 10 days' worth of crude oil.²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Interview with Port Authorities on January 22, 2026.

²⁰ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTRSP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document page 57 of 173, dated January 2020

²¹ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTRSP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document page 57 of 173, dated January 2020

²² June 2024 City of Los Angeles Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (final) pdf.

Pipelines: Petroleum pipelines transport crude oil and refined products to and from refineries and other delivery points. California refineries supply most transportation fuels to Nevada, Utah, and Arizona through a well-developed fuel corridor from the San Pedro Bay Port Complex. Southern California’s petroleum product pipelines connect Los Angeles Basin refineries to 35 distribution terminals and airports, with a combined storage tank capacity exceeding 25 million barrels.

Risks of severe disruptions could ripple far beyond the Ports:

- Southern California receives about 50% of its oil through the San Pedro Bay Ports
- Refineries typically hold only 7–10 days of fuel
- Nevada relies 100% on California refineries
- Arizona relies on Southern California for approximately 60% of its fuel
- “Just-in-time” manufacturing would be severely affected
- Consumer goods, industrial components, and agricultural products would face delays
- Military logistics could be impacted²³

²³ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTRSP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document page 58 of 173, dated January 2020



Photo 6 Police Boat On Patrol in POLA (Courtesy of Port of Los Angeles)

PORT OF LOS ANGELES

POLA maintains its competitive edge through record-setting cargo operations, groundbreaking environmental initiatives, and advanced security measures. In 2026, POLA will have been America's busiest container port for 26 consecutive years. The nation's first maritime cybersecurity operations center protects the port's infrastructure. This past year it blocked over 820 million attempted intrusions, safeguarding operations from malware, ransomware, and phishing attacks. ²⁴

²⁴ Interview with Port authorities on January 22, 2026.

The latest emissions report shows that POLA has reached its lowest per-Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit (TEU) emissions ever, moving more cargo while reducing pollution that impacts nearby communities. ²⁵

Situated in San Pedro Bay, 25 miles south of downtown Los Angeles, the port covers 7,500 acres of land and water along 43 miles of waterfront. POLA manages a variety of commodities and operates both passenger and cargo terminals, including container, automobile, dry, and liquid bulk terminals, as well as cruise and ferry passenger terminals. In 2025, the port hosted 241 cruise calls and welcomed 1.6 million passengers. Plans are underway to develop a new world-class Outer Harbor Cruise Center, positioning Los Angeles as the premier West Coast cruise gateway. ²⁶

POLA is also recognized for its progressive community engagement. For example, the 11th annual State of the Port address for the year 2025 was attended by 930 people, and proceeds from the 2026 event totaled \$350,000, which were donated to two local nonprofits. The port invested \$2.4 million in upgrades to projects sponsored by the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, with renovations set to be unveiled in April 2027. Over the past decade, POLA has led efforts to revitalize the Los Angeles Waterfront, improving public access, developing amenities and infrastructure, and transforming the shoreline into a world-class visitor destination. Each year, the Port allocates 10 percent of its net income for community purposes. Over the last twenty years, more than \$1 billion has been invested in the Los Angeles Waterfront, ensuring that community growth keeps pace with port development. ²⁷

²⁵ Interview with Port Authorities on January 22, 2026.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

The City of Los Angeles designates all POLA employees as Disaster Service Workers. They may be called upon to work outside their usual duties during a disaster. However, employees will never be required to perform tasks they are not familiar with or have not been adequately trained to complete. ²⁸



Photo 7 Port of Long Beach (Photo from LA Business Journal)

PORT OF LONG BEACH

POLB is a major gateway for trade between the United States and Asia. It serves 140 shipping lines and connects with 217 seaports globally. East Asian trade accounts for over 90% of shipments through POLB. Five out of six container terminals have water depths of at least 50 feet. ²⁹

POLB handles a wide range of vessel sizes, from small 10,000-barrel barges carrying refined products along the coast to medium-sized tankers delivering

²⁸ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTSRP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document page 58 of 173, dated January 2020

²⁹ <https://polb.com/port-info>

specialized fuel blends to California markets. POLB is equipped to accommodate the largest ships in operation today, with its main channel dredged to 76 feet to support Supermax petroleum tankers. The largest supertankers, known as Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs), can reach lengths of up to 1,200 feet and deliver as much as 2 million barrels of crude oil to refineries.³⁰

The Department of Defense has designated POLB as one of 17 strategic commercial seaports in the United States. These ports are vital due to their infrastructure, capacity, and readiness to support rapid military deployments during national emergencies or large-scale mobilizations. POLB has identified Pier F and Pier T for cargo staging and access to rail spurs, which can serve as Military Outload Facilities. Additionally, POLB anchorage D8 is designated by the U.S. Navy as an offshore ordinance transfer point, owing to the protection offered by the Long Beach Breakwater. POLB has approved U.S. Navy offshore ordinance anchorages, making POLB one of the nation's most militarily significant commercial ports.³¹

POLB is well-resourced and managed, with trained personnel ready to handle emergencies. POLB also aims for zero carbon emissions by 2050.³²

Current Development Expansion Plans

After achieving a record year in 2025, POLB is preparing for further expansion. POLB plans to double its cargo capacity by 2050, aiming to handle 20 million TEU containers compared to the 9.8 million managed last

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

year. In 2025, the Port set a new cargo record of 9.8 million TEU's and efficiently handled shipments without congestion or backlog. ³³

On-Dock Rail

POLB's infrastructure includes on-dock rail at five out of six container terminals, and it is served by intermodal railroad cars traveling north to Los Angeles via the Alameda Corridor. Over the next decade the port intends to allocate \$3.2 billion for renovating terminals, expanding its railyard, and building new wharves. These upgrades are designed to accommodate a significantly increased annual cargo flow, with the goal of doubling volume within the next 25 years. ³⁴

Pier G Wharf Construction

The plans feature a \$365 million unified wharf construction at Pier G. This project will create an additional 19 acres of land by filling in a water slip, enabling the port to berth larger ships. Construction began in July and is scheduled for completion in 2028. ³⁵

Rail Yard Expansion

\$1.8 billion expansion of the rail yard, which, upon completion in 2032, will double the facility's acreage and triple its annual cargo capacity. This expansion is also expected to decrease the number of trucks on nearby freeways, helping to reduce pollution in adjacent neighborhoods. ³⁶

³³ Caroline Petrow-Cohen, "After a record year, the Port of Long Beach prepares for growth." <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2026-01-13/port-of-long-beach-prepares-for-growth>, Los Angeles Times, January 13, 2026.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

Street Upgrades

The upcoming year includes \$53 million worth of proposed improvements to modernize harbor-area streets.³⁷

King Harbor, Redondo Beach

King Harbor is jointly managed by the Harbor Master, Redondo Beach Fire Department, Los Angeles County Sheriff, Lifeguards, and the Coast Guard. These agencies operate together around the clock, ensuring continuous monitoring and rapid emergency response throughout the harbor. The harbor features 1,500 boat slips accommodating boats under 45 feet. Incident action plans are established for major events, supporting safety and facilitating a swift response when needed. Surveillance is enhanced with drones and 24/7 camera coverage across the harbor area.³⁸

Environmental monitoring at the harbor involves strict compliance against illegal dumping and accidental leaks. Oversight is provided by Fish & Game, USCG, EPA, and lifeguards, each empowered to issue fines for non-compliance. Boats are allowed to moor for emergencies for up to 72 hours, with a maximum stay of seven days before departure is required. Additionally, the State of California's Department of Boating and Waterways has awarded the harbor \$50,000 to help address the increasing issue of derelict and abandoned boats. Since the harbor is located in a tsunami zone, evacuation protocols are in place. These protocols allow for the deployment of up to 20 engines within 20 minutes and up to 100 engines within one hour, ensuring a prompt response in emergencies.³⁹

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Interview with Redondo Beach Fire Department Staff, November 10, 2025

³⁹ Interview with Redondo Beach Fire Department Staff, November 10, 2025

Redondo Beach is regarded as a desirable assignment for harbor personnel, a reputation shared with other coastal harbors.⁴⁰



Photo 8 Avalon Harbor (Photo from the LA Times)

Avalon Harbor, Catalina Island

Avalon, located on Catalina Island, is a picturesque city covering just 2.8 square miles. Avalon has a population of approximately 4,000 year-round residents. It is nestled in a scenic bowl surrounded by steep hills, creating a unique and vibrant coastal community.⁴¹

The heart of Avalon is its harbor, which features 360 moorings and is serviced by ferries arriving from multiple mainland ports. The harbor is

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Interview with Harbor Master and Avalon Fire Department Staff, October 17, 2025

managed by the Avalon Harbor Department, whose dedicated staff oversee the moorings, dock times, and ensure water safety for both residents and the substantial number of visitors. Avalon attracts over a million tourists each year, contributing to its lively atmosphere. ⁴²

The City of Avalon's fire department focuses its staffing within Avalon to provide rapid response and promote safety during emergencies. The area is susceptible to dry winds that can develop quickly, prompting the fire department to deploy available assets proactively in anticipation of potential incidents. Additional staffing would allow for better deployment of trained personnel and equipment on both sides of the city, as well as on the hill above Avalon. ⁴³

To further enhance emergency preparedness, the City of Avalon has developed a plan to install an air-raid siren. This siren would serve to alert residents of rapidly emerging incidents, including the threat of fires or tsunamis, ensuring timely warnings and improved community safety. ⁴⁴

Marina Del Rey

Marina del Rey (MDR) is centrally located between Los Angeles International Airport (LAX) and Santa Monica, making it a hub for maritime activity within Los Angeles County. Established in 1965, MDR is the largest man-made small-craft harbor in the United States, providing approximately 5,000 boat slips for both recreational and commercial purposes. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department oversee the safety and law enforcement of the harbor, with responsibilities that extend beyond MDR. Upon request from the USCG, the Sheriff's patrols cover sea areas reaching Catalina Island and San Clemente Island. The Sheriff's Department also acts as the primary

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

responder for aircraft incidents in the ocean territory beyond LAX, ensuring comprehensive emergency coverage for maritime and aviation situations.⁴⁵

The area that is now MDR was, before its development, a salt marsh fed by Ballona Creek. In 1949, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers proposed building a marina to accommodate more than 8,000 small boats. President John F. Kennedy approved federal support in 1961, leading to marina construction. Following severe winter storms in 1962-63, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved building a protective breakwater, 2,340 feet long, with a budget of \$36 million, enhancing the harbor's safety and operational stability.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Interview with Marina del Rey Sheriff Department Staff, October 6, 2025

⁴⁶ Ibid.



Photo 9 Abandoned boat at Marina Del Rey Harbor (Juror Photo)

Abandoned And Derelict Boats

The local regulatory authority in Marina del Rey, owned and operated by Los Angeles County, exercises regulatory authority through several channels:⁴⁷

- Los Angeles County Code Title 19.12.1070 grants the Harbor Master the power to remove and store abandoned vessels.
- The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (MDR Station) is responsible for enforcement, including vessel impounding. After following due process, the department can conduct a lien sale and dispose of or demolish vessels.

⁴⁷ Ibid

- The Harbor Master can regulate berthing and remove or store abandoned or unlawfully berthed vessels.

Increasing numbers of derelict and abandoned vessels present navigational, environmental, public safety, and financial risks. ⁴⁸

State Regulatory Authority is provided under the California Harbors & Navigation Code, which allows for impoundment, cost recovery, and vessel disposal after statutory notice procedures:

- § 500-508 Boater's Lien Law: Governs lien sale procedures for stored vessels, including notice requirements and sale protocols. This code is applied alongside vessel impound actions. ⁴⁹

Berthing for slip-based vessels operates under written agreements. These agreements may be terminated for reasons including:

- Non-payment
- Failure to maintain insurance
- Failure to maintain seaworthiness
- Regulatory violations

Upon termination of a berthing agreement:

- The vessel may be declared unlawfully berthed.
- Impound procedures are initiated under code authority.
- Lien sale or destruction occurs following statutory notice. ⁵⁰

⁴⁸ <https://www.Parks.ca.gov/pages/28702/files/Article%204%20-%20Boater%20Lien%20Laws.pdf>

⁴⁹ Interview with Marina del Rey Sheriff Department Staff, October 6, 2025.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Primary California State Reimbursement Program Is Managed By The Division Of Boating And Waterway Through The Surrendered And Abandoned Vessel Exchange (SAVE) Program. This Program Aims To Remove, Prevent, Store, And Dispose Of Abandoned Recreational Vessels By Providing Competitive Grants To Eligible Local Public Agencies, Typically Requiring A Local Match Of About 10%. Los Angeles County, Through LASD (MDR), Is Eligible And Has Participated In The Program. SAVE Is The Main Reimbursement Mechanism For Expensive Removals, Especially For Vessels With Minimal Resale Value. Strict Slip Compliance Enforcement, Early Intervention, And Thorough Documentation By The Harbor Master And The Los Angeles Sheriff Department Provides Proactive Abatement And Effective Slip Management Of The 5,000 Slips And Reduces Long-Term Risks.⁵¹

Possible Emergencies/Disasters

There are 19 disasters that the ports are prepared to address. A recent Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment study identified the greatest risk to Southern California to be from a catastrophic earthquake. U.S. Geological Surveys have identified 21 probable complex faults in Southern California. Liquefaction and tsunamis may develop depending on the location and the intensity of an earthquake.⁵²

The City of Los Angeles Harbor Department, January 2025 report lists 19 hazards and threats that the Ports include the their Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plan: Earthquake, Dam Failure, Landslide Debris Flow, Sea Level Rise, Severe Wind, Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat, Flood, Wildfire, Tsunami and Seiche, Cyber Threats, Hazardous Material Release,

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² City of Los Angeles Harbor Department, Department of Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plan, dated January 2025, Page 13.

Civil Disorder, Oil Spills, Radiological Accidents, Smoke/Air Pollution, Terrorism, Oil Spills, and Public Health Hazards.

Earthquake

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) predicts a 7.8 or greater earthquake along the San Andreas fault. The total perceptible shaking will last approximately two to three minutes, with the most damaging strong shaking occurring between 45 and 90 seconds. Horizontal ground displacement up to 30 feet could be produced. This would result in the shearing of large utility infrastructures crossing the fault, causing failures in fiber optic cables, petroleum pipelines, natural gas pipelines, overhead electric power transmission lines, aqueducts, railroad crossings, bridges, and overpasses. Major highways likely to be affected include Interstates 5, 10, 15, 101, 105, 405, 710, and Highways 14, 60, 91, and 111. Business interruption would be significant, and extensive damage to buildings and their contents is expected. Severely impacted areas may be without water for up to six months, and water system damage would hamper firefighting efforts. Food delivery by truck to grocery markets is likely to be disrupted. ⁵³Current estimates suggest thousands could be injured or killed, and more than two million people may be displaced. ⁵⁴

Major Earthquake Impacts

- Severe damage to major aqueducts, with repairs expected to take several months. ⁵⁵
- Prolonged natural gas shutoffs, potentially lasting multiple weeks. ⁵⁶

⁵⁴ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/Final-2025-LA-County-AHMP-Base-Plan-Signed.pdf>

⁵⁵ https://pubs.usgs.gov/of/2008/1150/apendixes/of2008-1150_appendix_e.pdf (in Conclusions)

⁵⁶ Ibid.

- Extended electric power outages until the distribution system can be rebuilt.⁵⁷
- Highways could experience large displacement, causing bridges and crossings to become unseated, with repairs taking weeks to months.⁵⁸
- Rail lines would be displaced, resulting in loss of rail service for weeks.⁵⁹
- Communications infrastructure, including fiber and cellular, could be disrupted for several days.⁶⁰
- Water may not be available to fight fires due to infrastructure damage.⁶¹

Liquefaction

Earthquake-induced shaking lasting nearly two minutes can trigger liquefaction, causing granular soil to temporarily lose strength and behave like a liquid. This phenomenon is likely in the coastal basin, river valleys, and flatlands of Los Angeles. Liquefaction could impact oilfield gathering systems and the liquid fuels infrastructure supporting Southern California, including oilfield gathering systems, refineries, transmission pipelines, and distribution in the San Pedro Bay Port Complex. As a result, refineries would experience hard power shutdowns and remain offline for at least 14 days to assess safety and restart facilities.⁶²

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan for COTP zone Los Angeles-Long Beach document, January 2020, page 7.

Tsunami

Tsunamis are high-energy, long-wavelength ocean waves generated mainly by significant offshore earthquakes. They can rapidly inundate low-lying coastal areas, causing sudden flooding and destruction. Depending on its magnitude, a tsunami could inundate coastal areas of Los Angeles County and Los Angeles City, especially the San Pedro Bay Port Complex. The worst-case scenario for the Los Angeles coastline would be a near-shore tsunami triggered by a significant offshore earthquake. Underwater landslides off Palos Verdes or Catalina Island could produce waves 30 to 60 feet high, reaching San Pedro Bay Port Complex. Local tsunami events pose a higher risk, as evacuation may not be possible—the first surge could arrive within minutes.⁶³

United States Coast Guard



The U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) Captain of the Ports (COTP) has a large zone of responsibility.⁶⁴ The Los Angeles/Long Beach – Zone of Responsibility covers a large geographic area, extending from Morro Bay down to San Clemente. This spans 350+ miles of coastline, and 200 miles offshore. This authority overrides local or commercial preferences when marine safety or security is at risk. Examples include:

- Oil spills
- Terrorism threat
- Hazardous cargo incidents

⁶³ <https://ceo.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads.2025/10/final-2025-LA-County-AHMP-Plan-Signed.pdf>

⁶⁴ Interview with United States Coast Guard Staff March 17, 2026

- Major fire or explosions
- Earthquakes
- Cyber disruptions

The USCG unusually broad federal maritime authority over the nation's busiest container gateway. ⁶⁵ The USCG provides the Captain of the Port's statutory authority under:

- Port & Waterways Safety Act (33 U.S.C. §1221-1236)
- Maritime Transportation Security Act of 2002 (MTSA)
- Magnuson Act (50 USC §191)
- Oil Pollution Act of 1990

Most ports have just one port and one port authority. The San Pedro Bay Port Complex is more complex with two ports and two port authorities. The COTP, LA & LB zone covers far more. It includes:

- The Port of Los Angeles
- The Port of Long Beach
- San Pedro Bay Approaches
- Offshore anchorages
- Oil terminals and pipelines
- Passenger vessel terminals
- Coastal waters extending miles offshore⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Marine Transportation System Recovery Plan (MTRP) for COTP Zone Los Angeles-Long Beach, dated January 2020, page 8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Because risk concentration is extremely high, the USCG maintains a broader and more active footprint than in most U.S. ports. This structure is unusually sophisticated because separate governance systems overlap:⁶⁷

- Port Authorities (PeaOLA & POLB) Operators/Maritime Industry
- Local Fire/Police LA-PD & FD, LB-Police & Fire
- California agencies Environmental/Transportation
- DHS components Federal Maritime authority
- US Coast Guard COTP Navy, if required

Incident And Unified Command

Integration of port authorities occurs through Incident Command System and Unified Command (UC). The participants pre-build UC relationships before disaster occurs. UC allows a coordinated Incident Action Plan while preserving each agency's authority.⁶⁸

Major earthquake implications, especially relevant to Los Angeles, allow the COTP immediate federal control authority over:

- Channel surveys
- Bridge clearance determinations
- Hazard exclusion zones
- Liquid natural gas and petroleum terminal operations
- Emergency anchorage assignments

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview with United States Coast Guard Staff, March 17,2026

This prevents unsafe vessel movement before infrastructure integrity is confirmed. The ports cannot legally resume normal maritime traffic without USCG concurrence. San Pedro Bay Port Complex is designated a critical maritime infrastructure. It effectively turns the harbor into a controlled maritime operating area during crisis.⁶⁹

The large COTP zone prevents operational chaos during emergencies. In practical terms, it:

1. creates single federal command authority over the nation's most critical port.
2. allows immediate control of vessel movement and waterway safety.
3. enables unified emergency response across multiple jurisdictions.
4. protects national supply chains and energy infrastructure.
5. provides the legal mechanism to safely reopen the port after disasters or security threats.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Interview with United States Coast Guard Staff, March 17,2026

⁷⁰ Interview with United States Coast Guard Staff, March 17,2026

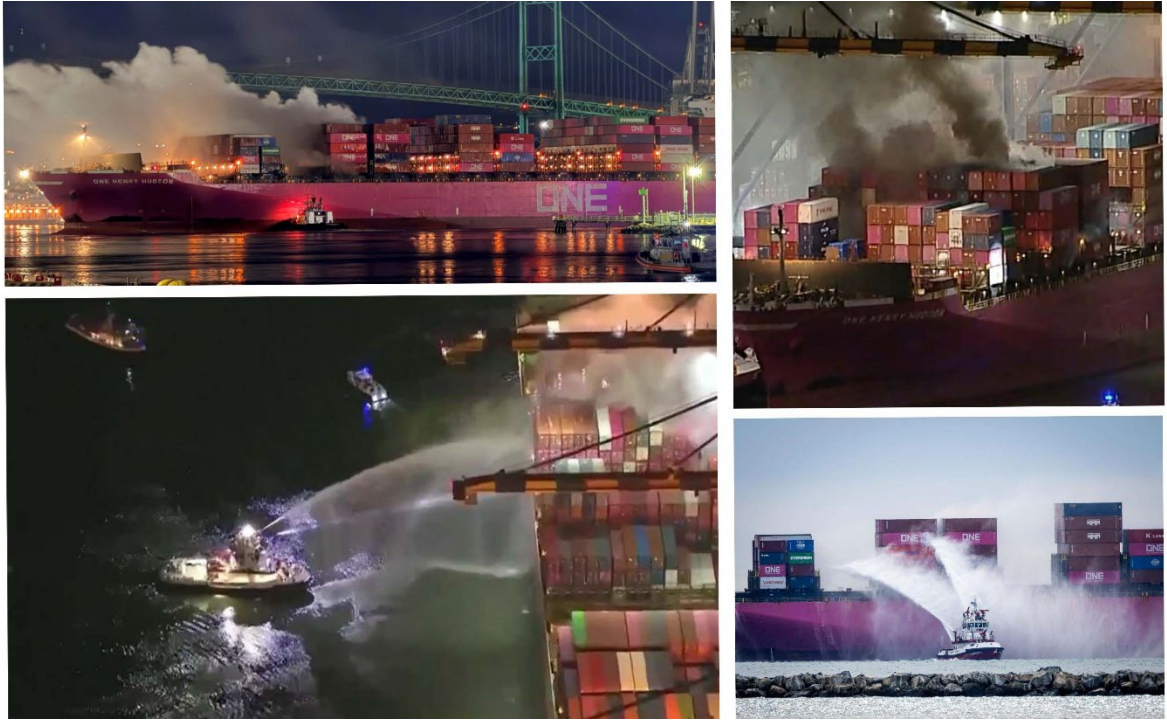


Photo 10 Fire on One Henry Hudson (Photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard) 11/21/25

Unified Command in Action: ONE Henry Hudson Fire

An explosion and cargo fire occurred onboard the container Maritime Vessel (M/V) ONE Henry Hudson while docked in the Port of Los Angeles on November 21, 2025.⁷¹ The ship was carrying thousands of cargo containers, including several with hazardous materials. ***72The cargo manifest included 20,000 pounds of Lithium-ion batteries, 240,000 pounds of 5.1 oxidizer also known as ammonium nitrate, one million gallons of fuel and oil products, flammable solids, toxics, and corrosives. Note: the 1995 Oklahoma City Bombing used 4,800 pounds of ammonium nitrate mixed with 200 pounds of fuel.***⁷³

The Los Angeles City Fire Department responded immediately and worked in coordination with the U.S. Coast Guard, Los Angeles Port Police, and other local, state, and federal partners under a Unified Command structure. Over 200 firefighters from various agencies responded with land, sea, & air.⁷⁴

Incident Overview

Due to tactical firefighting challenges and worsening conditions, port economic and environmental risks, and potential health impacts to the community, the vessel was ordered out of the port to an offshore anchorage by USCG Captain of the Port. The incident lasted several days due to the size of the ship, the location of the fire deep within the vessel, and the nature of the cargo involved. The fire was declared contained on November 26 and returned to port on November 27 to offload containers.⁷⁵

⁷¹ John Albrough, M/V ONE Henry Hudson After Action Report, Presentation for the California Maritime Security Council (CMSC) CalOES, United States Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach, March 12, 2026 – Port of LA

⁷² Interview with United States Coast Guard Staff, March 17, 2026

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Unified Command, Public Agencies and Private Organizations for the ONE Henry Hudson involved in fire containment and resolution were the following:

- Los Angeles City Fire Department
- Los Angeles Port Police
- U.S. Coast Guard, Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach
- Vessel Representative – Witt O’Brien’s
- Long Beach Fire Department
- California Office Emergency Services - Fire & Rescue
- California Department of Fish & Wildlife
- Yusen Terminal
- International Longshore and Warehouse Union
- Los Angeles Pilot Service
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection
- Environmental Protection Agency
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- North American Transportation Brokers
- Pipeline and Hazardous Maritime Safety Administration
- DonJon-SMIT Salvage⁷⁶

Operations extended from November 22 to 26. Over 4 million gallons of firefighting water accumulated in the cargo bay where the fire originated impacting the vessel's stability. An International Longshore and Warehouse Union labor gang went offshore to secure all containers to help ensure a safe transit back into port.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

Table 8

Incident Phases

Phase 1: Firefighting and Damage Assessment 21 to 25 Nov	Phase 2: Transit Preparation and Vessel Stabilization 26 Nov	Phase 3: Cargo and Waste Removal 27 Nov to 19 Jan	Phase 4: Return to Service 19 Jan to 21 Jan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire containment • 24-hour reflash watch • Cargo containers visually categorized: fire-affected, water-affected, etc. • All refrigerated cargo re-energized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cargo secured/lashed • Structural and stability analysis conducted • Transit to Yusen Terminal 218 for hatch covers • Transit to Yusen Terminal 212 for cargo offload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from Emergency Response to Salvage Operations • Dry cargo offload in affected bays • Wet cargo offload • Firefighting water offload • Unaffected cargo offload 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition from Salvage Operations back to normal operations and standdown of Unified Command • Complete documentation of incident response • Complete Class Society and Port State Inspections and complete any required repairs to return vessel to service

The information in Table 1 came from: "Note" M/V ONE Henry Hudson After Action Report, Presentation for the California Maritime Security Council (CMSC) CalOES, United States Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach, (March 12,2026)

Key Operational Challenges

- The fire was located below deck, making access extremely limited
- Some cargo contained lithium-ion batteries and oxidizing materials, increasing fire and explosion risk (ongoing issue on terminal)
- A significant explosion onboard reinforced the need to prioritize firefighter safety
- Fire suppression water accumulation raised concerns about vessel stability
These conditions made traditional firefighting approaches unsafe and ineffective ⁷⁸

Outcomes

- The fire was contained and prevented from spreading throughout the vessel.
- Port operations were protected from catastrophic damage.
- No significant environmental release occurred.
- UC and interagency coordination functioned effectively.
- The incident transitioned safely to recovery and investigation phases.⁷⁹

What Worked Well

- Early establishment of UC Best Practices
- Effective use of fire boats and master streams for boundary cooling

⁷⁸ John Albrough, M/V ONE Henry Hudson After Action Report, Presentation for the California Maritime Security Council (CMSC) CalOES, United States Coast Guard Sector Los Angeles-Long Beach, March 12, 2026 – Port of LA

⁷⁹ Ibid.

- Continuous air monitoring to support firefighters and community safety
- Transition from municipal to commercial marine firefighting resources⁸⁰

Future Actions

- Identify how to connect key people earlier in a response ⁸¹
- The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) #1005 course – job performance requirement for firefighters who respond to marine vessel fires from shore and the #1405 course – defines how departments should plan and operate firefighting from shore ⁸²

Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP)

Ongoing, coordinated preparation helps minimize severe damage to marine infrastructure when a disaster occurs. Investments in seismic retrofits, utility resilience, and operational readiness should allow ports to resume limited operations within days and restore significant throughput quickly. The ports are well-equipped and train for multiple, simultaneous disasters, acknowledging that emergencies seldom occur in isolation or with advance warning. A major earthquake, for example, will test more than just physical structures; it will challenge the ports' preparedness, governance, and coordination.⁸³

The City of Los Angeles Local Hazard Mitigation Plan (LHMP) includes projects aimed at strengthening port resilience:⁸⁴

- Improvements and maintenance of bridges

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ City of Los Angeles, *Department Emergency and Continuity of Operations Plan*, pg. 21 of 92, January 2025

⁸⁴ Ibid.

- Continuing and updating the Sea Level Rise Adaptation Study to address impacts and inform planning
- Improvements and maintenance of wharfs
- Ongoing Infrastructure Maintenance Program (IMP)
- Purchasing and maintaining communications and surveillance equipment for Harbor and Port Police
- Improvements and maintenance of roadways and ramps
- Improvements and maintenance of the railroad system
- Electrical improvements throughout facilities and terminals
- Seismic improvements to prevent operational disruptions
- Enhancing fire protection systems for facilities and terminals

Both POLA and POLB are actively implementing strategies to reduce potential damage and accelerate recovery from major emergencies or marine disasters. Their primary focus is on protecting lives, preserving essential infrastructure, and maintaining continuity of operations. Port personnel receive training covering a wide range (19) of natural and human-caused disasters, including:

- Earthquakes, liquefaction, and tsunamis
- Major marine incidents that block shipping channels
- Failures in transportation infrastructure, such as damaged bridges
- Oil discharges and hazardous substance releases
- Mass rescue operations

- Cyberattacks or terrorism targeting port infrastructure
- Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, and Explosive incidents⁸⁵

The Local Hazard Mitigation Plan prioritizes infrastructure improvements that are critical because it identifies vulnerabilities and outlines strategies to protect vital infrastructure such as bridges, wharfs, roadways, and terminals from natural and man-made hazards. By proactively addressing risks—seismic events, and fire hazards—the plan ensures operational continuity and safety for both personnel and assets. Additionally, it guides ongoing maintenance and improvements that support resilient and sustainable port operations.⁸⁶

Seismic Upgrade Triggers

Ports require seismic upgrades when specific trigger points are reached. These triggers ensure that cargo terminal facilities meet current safety and performance standards. This approach enforces seismic resilience through control of change, not passive ownership.⁸⁷

Seismic Responsibilities Under Ground Leases

Long-term ground leases serve as the primary legal framework for assigning seismic responsibility within marine terminals. Under these leases, operators must adhere to several key obligations:

- To maintain the leased premises in good order and repair
- To operate safely and comply with all applicable laws

⁸⁵ Interview with Port Staff on March 6, 2026.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Interview with Crane Supplier Staff, State of the Port, January 22, 2026

- To follow port engineering criteria as a prerequisite for approval of alterations, construction, or installation of major equipment
- To design and construct improvements in accordance with engineering criteria adopted by the port⁸⁸

Seismic Upgrade Trigger Points

Seismic upgrade triggers can be summarized as follows:

1. Failure to meet current port seismic criteria.
2. Significant redevelopment occurs or load changes are introduced.
3. Performance-based evaluations reveal unacceptable risk.
4. Earthquake damage or identification of critical vulnerabilities.⁸⁹

Seismic upgrade triggers at the San Pedro Bay Port Complex center on ensuring the safety, operational continuity, and legal compliance of marine terminals. These requirements are embedded in long-term ground leases, which mandate that terminal operators maintain facilities in good condition, adhere to safety standards, and follow port engineering criteria for any significant alterations. This is important because it minimizes risks from seismic events, safeguards the region's economic infrastructure, and ensures that operators are proactively addressing vulnerabilities to protect both personnel and cargo. Fulfilling these obligations fosters resilience and likely supports uninterrupted trade operations in the event of an earthquake.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.



Picture of Angel's Gate courtesy of POLA

FINDINGS

Finding 6.1

A central concern addressed in this report is the vulnerability of our essential commercial “Lifeline” ports to emergencies and disasters, specifically whether a lack of preparation could compromise their effectiveness. After careful evaluation, the Grand Jury determined, and this report confirms, that the ports and harbors currently possess the readiness required to manage future incidents.

Finding 6.2

To maintain and strengthen their ability to respond to emergencies, port and harbor authorities consistently enhance operations, environmental standards, safety protocols, and infrastructure. This ongoing commitment is especially important given the possibility of encountering multiple disasters at once. New threats may emerge. Key elements of this process include routine risk assessment, updated and comprehensive training for all personnel, and investment in advanced technologies. Maintaining resilience depends on this cycle of evaluation and proactive enhancement to stay ahead of emerging threats.

Finding 6.3

Both Port Authorities foster a culture of continuous improvement which is vital to improving port resilience. Stakeholders build this culture through active engagement and collaboration: independent business owners, port operators, workers, commercial suppliers, local residents, and representatives from city, County, State, and federal agencies.

COMMENDATION

Based on the committee's findings and on behalf of the Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury, we wish to formally commend the Port and Harbor Personnel for the invaluable service you provide and for your consistent responsiveness to the concerns and requests of the community.

Your work is often carried out under complex and dangerous conditions that require balancing operational demands, safety, environmental stewardship, and community interests. You approach these responsibilities with professionalism, dedication, and care with which we wish to recognize. Repeatedly, you have demonstrated a willingness to listen, engage, and respond thoughtfully to our requests, reinforcing a sense of trust and partnership between the port and the citizens of this county.

We are particularly grateful for your accessibility and responsiveness. Whether addressing operational impacts, safety issues, or community questions, your team has shown a genuine commitment to transparency and collaboration. This level of engagement is not only appreciated – it is essential to maintaining a positive and constructive relationship between the ports and harbors and with the communities it serves.

The Port and Harbor Personnel play a critical role in supporting commerce, employment, recreation, and regional vitality. Equally important is the care you take to recognize the lived experience of nearby residents. Your efforts reflect an understanding that a successful port and harbor is one that operates responsibly, communicates openly, and values the community as a key stakeholder.

Please accept this commendation as a sincere expression of our appreciation and respect. We thank you for your continued service and look forward to your ongoing success in the years ahead.

With gratitude and respect,

Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury 2025-26

Acronyms

CGJ	Civil Grand Jury
COTP	Captain of the Port
DHS	Department Homeland Security
LAX	Los Angeles International Airport
MDR	Marina del Rey
POLA	Port of Los Angeles
POLB	Port of Long Beach
SAVE	Surrendered and Abandoned Vessel Exchange
UC	Unified Command
USCG	United States Coast Guard

Committee Members

Donald A. Gonzales – Co-Chair
 Victor H. Vidal – Co-Chair
 Holly Carroll
 Michelle M. Wilson

LOS ANGELES COUNTY ELECTION INTEGRITY



2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury

PROLOGUE

President Ronald Reagan began his 1981 inaugural address by noting the significance of the peaceful transfer of power in our country.

"To a few of us here today this is a solemn and most momentous occasion, and yet in the history of our nation it is a commonplace occurrence. The orderly transfer of authority as called for in the Constitution routinely takes place, as it has for almost two centuries, and few of us stop to think how unique we really are. In the eyes of many in the world, this every-4-year ceremony we accept as normal is nothing less than a miracle."¹

¹ Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum. Archives, Major Speeches 1964-1989, First Inaugural Address. <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/archives/speech/inaugural-address-1981>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A key feature of our political system is our election process. For many years society has taken for granted that our elections are fairly conducted, and that the outcome reliably reflects the wishes of the electorate. In recent years, societal changes have made us question the validity of our elections. The Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) studied the election process in Los Angeles County (LACO) in detail. It is the view of the LACO CGJ that the election system, as designed and operated by the Registrar/Recorder, is secure, reliable, and unique to Los Angeles County. It is a “best practices” example for the nation.

The County relies on its “Voting Solutions for All People” (VSAP), which features transparent processes for all voters and easy verification of paper ballots. The new Ballot Processing Center successfully delivers timely and accurate counts. Ballots are secured at every step, from when each ballot is marked to the final processing when ballots are counted and election results determined.

Today, there are other challenges that threaten to disrupt our elections. Cybersecurity is an ongoing concern with respect to the security of infrastructure and voter data. The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has grown from a concept to easily available tools that can and do barrage voters with an array of targeted information, some real and some fake. Today there are players who would persuade the electorate to lose trust in, and acceptance of, the democratic system as we know it.

We asked, “How will the guardrails of our voting system hold?” The VSAP balloting system has proven solid, but voters have doubts about system integrity. Our recommendation is to make our system transparent, with comprehensive voting information easily available in many formats. The

LACO Office of Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) should be the citizens' first choice for trusted information about voting – how to register, how to learn about upcoming elections, and options for voting and finding election results. Citizens must know that elections are fair, legitimate, and consequential.

BACKGROUND

We live in fraught times. Economic instability, political trends, climate change, cultural changes, the pandemic, and digital technology developments all play a part in our rapidly changing world. This report focuses on just one topic, – the integrity of the Los Angeles County elections.

The sheer size of its economy and population make Los Angeles County a powerhouse and a target.

Los Angeles is the largest county by population in the United States. With a population of just under 10 million, the County has more residents than each of the bottom 40 states.² The County has an area of 4,084 square miles, larger than 98% of all other counties in the Country.³ Los Angeles County is an economic powerhouse, with a Gross Domestic Product approaching \$800 billion.⁴ The sheer size of its economy and population make Los Angeles County a powerhouse and a target. By all measures, LACO is vital to local and national elections. Therefore, the integrity of the election system in Los Angeles must be unassailable.

VSAP Makes Its Debut

In 2009 the Registrar-Recorder launched a project to replace the former balloting system. The Voting Systems Assessment Project (later rebranded as Voting Solutions for All People, or VSAP) took ten years to build. The project included an extensive public outreach campaign and phases to

² LA Almanac. <https://www.laalmanac.com/population/po04a.php>.

³ <https://lacounty.gov/by-the-numbers/>, Accessed March 26, 2026.

⁴ ([https://www.bea.gov/news/2024/gross-domestic-product-county-and-metropolitan-area-2023#:~:text=In%20large%20counties%20\(147%20counties,in%20Los%20Angeles%20County%2C%20CA.\)](https://www.bea.gov/news/2024/gross-domestic-product-county-and-metropolitan-area-2023#:~:text=In%20large%20counties%20(147%20counties,in%20Los%20Angeles%20County%2C%20CA.))).

design, build, test, train, and implement VSAP within LACO.⁵ The County purchased the VSAP system from Smartmatic.⁶ The VSAP system uses modern technology to harness real time data and provides a variety of choices that make voting accessible to all citizens. Voters can request ballots in any of nineteen languages.⁷ Any registered voter is allowed to appear at any vote center in the County to cast their ballot. In fact, a citizen can register to vote at the vote center and then vote the same day.⁸

One VSAP feature that greatly increased the efficiency and accuracy of the vote count is the access to real time data. Under the former system, a voter appearing at a polling place needed to surrender their vote-by-mail ballot. If they failed to bring it, they were instructed to vote by provisional ballot, a cumbersome process. Today, all Californians are mailed ballots, and voters no longer need to surrender their paper ballots. Under VSAP, real time data is used to prevent a voter from casting multiple ballots. Thus, with the debut of VSAP, the use of provisional ballots dropped by over 90%.⁹ This feature helped speed the ballot processing and increased the accuracy of the count.

With the debut of VSAP, the use of provisional ballots dropped by over 90%.

⁵ https://www.smartmatic.com/us/case-studies/los-angeles-county-building-deploying-vsap-a-model-for-21st-century-elections/?__cf_chl_f_tk=S9AJ8cEhdRO9e2rBfFYjY.heityCRRa1YjikOltit40-1767047421-1.0.1.1-gPx0dDJq6_9rm2Tx1DOF.JrKVTqHBhmAarX.89VnwVU.

⁶ LACO RR/CC. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rccc/vsap/news/newsletters/2018/vsap_newsletter_jun2018.pdf.

⁷ LACO RR/CC. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voter-education/multilingual-services-program/multilingual-services-program>.

⁸ LACO RR/CC. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voter-registration/conditional-voter-registration>.

⁹ Interview on March 3, 2026.

The new VSAP system went live in LACO for the midterm election of 2018.¹⁰ VSAP was an immediate success, in part, due to the tremendous amount of publicity and community outreach that had been employed during all phases of project development. Voters overwhelmingly accepted the VSAP system.¹¹

Mail-In Ballots Have Become the Norm

The percentage of voters who use mail-in ballots soared to 89% in the 2025 Special Statewide Election.

Mail-in ballots have been available since 1962, and their popularity has increased each year as more voters registered for the mail-in option.¹² By 2012, a majority of voters in primary and general elections cast mail-in ballots. The 2020 COVID-19

shutdown caused a tremendous increase in the use of mail-in-ballots as voters avoided public spaces. California began mailing ballots to all registered voters in 2022. As a result, the percentage of voters who use mail-in ballots soared to 89% in the 2025 Special Statewide Election.¹³

VSAP solved the problems of its day, but we now must face different challenges related to the digital online world in which we find ourselves.

“I hope that we can get beyond the noise and remind voters that this process belongs to them,” said Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk.

¹⁰ LACO RR/CC. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/vsap/vsap-report_final.pdf.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² California Secretary of State. Historical Absentee (Mail-In) Balot Use in California. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/historical-absentee>, Accessed February 3, 2026.

¹³ Ibid.

At this point, VSAP is well established in Los Angeles County. Nevertheless, new technology tools and constant vigilance are required to keep the system secure. Our inquiry addresses these new challenges.¹⁴

¹⁴ Linh Tat. "How Southern California elections officials are preparing for the 2026 midterms — and any potential disruptions."
February 15, 2026.
<https://www.dailynews.com/?s=how+southern+california+elections+officials+are+preparing+for+the+2026+midterms&orderby=date&order=desc>.

METHODOLOGY

We conducted this study to understand in detail how the Los Angeles County election system operates. We sought to identify challenges to the democratic election system, and to observe current events that illustrate the extent to which the guardrails in Los Angeles County can resist the many emerging challenges.

The RR/CC provides key informational documents to the public via its website, **lavote.gov**, which was found to be invaluable as we began our inquiry. The Committee built upon this base by interviewing key personnel in the Registrar-Recorder's office and representatives of several County Supervisors. The entire CGJ also visited the Los Angeles County Ballot Processing Center in the City of Industry.

To better understand current and future election issues, we conducted meetings with researchers at prestigious universities. In addition, we relied on online and published materials, focusing on election integrity.

Basic Terminology

AI, Artificial Intelligence	Systems that can understand and respond to language commands and queries.
Air-gapped	An air-gapped computer or network is physically isolated from other networks and the internet and thereby is protected from online threats and data breaches.
Cybersecurity	Protection of computer systems from malicious attacks, especially any internet connected system. Includes hardware, software, and data. Attacks usually occur from a remote system.
Data security	Protection of digital information against unauthorized access, corruption, theft, or deletion. Related to cybersecurity.
Debunk (related to Prebunk)	The act of countering misinformation by exposing or proving it to be false.
Deepfake	A video, image, etc. in which a person's face, body, or voice has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information
Disinformation (similar to Misinformation)	Deliberate act. Intentional creation and dissemination of false information with the purpose of misleading others.

Generative AI	Systems that create original content such as video, audio, or images by using massive databases to create new content based on user prompts.
Hack or hacking	The act of gaining unauthorized access to a computer system.
Malicious cybersecurity event	An attack on a computer system, usually on the software or data.
Misinformation (similar to Disinformation)	False or inaccurate information that is spread, not necessarily with the intention to deceive. This can occur due to mistakes and misinterpretation.
Prebunk (related to Debunk)	Proactively counter misinformation and disinformation by warning people about it before they see it.
Realtime	Data processing that occurs within milliseconds, yielding instant response.
Social media	Websites that allow users to create online communities to share information. Examples are Facebook, X (Twitter), TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.
Viral	Relating to an image, video, or piece of information that is circulated rapidly and widely on the internet, sometimes millions of times in one day.

DISCUSSION

The committee set out to examine how the LACO RR/CC is positioned to protect election operations in Los Angeles County. These operations face persistent cyberthreats, given the many layers of technology and data systems that underpin the modern election process. At the same time, rapid developments in AI present both emerging opportunities and significant challenges.

As the committee pursued these topics, it became clear that current events vividly illustrate how such technologies can affect the integrity of elections, and more broadly, challenge the basic premises of our democratic system.

This discussion begins with the technology itself and examines how these tools shape, influence, and define the broader narrative surrounding election integrity. Additionally, the Committee examined how votes are cast and counted, and how voters can be targeted through media coverage to influence their perception of candidates and even whether to participate in an election.

So, How Do People Actually Vote?

Our current VSAP system introduced a secure Ballot Marking Device (BMD), which prints a voter verifiable paper ballot. The system was developed at the direction of and for the specific use of, Los Angeles County.¹⁵

The election process, from the perspective of LACO RR/CC, begins with the VSAP Operations Center (VOC). The Ballot Marking Devices are securely stored there between elections,¹⁶ but, “in a major election, nearly all of the

¹⁵ LACO RR/CC. Voting Solutions for All People, Final Report. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/vsap/vsap-report_final.pdf.

¹⁶ LACO-RRCC. Election Guide; Election Worker Procedures. <https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-guide-110425.pdf>.

devices and equipment stored in the VOC are deployed to hundreds of specified Vote Center locations throughout the County as early as two weeks before Election Day.”¹⁷ The LACO Election Management System generates Vote-by-Mail and BMD ballots using a secure VSAP Ballot Layout (VBL) application for the full-face ballot design adopted in 2018.¹⁸

Each Vote Center is in a facility that meets several requirements. First, the Vote Center must be secure so nobody can enter in off hours. Ballots, BMDs, all electronic equipment and paperwork must be locked and inaccessible after the polls close.¹⁹

When the Vote Center closes, a tamper-proof seal is applied to each BMD to assure there is no overnight intrusion.

When the Vote Center closes, a tamper-proof seal is applied to each BMD to ensure there is no overnight intrusion.²⁰ Logs are kept with the seal serial number and date/times of application and removal.²¹ All electronic equipment is logged and stored in steel cabinets.²² The design and operation of the Vote Center assures the ballots are secure.²³

¹⁷ “VSAP Operations Center”. Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. <https://lavote.gov>, Accessed February 6, 2026.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ LACO-RRCC. Election Guide; Election Worker Procedures. <https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-guide-110425.pdf>.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

In-Person Voting

The VSAP system replaced the previous punch-card voting system in 2020.²⁴ This shift introduced the in-person voter to the BMD, which prints a voter verifiable paper ballot.²⁵ The voter's selections are printed in human-readable text, and these paper ballots are the official vote of record.²⁶ "By design, the BMD is not connected to a network or the internet. It does not store any voter data or tally votes."²⁷

LACO owns the Smartmatic BMDs, and they cannot be accessed by anyone other than LACO, even by Smartmatic itself.²⁸ Any suggestion that Smartmatic somehow can tamper with LACO equipment or access it electronically to modify the votes in any way is completely unfounded.²⁹

To further protect against any possibility of tampering, the BMDs are securely stored in the VSAP Operations Center between elections.³⁰ This maintains the security of "Chain of Custody" protocol for the voting equipment. A key feature of the BMD is

A key feature of the BMD is the "end-to-end auditability from paper ballot to tallied cast vote record.

the "end-to-end auditability from paper ballot to tallied cast vote record."³¹ This provides traceability should an audit ever be required.

²⁴ Smartmatic. https://www.smartmatic.com/blank/los-angeles-county-vsap-modernizes-elections-projects-timeline/?__cf_chl_f_tk=u6zZHJbleteyImYoAUwecvvyzjEoldKHxaZuN3sdTbg-1776964135-1.0.1.1-1Jz8eKAEktlNiTOWtHLwTYXpMncZ7XgX6tuQiOJybEc.

²⁵ LACO-RRCC. New Voting Experience. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voting-options/voting-accessibility/new-voting-experience>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ "Voting Solutions for All People: Security". <https://VSAP.lavote.net>, Accessed February 6, 2026.

²⁸ Interview on September 22, 2025.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Interview on September 22, 2025.

³¹ "LACO-RRCC. Election Guide; Election Worker Procedures. <https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-guide-110425.pdf>.

Vote-by-Mail, Ballot Drop Box and other Alternatives

For our report, any vote NOT cast in person is considered a Vote-By-Mail (VBM) ballot. This category includes ballots returned by USPS mail, completed ballots brought to Vote Centers, ballots deposited in drop boxes, and ballots FAXed by citizens who are traveling outside the country and active military personnel stationed outside our county.³² There are many ways for a voter to return their ballot.

From the perspective of the voter, the LACO Election Management System generates and mails the VBM ballots at least a month prior to election date. Since the 2020 election cycle, fewer than 20% of ballots have been cast in person at vote centers.³³ All VBM ballots require voter and signature verification before the vote can be counted.³⁴ The voting laws in California maximize the opportunity for citizens to vote, but there is a requisite need for detailed attention to the verification of cast ballots.

This Isn't Just Any Old Ballot

The paper ballot that every voter receives is an integral piece of the election technology. The ballots are durable and include numerous security checks that keep our elections free from tampering.³⁵

- The BMD ballot is printed on special synthetic paper that is readable to humans and machines. The paper is tough, and strong enough to withstand human handling and machine processing.

³² How to Vote on the Military and Overseas Electronic Ballot. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voting-options/military-overseas/how-to-vote>.

³³ "Historical Vote-By-Mail (Absentee) Ballot Use in California, 1962-2024". California Secretary of State, Home – Elections and Voter Information. Historical Vote-By-Mail (Absentee) Ballot Use in California. California Secretary of State, Accessed March 9, 2026.

³⁴ LACO-RRCC. Returning Your Vote By Mail. <https://www.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/media/VBM-Ballot-Returnv3.pdf>.

³⁵ LACO RRCC. VSAP Ballot Security. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/voting-options/voting-in-person/vsap-faqs>.

- The special tint of the ballot serves as a security feature by preventing duplication.
- A watermark further prevents duplication. Counterfeit ballots cannot be processed by the VSAP tally system.³⁶

Two QR codes (QRCs) are a central feature of the ballot.

- The small QRC in the upper left corner of the ballot carries a serial number and precinct data. It is the key that enables voters to participate at any vote center in the county.
 - The QRC ensures the in-person voter has received the correct ballot with the right federal, state, county, municipal, and precinct contests.
 - The QRC is an additional security check to prevent use of stolen ballots, double voting, and any other fraudulent voting attempts.
- The large QRC identifies the specific contests in the same order in which they are printed on the ballot. This ensures that the tally system correctly reads and processes the vote as cast.

The ballots must be securely stored for 22 months after an election.³⁷ All in-person ballots, mail-in ballots, damaged ballots, and unused ballots are kept in case a recount is necessary.³⁸

The Ballot Processing Center

At the Ballot Processing Center (BPC), a VSAP Tally System, developed by LACO, uses scanners to capture VBM and BMD ballot images. “Among its key features, the VSAP Tally System takes digital images of voted paper ballots from one or more scanner output directories, uses digital image processing

³⁶ CGJ Tour of Ballot Processing Center. November 6, 2025.

³⁷ California Elections Code § 17301.

³⁸ California Secretary of State. Preservation of Election Materials.
<https://elections.cdn.sos.ca.gov/ccrov/2022/september/22216sr.pdf>.

tools and techniques to recognize and adjudicate the votes cast on the ballots, and tabulates and reports the results.”³⁹ In addition, “the system will keep logs and batch-processing information to support independent ballot-level comparison audits of election results.”⁴⁰ But, it takes time to verify one-quarter of the California vote. There were 6,556,074 eligible voters in our County as of February 2024.⁴¹ Thirty days are allowed between Election Day and certification of the final tally by the California Secretary of State.

Voter Rolls

Is there another vulnerability within our election system? What about the lists of eligible voters? Voter rolls are the official list of citizens who are eligible to vote.

In California counties, voter rolls are maintained by the California Secretary of State. The California voter registration system is called VoteCal⁴². The

The County has to be connected to the State database, but our Ballot Processing Center is totally isolated from it.

County must be connected to the State database, but our Ballot Processing Center is totally isolated from it.⁴³ The electronic poll books (used to check in voters) are connected only to the Vote Center and not to the Internet.⁴⁴

Questions often arise as to the accuracy of the California voter rolls.

³⁹ LACO-RRCC. Election Observation Program. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-observation-program_11042025_final.pdf.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ “Report of Registration as of February 20, 2024 - Registration by County”. California Secretary of State: Home – Elections and Voter Information – Report of Registration. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/report-registration/15day-presprim-2024>, Accessed March 6, 2026.

⁴² California Secretary of State. VoteCal. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voter-registration/votecal-project>

⁴³ Civil Grand Jury’s tour of Ballot Processing Center on November 6, 2025.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

This is a complex situation. Many events require the database to be updated. The most common triggers requiring the voter roll to be updated involve a change of address, whether within or out of the county, or a move into or out of California.⁴⁵ Other significant reasons for a change in the voter rolls are death or a voter’s name change.⁴⁶

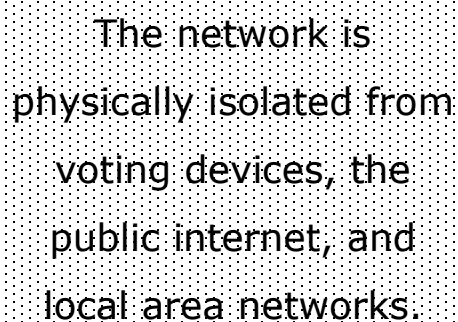
Voters can, and should, go online to update their voter registration. But voters do not always self-report updates. Thus, the LACO RR/CC (and counterparts in the other 57 counties) use various official sources to update the rolls.

Maintaining updated voter rolls is an ongoing process, and at any given moment the rolls include some obsolete data. For this reason, LACO performs extensive verification tests on all ballots that are cast.⁴⁷

Counting the Ballots

Once the voter has cast their ballot, another significant chapter in the VSAP story unfolds at the Ballot Processing Center.

“The VSAP Tally and VBL applications are custom software solutions used on open-source software stacks and are owned by Los Angeles County.”⁴⁸ Tally and VBL operations occur in an air-gapped environment where the network is physically isolated from voting devices, the public internet, and local area networks.⁴⁹



The network is physically isolated from voting devices, the public internet, and local area networks.

⁴⁵ Interview on September 22, 2025.

⁴⁶ Interview on September 22, 2025.

⁴⁷ LACO-RRCC. Election Observation Program. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-observation-program_11042025_final.pdf.

⁴⁸ Interview on November 6, 2025.

⁴⁹ Interview on November 6, 2025.

Removable digital media is the only method of input and output of data with external systems. The air-gapped environment prevents any software or firmware updates from occurring automatically. All necessary software changes are transferred to the hardware via digital media and installed locally.⁵⁰

Touring the Ballot Processing Center

One of the ways a LACO citizen can assure themselves of the integrity of their vote is to visit the secure BPC in which all the ballots are tabulated and reported.⁵¹ The BPC includes such critical operations as the Election Command Center, the IT Call Center, and Signature Verification and Tally operations.⁵²

“Public observation provides a great opportunity to view and learn about the activities that go into conducting an election.”⁵³ Following an election, anyone can visit and watch the proceedings in person.⁵⁴ Those who cannot, or choose not, to attend in person may still view the proceedings via a live video feed made available during election periods on the RR/CC website (<https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/current-elections/live-feed>). Webcams cover incoming mail, VBM ballot extraction (removing ballots from envelopes), and ballot reception and canvass operations.

All facilities responsible for preparing and processing the election are secured 24/7 with a full-scale intrusion alarm, and a camera system with recorded

⁵⁰ “Tabulation (Tally): Tally Operations”. Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk. <https://lavote.gov>, Accessed February 6, 2026.

⁵¹ LACO RRCC.Public Observation. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/current-elections/election-results/public-observation>.

⁵² LACO-RRCC. Election Observation Program. https://content.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/documents/election-observation-program_11042025_final.pdf.

⁵³ LACO RRCC. <https://www.lavote.gov/home/voting-elections/current-elections/election-results/public-observation> , accessed February 6, 2026.

⁵⁴ Comments made to Committee members by senior officials during the Civil Grand Jury’s visit to the Ballot Processing Center on November 6, 2025.

video that monitors both the internal and external premises.⁵⁵ Access to the parking lot is authorized by a pre-approved access list referenced by security personnel and validated against an ID.⁵⁶ Access to the building is centrally controlled through the use of keycard protocols and access logs.⁵⁷ The chain-of-custody procedures ensure that ballots are fully accounted for during every step of processing.⁵⁸

The ballots from the Vote Centers are transported with multiple chain-of-custody events at each Vote Center and at the BPC, their ultimate destination. The ballots are then scanned and tabulated at the BPC by the VSAP tally system.⁵⁹

In addition to the dedicated Security Operations Center managed by the LACO Internal Services Department, the RR/CC has procedures in place to address and respond to any activity that may pose any threat to election systems. The team collaborates with local, state, and federal agencies to ensure election security.⁶⁰

Two days after the November 2025 Special Election, fourteen members of the CGJ toured the BPC.⁶¹ The entrance is well marked on the outside so visitors can easily find their way. Indoor cameras are ubiquitous. Security personnel were on site, including a Sheriff's deputy.

⁵⁵ Interview on November 6, 2025.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ CGJ Visit on November 6, 2025.

⁶¹ Ibid.

Media and other observers can get a close look at the actual counting of ballots.

There was just one access point for the public. There were no interior walls in the entire processing area. The ceiling was remarkably high with 250 cameras providing complete remote visibility of all operations. At the center of the processing area is a glassed-in enclosure where key tallying of

votes is conducted. This room is known as the "fishbowl" owing to the easy visibility of the entire room. The fishbowl is open only to credentialed workers. Surrounding the fishbowl is a wide walkway where media and other observers can get a close look at the actual counting of ballots.

As a Jury, we were impressed by the modernity and cleanliness of the facility. It was apparent that much care had been taken to achieve the implementation of what had obviously been a strong vision of how a world-class ballot processing center should be constructed.

Now that we have described a sound foundation we turn to the current challenges of AI and cybersecurity threats.

New Election Challenges

It's a fascinating time. As of March 2026, the intersection of tech and democracy has moved past simple "disruption" and into a phase of deep structural adaptation.⁶² Developments in technology, including AI and Cybersecurity, are front and center today. In addition, there are challenges of a political nature that are of concern with respect to LACO election integrity.

⁶² Rick Harrison. AI and Democracy: Scholars Unpack the Intersection of Technology and Governance. April 23, 2025. <https://isps.yale.edu/news/blog/2025/04/ai-and-democracy-scholars-unpack-the-intersection-of-technology-and-governance>.

The Role of AI in LACO Elections

The "Architects of AI" were named Time Magazine's 2025 Person of the Year, "for delivering the age of thinking machines, for wowing and worrying humanity, and for transcending the possible."⁶³

AI is a branch of computer science that focuses on creating systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence. These tasks include reasoning, learning, predicting, understanding language, recognizing images, and interacting with the environment.⁶⁴ Recent advancements in AI, particularly generative AI such as ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, could have an unprecedented impact on the electoral process.

These digital innovations offer opportunities to improve electoral efficiency and voter engagement but also raise concerns about potential misuse. Sophisticated software tools can be used to produce communications that can influence voter decision-making. AI tools have the capacity to launch cyberattacks, produce deepfakes, and spread disinformation. There are fears that AI could be used to destabilize democratic processes, threaten the integrity of political discourse, and erode public trust.

Given the rapidly developing capabilities of AI, the CGJ is looking at our elections, the bedrock of our democracy, and how AI can either wow us, worry us, or, as Time Magazine suggests - both.

⁶³ Charlie Campbell, Andrew R. Chow and Billy Perrigo. "The Architects of AI Are TIME's 2025 Person of the Year". *Time Magazine*. DEC 11, 2025. <https://time.com/7339685/person-of-the-year-2025-ai-architects/>, Accessed March 6, 2026.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

The Wow: AI Protects Against Election Cyberattack

“AI has become an indispensable tool in cybersecurity, capable of detecting anomalies, identifying suspicious patterns, and responding to threats in real time. AI models can learn from data and adapt to evolving cyberthreats and help systems recover after an attack. They form a dynamic shield in an increasingly digital world, protecting individuals, businesses, and governments alike.”⁶⁵ LACO CGJ learned that in a typical election, LACO RR/CC analyzes 600 million cybersecurity events in real time, and we never hear about it.⁶⁶



In a typical election, LACO RR/CC analyzes 600 million cybersecurity events in real time, and we never hear about it.

Why? Because LACO RR/CC’s Election Cybersecurity Operations Center uses stealth systems that rely on AI to identify trends in the threat landscape. Best practices show that the most effective way to combat malicious AI is by pairing existing cybersecurity tools with other AI technologies.⁶⁷ AI technology analyzes a vast amount of data to detect patterns indicative of cyberattack, and AI adjusts defenses to emerging threats in real time.⁶⁸

These systems speed up the process of filtering any events that require human intervention, quickly sifting through data noise. They utilize machine learning algorithms to analyze these events and signatures in real time to escalate only a handful of events requiring human intervention and investigation. AI technologies play a crucial role in protecting LACO election

⁶⁵ Muhammad Tuhin. “The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence”. *Science News Today*. April 23, 2025. <https://www.sciencenewstoday.org/the-pros-and-cons-of-artificial-intelligence>, Accessed March 6, 2026.

⁶⁶ Interview on November 6, 2025.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Committee interviews with key leadership of the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder.

security by bolstering efforts in threat detection, anomaly identification, and data analysis. AI contributes to the crucial development of advanced authentication methods and encryption techniques, fortifying the resilience of election systems against evolving cyber threats.”⁶⁹

LACO RR/CC takes a proactive approach to cybersecurity. While the RR/CC cannot control hack attempts, they have the power to control and fortify our defenses by proactively building and strengthening programs in anticipation of what is to come. LACO RR/CC has built a comprehensive “threat hunting program” using “deception technology” which has proven to successfully halt and trap assailants in cyberspace before they could ever breach our walls.⁷⁰

The Worry: AI Breeds Election Disinformation

We are seeing higher levels of distrust in our election systems and the validity of their results. The biggest threat we face is the undermining of confidence in the electoral process through misinformation campaigns powered by AI and unfounded political discourse.

AI tools are available to anyone to generate original content such as text, images, video, or audio. “A piece of misleading information can go viral in minutes, potentially reaching millions of people almost instantly.”⁷¹

“We’re not just dealing with generic robocalls anymore. AI can now create highly convincing voice attacks that make it sound like a trusted figure, such as a candidate, is urging you not to vote or is spreading false information...”⁷²

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Nina Raffio. “Trust in voting: How misinformation threatens democracy”. *USC Today*. October 28, 2024. <https://today.usc.edu/trust-in-voting-how-misinformation-threatens-democracy/>, March 6, 2026.

⁷² Kevin Townsend. “Election Day is Close, the Threat of Cyber Disruption is Real”. *SecurityWeek*. October 15, 2024. <https://www.securityweek.com/election-day-is-close-the-threat-of-cyber-disruption-is-real/> March 6, 2026.

“As technology improves, it is quickly getting easier even for those without great technical sophistication to use artificial intelligence technology to create synthetic media - more commonly known as “deepfakes.” Such audio and video clips can be manipulated using machine learning, and AI can make a politician, celebrity or anyone else appear to say or do anything the manipulator wants. Even now any politician can be shown making a racially derogatory remark, engaging in sexual misconduct, or suddenly falling ill on the eve of an election. We will no longer be able to trust what we see and hear.”⁷³

One only needs to look as far as national media headlines over the last few years to understand how disruptive this technology has been to our elections. Examples of this phenomenon are clearly visible:

- “Fact check: “Drunk” Nancy Pelosi video is manipulated,” *Reuters*
- “New Hampshire investigating fake Biden robocall meant to discourage voters ahead of primary,” *Associated Press*
- “Viral Katie Porter interview sparks AI videos as experts warn of election fakes,” *ABC News*
- “Is Trump kissing Fauci? With apparently fake photos, DeSantis raises AI ante,” *Reuters*
- “Elon Musk made a Kamala Harris deepfake ad go viral, sparking a debate about parody and free speech,” *NBC News*

These examples and others have not gone unnoticed.

⁷³ Richard L. Hasen. *Cheap Speech: How Disinformation Poisons Our Politics and How to Cure It* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2022).

Former fringe ideas like 'The Earth is flat' and 'The moon landing was a hoax' are gaining more ground than ever before.

"Our expressions are being mimicked, and AI is smart enough to predict what content will go viral, which is typically content that presents as more extreme. Former fringe ideas like 'The Earth is flat' and 'The moon landing was a hoax' are gaining more ground than ever before."⁷⁴

"In the hands of well-motivated and well-resourced adversaries, these tools could

lead to influence campaigns with potentially catastrophic effects on elections decided by slim margins."⁷⁵

Additionally, if left unchecked, "the spread of misinformation could have serious consequences for political representation as voters become discouraged, misled, or manipulated into sitting out elections or voting against their interests."⁷⁶

AI technology clearly has the potential to exacerbate election-related challenges, including the spread of disinformation and cyber vulnerabilities in election systems. Governments and civil society must work to fortify the electorate against such threats.

The Offense: Safeguarding our Elections from Disinformation

Deepfake and deceptive media pose novel risks in the electoral context.

"Voters must be able to get enough reliable and accurate information about

⁷⁴ Interview.

⁷⁵ Nina Raffio. "Trust in voting: How misinformation threatens democracy". *USC Today*. October 28, 2024. <https://today.usc.edu/trust-in-voting-how-misinformation-threatens-democracy/>, Accessed March 9, 2026.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

the state of the world, to permit them to vote in line with their interests and values and have confidence in a fair and impartial election system.”⁷⁷

So, the question is, what is the strategy to adopt in these uncharted territories of deepfake media? To start, a consensus is forming that governments should promote accurate information about the electoral process, including through public education campaigns, to empower citizens to discern truth from falsehoods. Additionally, establishment of rapid response teams should be prioritized to monitor and counteract misinformation.

Establishment of rapid response teams should be prioritized to monitor and counteract misinformation.

“These efforts should be in collaboration with social media companies and key participants in the electoral process including candidates’ political parties. Tactics should include the immediate action of publicizing corrective information, and beefing up online safeguards and legislation, such as stronger curbs on deceptive online political advertising.”⁷⁸

A bright spot in the war on election disinformation is that prior to the 2024 Presidential election, Google became the first search engine to restrict its AI-powered chatbot, Gemini, from answering election-related questions during an election year. Instead, when asked an election-related question, it responds with “can’t help with responses on elections and political figures right now,” or “I’m still learning how to answer this question”. In the

⁷⁷ Richard L. Hasen. *Cheap Speech: How Disinformation Poisons Our Politics and How to Cure It* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2022).

⁷⁸ Shanze Hasan. “*The Effect of AI on Elections Around the World and What to Do About It*”. *Brennan Center for Justice, NYU Law*. June 6, 2024. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/effect-ai-elections-around-world-and-what-do-about-it>, Accessed March 9, 2026.

meantime, try Google Search". Other chatbots, including Meta's Meta AI, and OpenAI's ChatGPT have since followed suit.⁷⁹

Social media companies can determine whether uploaded content is created by a human or by an AI tool. Companies theoretically could generate a marker that would notify viewers whether a video is made by a human or is AI generated. However, such filters and notices are not the norm.

Social media companies are not doing a good job of detecting whether a content author is human or non-human. "Big tech social media forces are not regulating or disclosing what content is AI-generated. A much higher threshold is needed to separate real vs false information on social media platforms."⁸⁰

This is easier said than done. There's a constitutional legal speedbump in the road to stronger curbs on deceptive online political advertising and social media platforms: The United States Constitution. For better or worse, the First Amendment protects free speech. In other words, it's unconstitutional to stop lies.

California is in court working to make it a crime to create deepfake AI-generated videos of political candidates.⁸¹ Currently making its way through the 9th Circuit Appeals Court, proponents are arguing that "deceptive political advertising is not a new phenomenon. But the advent of AI poses a particularly acute threat. This is especially true in the electoral context due to its unprecedented ability to create realistic false content, coupled with the

⁷⁹ Michael Kan. "Google Restricts Gemini AI From Answering Election-Related Questions". *PCMag*. March 12, 2024. <https://www.pcmag.com/news/google-restricts-gemini-ai-from-answering-election-related-questions>, Accessed March 9, 2026.

⁸⁰ Interview on October 13, 2025.

⁸¹ Interview on December 17, 2025.

ease that bad actors can produce media that intentionally distorts reality to mislead voters.”⁸²

While we wait for this legislation to ultimately make its way to the Supreme Court, it should be up to the social media platforms, the traditional media, and our own LACO RR/CC, to stay on top of the news. “LACO RR/CC must educate the voters early and be 100% transparent. It’s imperative to keep an open line of communication with voters in real time to prebunk disinformation before it spreads and mutates to a place where it needs to be debunked. Bottom line, face rumors head on and provide the facts. The best offense is a great defense.”⁸³

While social media platforms are taking little action to remove fake news, the CGJ has learned that LACO RR/CC is diligent in stopping misinformation in its tracks at the county level. The RR/CC has instituted “comprehensive

LACO RR/CC is diligent in stopping misinformation in its tracks at the county level

programs to address the spread of inadvertent, purposeful and deepfake information by using top-of-the-line social media monitoring systems to find cases and trends of misleading information.”⁸⁴ It is the

policy of the RR/CC to proactively engage voters and provide correct information via social media and other channels. Every attempt is made to ensure that voters get correct information in real time.”⁸⁵

⁸² “Brief of Campaign Legal Centers as Amicus Curiae in Support of Defendants’ Motion for Summary Judgment.” Case No. 2:24-cv-02527-JAM-CKD in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of California Sacramento Division. August 5, 2025. Document 77 in: “Kohls v. Bonta – Amicus Brief” (District Court, June 6, 2025). Kohls v. Bonta — Amicus Brief | Campaign Legal Center, Accessed March 9, 2026.

⁸³ Interview on October 6, 2025.

⁸⁴ Interview on November 6, 2025.

⁸⁵ Committee interviews with key leadership of the Office of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder.

Traditional media also has a duty to assist in combatting misinformation. It is essential that all traditional and trusted media outlets focus their efforts on rebutting mistruths and building the public's confidence in our elections. Fortunately, the LACO RR/CC has very strong relationships with local Los Angeles network TV affiliates, radio, ethnic and hyperlocal media.

Transparent headline examples include:

- "How Southern California elections officials are preparing for the 2026 midterms — and any potential disruptions," *Los Angeles Daily News*
- "How the L.A. County Registrar's Office increased security for 2024 election," *KABC7*
- "LA County Officials Work to Keep Voters Safe," *KTTV Fox11*
- "How LA authorities are keeping voters, election workers safe," *NBCLA*
- "Highest Level of Integrity Grand Jury Report Affirms," *Los Angeles Times*

These crucial relationships have been integral to knocking down election lies before they can take root and spread. In the end, AI is not inherently good or evil. It's a powerful tool, and like all tools, its nature depends on how we use it. "The future of AI hinges on responsible development, transparent governance, and inclusive decision-making. Engineers, ethicists, lawmakers, and everyday citizens must collaborate to ensure AI serves the common good."⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Muhammad Tuhin. "The Pros and Cons of Artificial Intelligence". *Science News Today*. April 23, 2025. <https://www.sciencenewstoday.org/the-pros-and-cons-of-artificial-intelligence>, Accessed March 6, 2026.

How Is Our System Holding Up?

As of the date of our visit, the LACO RR/CC is not aware of any data breach.⁸⁷ Since 2020, only two states have experienced actual breaches.”⁸⁸

Our committee learned that approximately thirty-five network experts monitor the entire network traffic and communication from every Vote Center “to ensure that only authentic network traffic is passed through the systems. This team also acts as the first line of support in case of a network or communication-related issue during an election.”⁸⁹

On November 4, 2025, California held a special election with one issue on the ballot – Prop 50, the Election Rigging Response Act. What we did not know then was how the system would hold up under the stress of conducting an unscheduled special election on short notice. There was national attention on California. A flawless election would be necessary to ensure continued voter trust. The announcement that monitors from the U.S. Department of Justice would observe the vote count only added to the tension. Why does this matter? Registrar-Recorder Dean Logan is unequivocal on this matter: “It is unfortunate that on Election Day we have a narrative out there that is distracting people from the importance of their vote.... The reality is that California and Los Angeles County have shown over and over again that the voting process is secure.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Comments made to Committee members by senior officials during the Civil Grand Jury’s visit to the Ballot Processing Center on November 6, 2025.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ “Cybersecurity readiness for the 2024 Presidential election,” from Dean C. Logan, Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk to the Honorable Board of Supervisors, 19 February 2024, Page 10.

⁹⁰ Shawn Hubler, “As L.A. Counts Ballots in a Glass Room, Officials Invite Anyone to Watch,” *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/04/us/politics/los-angeles-election-monitoring.html>, Accessed November 4, 2025.

The Role of Political Challenges in LACO Elections

Again, we live in fraught times. The current federal administration has made no secret of its

A central effect of these actions is the continued casting of doubt on election outcomes and the potential discouragement of participation by many voters.

intent to change the rules governing U.S. elections.⁹¹ Even when legal challenges ultimately fail, a central effect of these actions is the continued casting of doubt on election outcomes and the potential discouragement of participation by many voters.⁹²

Can't We Speed Up the Vote Count?

California takes pride in making election participation easy for all qualified citizens. Every citizen is mailed a ballot a month before elections. A ballot can be returned by mail, dropped in any of hundreds of secure dropboxes, or brought to a vote center. Those who choose may cast their ballot up to 29 days before the election at the Norwalk RR/CC office, up to ten days before the election at large vote centers, up to four days ahead at many smaller vote centers, and on Election Day at any vote center.⁹³

So why is there any criticism about the LACO election system? Critics say it takes too long to count the ballots, and there are real costs to any delays.

⁹¹ Wendy R. Weiser. "The President's Executive Order on Elections." Brennan Center for Justice. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/presidents-executive-order-elections-explained>. Published April 1, 2025, Updated October 31, 2025.

⁹² Patrick Marley and Yvonne Wingett Sanchez. "Trump is trying to change how the midterm elections are conducted." *The Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/01/12/trump-midterms-elections-voting-redistricting/>. January 12, 2026.

⁹³ LACO RRCC. Returning Your Vote By Mail. <https://www.lavote.gov/docs/rrcc/media/VBM-Ballot-Returnv3.pdf>

LACO needs to increase the speed of counting without disenfranchising any voters.⁹⁴

People are used to receiving election results and updated information quickly, and they tend to have confidence in the first results they see. When the final results are delayed, confidence sometimes wanes. There is time for detractors to sow doubt in the validity of the outcome.⁹⁵

The longer the delay, the more the appearance there may be that something is not trustworthy about the final tally. By speeding up the count, the opportunity for rumors and lies to gain traction is greatly reduced.

There is another practical reason to speed up the count. For many elected positions, the winner takes office less than a month after the election date. Many positions require training to be completed before the term begins. A November election date may conflict with an early December start of the term of office. For close elections, this has meant both candidates go to training even though only one will eventually serve.⁹⁶

Specific requirements in California contribute to delays in counting the votes. A voter may register to vote as late as Election Day. New voters must be validated, with a California driver license or California identification card number, the last four digits of their social security number and their date of birth.⁹⁷ An absentee ballot can arrive up to 10 days after the election if postmarked on Election Day or earlier. California has between 22 and 28

⁹⁴ Jason Henry. "What's taking California so long to count its ballots from Election Day?" *Pasadena Star News*, November 16, 2024. <https://calvoter.org/content/what%E2%80%99s-taking-california-so-long-count-its-ballots-election-day>.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ballotpedia. https://ballotpedia.org/When_state_legislators_assume_office_after_a_general_election.

⁹⁷ California SOS. California Online Voter Registration. <https://registertovote.ca.gov/>.

days to cure a ballot⁹⁸ and 30 days to certify the vote⁹⁹. California allows more time to count the vote, and a federal “one size fits all” policy would require significant changes to our election process. Some changes, in practice, would restrict the ability of some citizens to cast a vote.¹⁰⁰

The Last Word

Several steps are effective in showing voters that the election is fair and honest. A vigorous prebunking and immediate debunking campaign is effective at countering rumors and conspiracy theories attacking election integrity. “Election transparency is a key component in bolstering voter confidence. Voters should know that their vote counts.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ What is the deadline in California for voters to fix problems with their ballot envelopes?
<https://tracker.votingrightslab.org/issues/returning-verifying-and-curing-mail-ballots?law=70#CA>.

⁹⁹ Official Canvass - Vote Counting Process. California Secretary of State.
<https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/upcoming-elections/vote-counting-process>.

¹⁰⁰ California Secretary of State. Election Dates and Resources. <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/voting-resources/voting-california/election-dates-and-resources>.

¹⁰¹ Interview on March 3, 2026.

FINDINGS

Finding 7.1

The CGJ learned the RR/CC makes rigorous efforts to prevent cyber-attacks that otherwise would pose threats to election integrity.

Finding 7.2

The CGJ has determined the RR/CC has an expert communications team in place that monitors the Internet for AI disinformation so false information can be corrected in real time.

Finding 7.3

We have found that the RR/CC makes election transparency a priority by inviting the public to observe ballot processing at the BPC or live online.

Finding 7.4

The CGJ finds that the goal of the LACO RR/CC is to afford every citizen an opportunity to participate in elections and still certify the election results within the 30 day State allowance.

Acronyms

BMD	Ballot Marking Device
BPC	Ballot Processing Center
NOC	Network Operations Center
RR/CC	Registrar/Recorder-County Clerk
SOC	Security Operations Center
USPS	United States Postal Service
VBL	VSAP Ballot Layout
VBM	Vote By Mail
VOC	VSAP Operations Center
VSAP	Voting Solutions for All People

Committee Members

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LOS ANGELES SENIOR MULTIPURPOSE CENTERS



2025-26

**Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1983, the Mayor and the Los Angeles City Council formally created the Los Angeles Department of Aging (LADOA).¹ Its purpose was to manage and provide services to the City's senior population. A major component of LADOA is the management of contracts with nonprofit organizations that operate 19 multipurpose centers (MPC) throughout the City.² Basic services of these MPCs include programs offering health and wellness, nutrition, transportation, legal/advocacy assistance, civic involvement and employment services.

In April 2025, the Mayor proposed a budget for fiscal year 2025-26 eliminating LADOA as a separate entity. LADOA functions, along with those of two additional small departments, Youth Development Department (YDD) and Economic and Workforce Development Department (EWDD), would be transitioned into the City of Los Angeles Community Investment for Families Department (CIFD), which has historically focused on integrating families through fiscal education and housing.³ The primary reason for this restructuring was due to budget reductions. This could impact LADOA fulfilling its mission of providing concentrated services to seniors.

In addition to cost savings of approximately \$3.5 million, this merger would provide greater and improved administrative support and staff resources, especially in contract execution, an integral part of LADOAs MPC operation.

¹ Los Angeles City Ordinance Number 157,596 effective May 15, 1983, Department of Aging

² <https://aging.lacity.gov>, Accessed February 23, 2026.

³ <https://communityinvestment.lacity.gov>, Accessed December 4, 2025.

While recognizing the benefits such a merger would bring, our Committee investigated the impact of restructuring and had concerns in the following areas:

- Los Angeles demographics are changing, and the number of seniors is increasing, i.e. additional services will be needed for more seniors.
- The cost of living for seniors on fixed incomes is becoming more expensive, potentially increasing the risk for food insufficiency and making the finding of stable housing more challenging.
- MPCs need a stable income flow to continue services and meet contractual obligations.

Our Committee learned that the MPCs provide an extensive array of programs and services, and that the administrators, professional staff and case managers are optimistic about joining CIFD. Our findings support the merger and make specific recommendations in the areas of continuity of services, expansion of the meal program and the Request for Proposal (RFP) cycle. Total implementation of the department consolidation will be completed by July 1, 2026, after final execution of the appropriate ordinance and administrative procedures completed by the City Attorney.

BACKGROUND

By the year 2030, baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 will range from 66-84 years in age. It is predicted by experts that they will outnumber those under the age of 18.⁴ This population will make up one-quarter of California's population with a very large percentage living in Los Angeles County.⁵

Approximately 764,000 current Los Angeles residents are over the age of 60.⁶ This population is projected to exceed 1 million by 2030.⁷ The need for programs offering health services, wellness, nutrition, housing, transportation, social interaction, civic involvement and employment will increase as the population of senior citizens continues to grow.⁸

During the 1970s and 1980s, the City of Los Angeles, as part of a countywide effort, began establishing dedicated facilities for seniors called Senior Centers. These Senior Centers offered services like meals, exercise classes and health screening. During the mid-1980s, the State and County expanded programs for seniors which were eventually mirrored by actions of the California legislature.⁹ The LADOA contracted with nonprofit organizations to provide MPCs with an in-depth program of services.

Governor Gavin Newsom announced the signing of California's Master Plan For Aging (MPA), a comprehensive plan to address and prepare for this increase in the aging population. The MPA is a 10-year plan for local

⁴ <https://ad.lacounty.gov/news/lacounty-older-adult-population.grows>, Accessed October 13, 2025.

⁵ <https://justiceinaging.org>, Accessed October 13, 2025.

⁶ <https://www.neilsberg.com/insights/california-population-by-age>, Accessed March 26, 2026.

⁷ <https://justiceinaging.org>, Accessed October 13, 2025.

⁸ <https://justiceinaging.org>, Accessed December 4, 2025.

⁹ https://aging.ca.gov/oaa_state_plan, Accessed December 23, 2025.

government as well as the private sector and nonprofit organizations to continue addressing and providing essential services and programs for that segment of society.¹⁰

This initiative is driven by five goals:¹¹

- Goal 1: Housing for all ages and stages
- Goal 2: Health Reimagined
- Goal 3: Inclusion and Equity, Not Isolation
- Goal 4: Caregiving that Works
- Goal 5: Affording Aging

The MPA Implementation Tracker is used to monitor the implementation of its initiatives. The 2025-26 MPA planning initiatives are as follows:

- Deliver and communicate outcomes that advance the MPA
- Protect and promote federal support for older adults, people with disabilities and caregivers
- Elevate under-served and under-represented populations and communities so all Californians can age well
- Leverage public and private partnerships
- Utilize data to inform policy, programs, and services
- Drive innovation for system change¹²

As a result of the MPA, a partnership between the County Board of Supervisors and the City Council was formulated. The Purposeful Aging Los

¹⁰ <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov>, Accessed December 3, 2025.

¹¹ Ibid

¹² <https://mpa.aging.ca.gov>, Accessed December 12, 2025.

Angeles Initiative (PALA) was approved and adopted by Mayor Garcetti's Executive Directive in May 2016.¹³ Its purpose was to coordinate the City's and County's efforts to improve services and lives of senior adults by formulating a Planning Service Area.

PALA's goal was to create a more coordinated system of services across Los Angeles County's 88 cities and help the County and City prepare for the increase in the aging population. PALA's coordinating efforts included agencies advocating for seniors, nonprofit organizations and universities. With the formulation of PALA, it appeared the future of the MPCs would remain a focal point.

The organization and assignment of responsibility for LADOA includes the following:¹⁴

- Facilitates and monitors 19 MPCs to ensure services and programs are implemented according to the contract with nonprofit organizations
- Ensure contracts for meals are being followed
- Coordinates with California State Department of Aging

Below is a chart of the nonprofit organizations and MPCs which offer the full range of services and programs through LADOA,¹⁵ followed by a list of the cumulative services and participants served for fiscal years 2023-24 and 2024-25.¹⁶

¹³ <https://www.purposefulagingla.com>, Accessed December 12,2025.

¹⁴ <https://aging.lacity.gov>, Accessed December 12,2025.

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Chart information provided by City of Los Angeles Department of Aging, Accessed January 5, 2026.

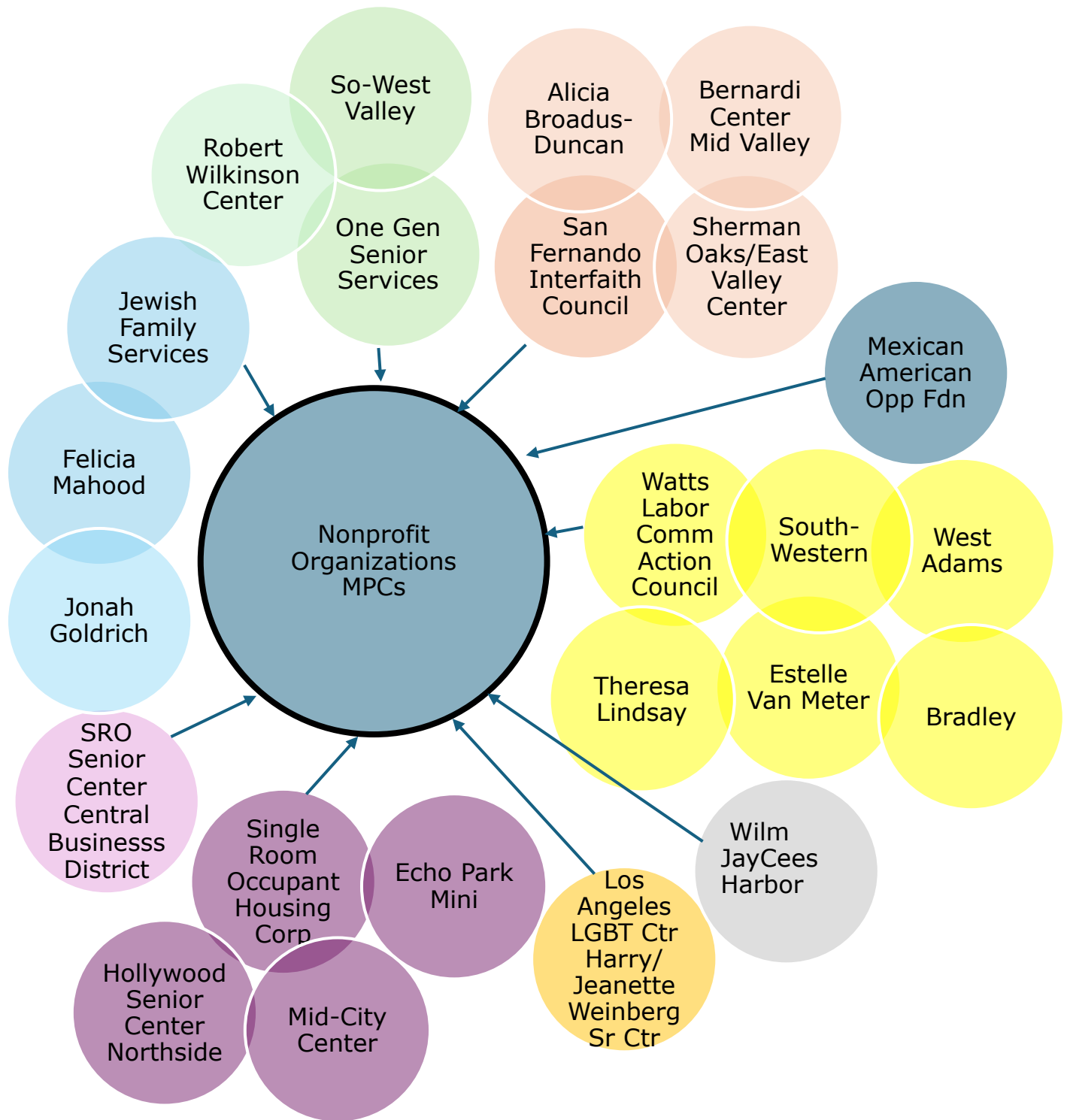


CHART 1 - TOTAL PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS¹⁷

PROGRAM	FISCAL YEAR (FY) 23-24	FY 24-25
Case Management – Care Planning	6,374	7,614
Case Management- Case Monitoring	18,789	18,895
Case Management – Service Auth/Arrangement	12,312	13,445
Chore – Heavy Housework	2,376	3,800
Chore – Yard Work	114	135
Homemaker – Light Housework	10,123	12,572
Homemaker – Preparing Meals	13	19
Homemaker – Shopping Personal	1,494	2,096
Information and Assistance -Assistance	105,402	110,126
Information and Assistance Assistance – Spanish	4,959	4,207
Information and Assistance – Follow-up	53,353	70,862
Information and Assistance – Follow -up (Spanish)	4,521	1,911
Information and Assistance – Information	203,646	161,414
Information and Assistance – Information (Spanish)	7,473	6,479
Personal Care	3,337	7,208
Comprehensive Assessment	7,370	7,915
Legal Assistance	7,476	5,593
Outreach	33,391	31,919
Personal Affairs Assistance	13,485	10,316
Senior Center Activities	33,537	39,976
Telephone Reassurance	37,440	26,389
Visiting	6,941	11,581
TOTALS	573,926	554,472

¹⁷Chart statistical information provided by Los Angeles Department of Aging on January 5, 2026

The following chart shows the cumulative number of congregate meals served, home delivered meals and transportation trips provided by the 19 MPCs. This information is separate from the information provided in the previous chart because it is paid for by a different funding source and is not a duplicated count of services.¹⁸

CHART 2

PROGRAM	FY 23-24	FY 24-25
Congregate Meals	576,142	557,329
Home Delivered Meals	907,408	920,506
SUBTOTAL MEALS	1,483,550	1,477,835
Transportation – Prop A ¹⁹	85,980	95,282
TOTAL	1,569,530	1,573,117

The Committee’s investigation focused on whether the CIFD could provide the same focus and attention to the MPCs and whether services to seniors would be adversely impacted or eliminated. This concern was based on the LADOA primary function was to provide services and programs for the aged. The Committee investigated whether including the operations and services for the aged in a multi-tiered department might impact or cause the services to be changed.

¹⁸ Chart information provided by Department of Aging, Accessed December 3,2025.

¹⁹ https://www.metro.net/about/local_return_pgm, Accessed March 24,2026.

METHODOLOGY

- The Committee conducted on-site meetings with the Directors of the MPCs, administrative staff and food/transportation coordinators.
- The Committee reviewed the current programs offered by the LADOA and compared them with the CIFD Proposed Consolidation report dated 10/22/2025.²⁰
- We conducted research on the history of MPCs. LADOA staff provided statistical reports on verifying success of each Center.
- We conducted meetings with LADOA staff on 10/08/2025 and 02/18/2026, and meetings with combined staff of LADOA and CIFD on 12/03/2025.

DISCUSSION

The organization and assignment of responsibility for the current LADOA includes the following:²¹

- Facilitates and monitors 19 MPCs to ensure services and programs are implemented according to the contract with nonprofit organizations
- Ensure contracts for meals are being followed
- Coordinates with California State Department of Aging

²⁰ Information provided by CIFD staff during meeting held on December 3, 2025

²¹ <https://aging.lacity.gov>, Accessed October 13, 2025.

LADOA is dedicated to serving older adults in the City of Los Angeles. They provide service and programs for those over age 60.

Based on this Committee's interviews of several MPC staff, we learned that all the MPCs provided services and assistance according to their contracts in the areas described below:

In-Home Assistance

In-Home Assistance provides help for seniors (60+) struggling with daily tasks. Case Managers may visit a senior home and complete a needs assessment. The Case Manager may assist with home delivered meals, grocery shopping, and light housekeeping. If the senior is frail, homebound, living alone, and has a low income, they may qualify for an Emergency Alert Response System (EARS).

Emergency Alert Response System (EARS)

EARS are personal devices in the form of bracelets or pendants worn by seniors. When pushed, the button on the device connects to a 24/7 communication monitoring center. EARS features two-way communication, GPS (for mobile units), and can notify friends and/or families and dispatch emergency services such as Lifeline, Medical Guardian, Life Alert and ADT.

Nutrition

The MPCs provide hot well-balanced lunches (congregate meals) to participants in the centers five days a week (M-F) and provide a calendar showing the menu for the current month. In addition to the lunches provided at the MPCs, they also provide home delivered meals to seniors who are in declining health or homebound.

Transportation

The MPCs provide door-to-door transportation for those who are disabled and unable to access other modes of transportation. They may assist with medical appointments and grocery shopping. To qualify, seniors must live within the center service area.

Wellness Education & Screening

Wellness education focuses on information and resources to help seniors manage their health and well-being:

- Health Screening: Regular preventative health screening helps monitor and manage common health issues.
- Nutritional Counseling and Workshops: Classes are provided on healthy diet, cooking, and weight control.
- Disease Prevention and Management: Classes are offered to provide education and information on certain health conditions, diabetes awareness, and safe exercise techniques.
- Emotional Well-Being: Offers counseling, support groups/referrals and provides information on elder abuse.
- Exercise and Fitness: Activities are offered at various fitness levels for groups and individuals. Classes include yoga, Pilates, Zumba, aerobic dance, line dancing, and boot camp.

Evidence-Based Programs (EBP)

Evidence-Based Programs are proven scientific research programs with reliably achieved outcomes such as improved health and disease reduction. MPCs offer key EBPs such as Stanford's Chronic Disease Self-Management Program which teaches skills for managing chronic conditions such as diabetes, pain and fatigue, while focusing on exercise, nutrition, and

problem solving. These research-backed programs work to improve energy, motivation, depression, fall prevention, and chronic illness.

Social And Recreational Activities/Exercise & Fitness

The MPCs offer several weekly/daily activities which are designed to enrich and enhance the lives of seniors. Examples of activities are: EBP exercise classes, bingo, karaoke, yoga, balance exercise, walk with ease (offsite), games, book discussions, current events, community education, crochet and billiards.

Transferring Services To CIFD

The Committee investigated whether dissolving the LADOA and moving the services into the CIFD would impact on the continuation of existing services and programs to meet the needs of seniors.

In October 2025, the Mayor requested the City Attorney prepare and present ordinances applicable to the Los Angeles Municipal Code and the Los Angeles Administrative Code to dissolve the LADOA and transfer all responsibilities and functions to CIFD.²² On December 10, 2025, the Los Angeles City Council approved the consolidation. Full implementation will occur by July 1, 2026.²³

In the initial proposal for eliminating LADOA as a separate entity and merging it into CIFD, several concerns were investigated by the Committee.

- Appropriate use of State and Federal grant funds
- Comingling of funds from various government agencies
- Input from advocating agencies such as the Area Agency on Aging

²² <https://mayor.lacity.gov/news/mayor-bass-leads>, Accessed January 20, 2026.

²³ Information provided by Administrators of MPCs during interviews on various dates

- Differences of constituencies (youth, families, seniors and work-force development) under one department
- Possible diminished focus on services for seniors

Currently, RFPs for operating the MPCs are solicited every three years. In response to the City's RFP, proposals are submitted by nonprofit organizations to renew their contracts and for new organizations to be selected.²⁴

Our Committee discovered that LADOA, as a small agency, has a limited number of staff dealing with fiscal matters as well as operational management. There is no specific staff dedicated to grant writing and the nonprofit agencies must use creative discretion in finding and securing additional funds. The nonprofit organizations that run the MPCs complained of long delays in payments to cover outstanding invoices, resulting in scaling back some services and staff and an overall inability to fulfill contract obligations.²⁵

Conversations with LADOA staff revealed that certain past delays in contract administration were due to State mandated changes that were implemented in a timely manner as possible. While such State actions are likely to occur periodically, having a consolidated larger department with more staff may expedite such changes more quickly going forward.

Also, the lack of certainty for on-going State and Federal funding poses potential risk for all local government departments. Providing housing assistance for the most vulnerable seniors is a priority with rising costs of

²⁴ Process discussed in meeting with CIFD staff on December 3, 2025

²⁵ Information provided by Administrators of MPCs during interviews on various dates

living and rent increases. Currently there is no LADOA program that fully addresses housing assistance.²⁶

Benefits Of Consolidation

Full implementation of the consolidation is still on-going. CIFD staff provided information that the new consolidated organization will not take away or reduce services to seniors.

The direction of the new consolidated CIFD is poised by design to be more responsive than reactive. To that end, several meetings with stakeholders such as the Advisory Council on Aging were held in July and October 2025, and there are on-going monthly meetings between CIFD and the nonprofit organizations that provide services at the MPCs to assess what is working and where future efforts need to be directed. Also, the hiring of an outside consultant will be utilized for overall strategic planning.²⁷

Having LADOA staff combined with those of the YDD and EWDD under one umbrella will promote better program assessment and development and will provide additional expertise to CIFD in grant research and allocation. Existing grant monies are not affected by the consolidation. Grant funding cannot be reallocated and must remain specific to their intended recipients. A single department will create the potential for intergenerational programs with a creative approach to benefit both youth and seniors.

CIFD is predicting an increase in both services and resources aimed at seniors. Specifically, there will be a \$40 million rental assistance package available in July 2026 to assist seniors 65+ who are late in rent payments.

²⁶ Process discussed in meeting with CIFD staff on February 18, 2026

²⁷ Process discussed in meeting with CIFD staff on February 18, 2026.

MPC staff will be trained to answer questions and help with the application process.

CIFD's focus will be on the integration of servicing families. They will be developing intergenerational connections, helpful to both the young and old in many ways. Interactions between these two groups foster mutual growth, exchange of knowledge/wisdom, empathy, and improve mental health for both age groups. Senior adults can offer young people support, guidance and mentorship. Young people can offer instruction on computers, telephone usage, handheld device usage and personal company.

Rather than labeling aging as a deficit, we see it as part of the diversity of human experience, deserving of respect and continued services. With that in mind, we submit the following findings and recommendations.

FINDINGS

Finding 8.1

The CIFD focus on the integration of servicing families may well be one of the strongest benefits of consolidation. The CIFD focus on youth, economic, and workforce development may diminish the full scope of services currently being provided to seniors. Creative programming will be necessary to achieve the full promise of this integration.

Finding 8.2

The uncertain status of State and Federal funding for senior programs is making long-range planning difficult for MPCs.

Finding 8.3

The current number of staff performing multiple duties and responsibilities causes delays in processing invoices for payment to the nonprofits that provide services at the 19 MPCs, and the resulting curtailment of services (and in some cases, layoffs of personnel) appear poised to possibly lead to gaps in program implementation, particularly in individual planning services.

Finding 8.4

LADOA has a limited number of staff for grant writing.

Finding 8.5

Nutritional considerations are a key part of senior health, and many seniors have difficulty obtaining meals on weekends and holidays.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 8.1

CIFD should create an integrated youth/senior program to provide services to both groups, with possible training programs for youths to assist MPCs in a variety of tasks such as office/program support or transportation assistance. Youth should be given the opportunity for paid internships in working with seniors for school credit.

Recommendation 8.2

We recommend extending the RFP cycle from 3 to 5 years. This would reduce administrative overhead, provide longer contract implementation, and the nonprofits would have extended time for planning.

Recommendation 8.3

Upon consolidation, we recommend the functions of Contract Administration and Program Management be separate managerial positions.

Recommendation 8.4

We recommend CIFD create a designated unit for the purpose of applying for grants and other sources of funds to ensure that seniors continue receiving the same level of services historically provided by LADOA.

Recommendation 8.5

Boxed meals should be made available, upon request, for all participants (center and homebound) over the weekends and holidays when the MPCs are closed.

COMMENDATIONS

We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation and thank you to all who provided valuable information for this report.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made no later than ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court.

All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 County of Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury must be submitted to:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles City Mayor	8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5
Los Angeles City Community Investment and Family Department	8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5

Acronyms

CGJ	Civil Grand Jury
CIFD	Los Angeles City Community Investment or Families Department
EARS	Emergency Alert Response System
EBP	Evidence-Based Programs
EWDD	Economic and Workforce Development Department
LADOA	Los Angeles City Department Of Aging
MPA	Master Plan For Aging
MPC	Multipurpose Center
PALA	Purposeful Aging Los Angeles Initiative
RFP	Request for Proposal
YDD	Youth Development Department

Committee Members

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Mercedes A. Fuller
Gwen D. Morgan-Smith

**EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES
USED BY LOCAL LAW
ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES**



**2025-26
Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**



Beverly Hills PD Real Time Crime Center. Photo provided to the CGJ by Beverly Hills PD.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Local law enforcement agencies (LEAs) are increasingly bringing emerging technologies into their operations and workflows. These technologies include communication, dispatch, tactical, surveillance, forensic and investigative tools. Four technologies are especially receiving attention: 1) Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs), 2) Drones, 3) Real Time Crime Centers (RTCC), and 4) Facial Recognition (FR). LEAs claim these technologies enhance public and officer safety by improving situational awareness and crime investigations.

Emerging technologies raise many issues that can erode trust in the criminal justice system, including cost/benefit trade-offs, privacy and legal issues and policing overreach. Critics often raise concerns about racial bias, disparate impact and data sharing with federal immigration officials.

LEAs obtain technology funding from federal and state grant sources and private donations. LEAs are not just buying surveillance and investigative tools; they are buying data systems that must be managed with proper policies and procedures. A hidden cost of technology misuse is the possibility of expensive litigation that can divert resources from other public services.

Civilian oversight bodies are the key to achieving a balance between privacy and public safety. Civilian oversight has traditionally been concerned with responding to complaints, complying with legal requirements and monitoring conditions in jails. A proactive civilian oversight body can do more: it can provide transparency about LEA technologies in five areas, initial procurement, costs and funding, policies and procedures, usage, and ongoing communication with the public.

Los Angeles County has over 45 municipal police departments, plus the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. This report examines and makes recommendations about the technologies used by local LEAs representing a variety of department sizes and uses of these tools: 1) Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, 2) Los Angeles Police Department, 3) Long Beach Police Department, 4) Pasadena Police Department, 5) Beverly Hills Police Department, 6) South Gate Police Department, and 7) Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

We conclude that LEAs should have an oversight structure that makes their community an equal partner in adopting and using emerging technologies.

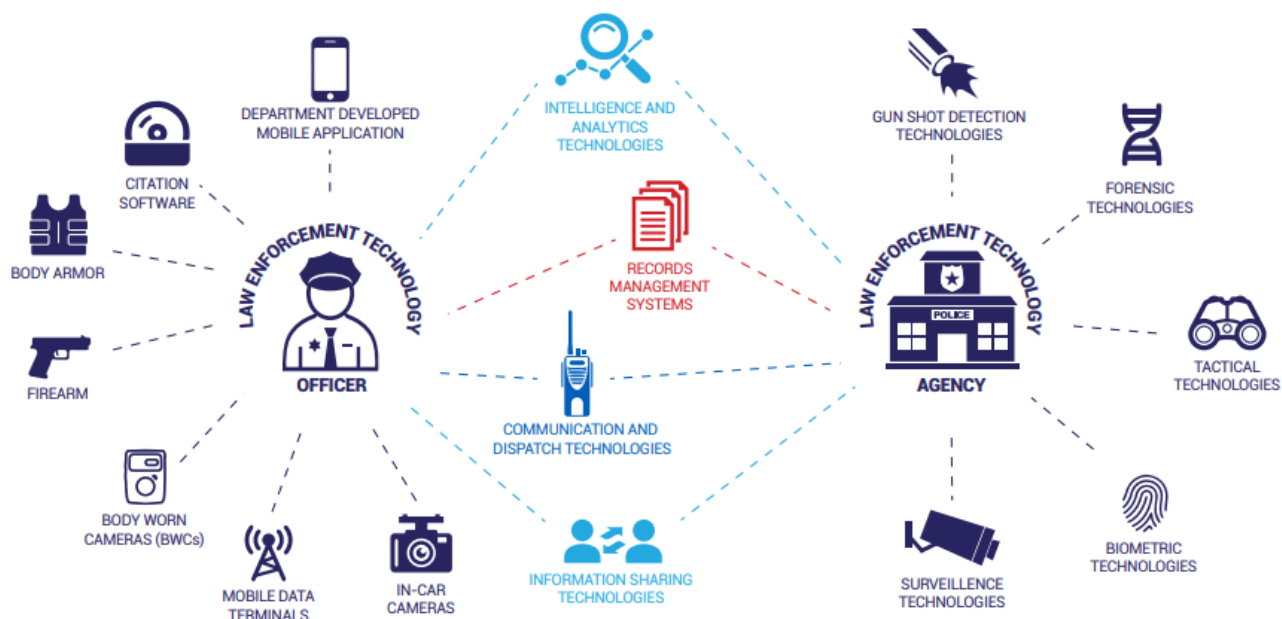
BACKGROUND

Law enforcement agency technologies include:

- Records management technologies, e.g., case records management systems (RMS)
- Communication and dispatch technologies, e.g., computer-aided dispatch (CAD)
- Intelligence and analytics technologies, e.g., crime analysis software
- Tactical technologies, e.g., firearms, less-than-lethal weapons
- Information sharing technologies, e.g., criminal records and investigative data
- Surveillance technologies, e.g., closed-circuit televisions (CCTV), unmanned aerial systems - drones
- Biometric and forensic technologies, e.g., facial recognition, DNA testing¹

¹ https://vrnclearinghousefiles.blob.core.windows.net/documents/PSP_PoliceTechnologyCost_v5.pdf.

Figure 1. Examples of Officer and Agency Technology



This exhibit shows how Officer and Agency Technologies are interrelated.²

Cost And Funding Considerations

The hidden costs of LEA technologies, including training and staffing, operations and maintenance, and the potential for budget overruns, can dwarf the initial acquisition costs. LEAs are not just buying surveillance and investigative tools; they are buying data systems that must be controlled and managed. An American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) publication also notes that LEA technologies that do not include proper safeguards to prevent errors or misuse “can lead to expensive litigation that diverts resources from other public services.”³ The following exhibit shows the four cost areas of technology purchases.

² https://vrnclearinghousefiles.blob.core.windows.net/documents/PSP_PoliceTechnologyCost_v5.pdf.

³ Nicole Ozer and Peter Bibring, *Making Smart Decisions About Surveillance: A Guide for Community Transparency & Oversight*, The ACLU of California, 2nd Edition (April 2016).

INITIAL COSTS	OPERATING COSTS	MAINTENANCE COSTS	DISPOSAL COSTS
<p>ACQUISITION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor for personnel to select technology (e.g., research options, develop requests for proposals, test equipment, validate vendor quotes) • Hardware: primary equipment (lease/subscriptions or initial hardware cost), spare parts, peripheral/supporting equipment (e.g., mounting devices, monitors, protective cases, servers, facilities) • Warranties • Software and licenses <p>DEPLOYMENT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Installation/set-up fee • Integration with other systems (e.g., adaptors, data translators, wiring) • Labor to update or create agency policies and procedures for the use of the equipment, train officers • Downtime of systems and officers during deployment • Infrastructure enhancement to support new technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facility costs (e.g., office space, furniture, utilities, leases) • Energy costs (e.g., oil, gas, electricity) • Telecommunications (e.g., internet and network costs) • Labor for administrative and logistics support (e.g., financial, human resources, program managers, contract managers), ongoing training, training for new users, and operating the system • Insurance • Leases and service fees (e.g., cloud storage costs) • System evaluation and auditing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor (or maintenance contracts) for system maintenance (e.g., user account management, user support/help desks, updates, patches, upgrades, bug identification and repair) • Labor for data maintenance (e.g., data backups, data security measures, data quality control, archive, deletion) • System and security monitoring software (e.g., antiviral software, fault detection) • Creation of new system integrations • Repairs • Upgrade costs (e.g., from technology that is no longer supported) • Server upgrades • Extended warranties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs to get data out of vendor systems • Cost to remove/uninstall systems • Equipment disposal costs

https://vrnclearinghousefiles.blob.core.windows.net/documents/PSP_PoliceTechnologyCost_v5.pdf

LEAs sometimes do not have budgets to acquire and support the costs of emerging technologies. The Urban Institute says, “Nearly all state and local spending on police, corrections, and courts in 2021 went toward operational costs such as salaries and benefits (96 percent for police, 97 percent for corrections, and 98 percent for courts).”⁴ Consequently, LEAs look to grants and other funding sources.

Common Funding Sources For Law Enforcement Technologies⁵

⁴ <https://www.urban.org/policy-centers/cross-center-initiatives/state-and-local-finance-initiative/state-and-local-backgrounders/criminal-justice-police-corrections-courts-expenditures#:~:text=From%201977%20to%202021%2C%20in,an%20increase%20of%20189%20percent.>

⁵ <https://www.flocksafety.com/blog/how-law-enforcement-agencies-are-funding-modern-technology--without-breaking-the-budget.>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Government: Grants offered by the DOJ Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS); the DOJ Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA); etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Government: The Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI), whose goal is to enhance the security of high-risk urban areas against acts of terrorism.⁶
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The State of California: Key state initiatives include the Organized Retail Theft (ORT) Grant Program, and the Technology and Equipment Program (TEP).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public-Private Partnerships: Local stakeholders—retailers, business parks, shopping malls, homeowner associations, etc. may be willing to sponsor technologies in exchange for improved security.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revenue-Generating Programs: Income from vehicle inspection fees, VIN checks, alcohol enforcement funds and similar programs have been used to help offset upfront costs of technology.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police Foundations: Independent, non-profit organizations that raise funds to support local agencies by funding equipment, technology, specialized training and community programs.

Legal And Privacy Considerations

Many people support LEA surveillance technologies and downplay the privacy issues. For example, a local city official said, “We’re always being tracked. You can’t commit a crime and get away with it without some form of technology catching up with you.”⁷

On the other hand, the author of the *Cato Handbook for Policymakers* says:

“Modern technology gives police access to tools such as body cameras, drones, facial recognition technology (FRT), and cellphone tracking devices that could, without appropriate regulations in place, allow for the warrantless and persistent surveillance of entire American cities.”⁸

⁶ <https://www.axon.com/resources/law-enforcement-equipment-grants>.

⁷ <https://forthe.org/journalism/lbpd-to-expand-alpr-systems/>.

⁸ Matthew Feeney, “Technology and Law Enforcement,” *Cato Handbook for Policymakers*, 9th edition. <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/2022-12/cato-handbook-9th-edition-13.pdf>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

Katz v. United States, 389 U.S. 347 (1967), is a landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in which the Court redefined what constitutes a "search" or "seizure" under the Fourth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. From that decision came the "reasonable expectation of privacy" standard.⁹ A person has a reasonable expectation of privacy if two criteria are met: 1) The person has established an actual (subjective) expectation of privacy, and 2) The expectation is one that society is willing to recognize as reasonable.¹⁰

Supreme Court Decisions Regarding Privacy And Technology¹¹

United States v. Knotts (1982). The Supreme Court determined that technology used to augment the senses of an officer is not constituted as a search if it could be accomplished through unaided visual observation.
Kyllo v. United States (2001). The Court ruled that using a device not commonly available to the public to uncover details inside a home—which would otherwise remain unknown without physical intrusion—constitutes a search and is unreasonable without a warrant.
United States v. Jones (2012). The Court ruled that the warrantless placing of a GPS device on a suspect's vehicle constitutes a search.
Carpenter v. United States (2018). the Court ruled that the warrantless acquisition of cell site location information (CSLI) violates the Fourth Amendment.

The people of California in 1972 used the initiative process to add "privacy" to the list of "inalienable rights" guaranteed by Article 1, Section 1 of the California Constitution.¹²

⁹ The reasonable expectation of privacy has since become the primary means of defining when law enforcement engages in a Fourth Amendment "search." Confirmed in an interview with a Los Angeles Sheriff's spokesperson on November 22, 2025.

¹⁰ <https://rightoncrime.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025-08-ROC-Emerging-Technologies-in-Law-Enforcement-Cochran.pdf>

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² <https://www.law.berkeley.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Kelso-Californias-Constitutional-Right-to-Privacy.pdf>

California Senate Bill (SB) 34 (2016), established legal requirements for California law enforcement agencies who collect, store, use, or share Automated License Plate Reader data.¹³

California SB 54 (2018) prohibits law enforcement agencies from using money or personnel to investigate, interrogate, detain, detect, or arrest persons for immigration enforcement purposes.¹⁴

Los Angeles City Ordinance 188441 (2024) (Sanctuary Ordinance) prohibits the use of any City and law enforcement resources, personnel, property and data to support federal immigration enforcement.¹⁵

Civilian Oversight Commissions

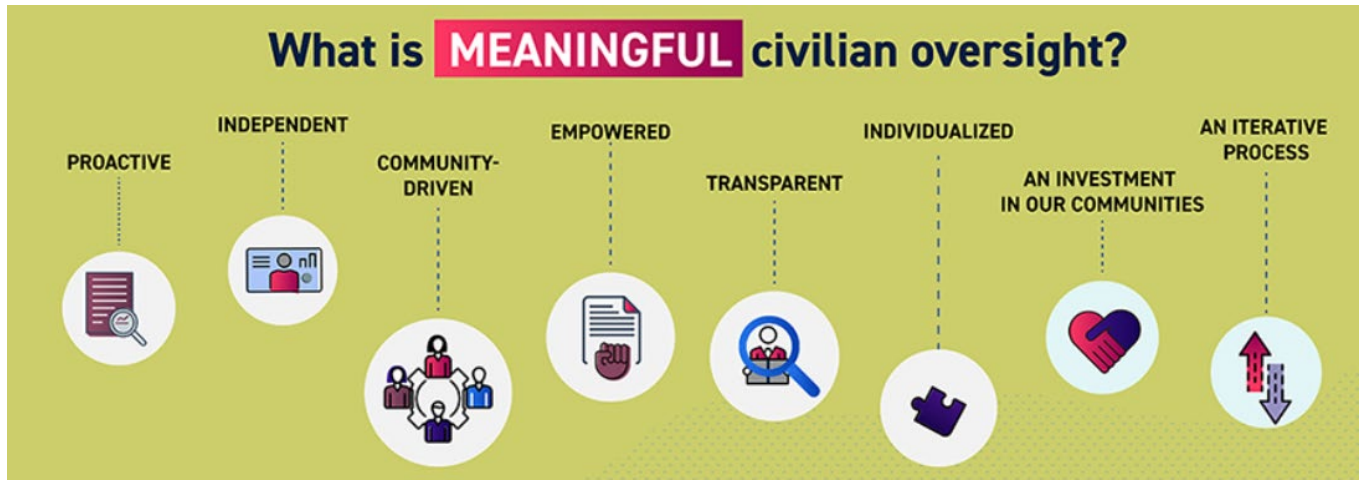
Civilian oversight commissions have become increasingly important and can provide transparency to the public regarding privacy concerns. An ACLU publication entitled “Making Smart Decisions About Surveillance” says, without civilian oversight, “public trust can be easily damaged, and communities end up saddled with systems that are too invasive, very expensive and much less effective at accomplishing community safety goals than initially imagined.”¹⁶

¹³ <https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/media/2023-dle-06.pdf>

¹⁴ https://calmatters.digitaldemocracy.org/bills/ca_201720180sb54

¹⁵ This ordinance, entitled “Prohibition of the Use of City Resources for Federal Immigration Enforcement,” is codified at Los Angeles Administrative Code (LAAC) Section 19.190 et seq.

¹⁶ https://www.aclunorcal.org/sites/default/files/20160325-making_smart_decisions_about_surveillance.pdf.



<https://www.nacole.org/>

Oversight commissions can enhance transparency for LEA technologies in five areas: 1) Initial procurement and purpose, 2) costs and funding sources, 3) policies and procedures, 4) usage, and 5) ongoing communication with the public.¹⁷

Civilian oversight has traditionally been **reactive**, i.e. responding to complaints, complying with legal requirements, and recommending sanctions for individual officers. Such civilian oversight is often the result of Department of Justice settlement agreements.¹⁸

Civilian oversight is most effective when it operates **proactively**, i.e. by investigating complaints, collecting and analyzing data, and creating bridges between law enforcement and the wider community.¹⁹

¹⁷ <https://publicsafety.jhu.edu/assets/uploads/sites/9/2022/04/Presentation-to-Johns-Hopkins-Police-Accountability-Board-20220324.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Common Models of Oversight in the U.S.

Review-focused

Ensures the community has the ability to provide input into the complaint investigation process.

Community review of investigations may increase public trust in the process

An individual or a board/commission authorized to review completed internal investigations – can agree/disagree with findings

Investigation-focused

Full-time civilian investigators may have highly specialized training

Investigations conducted by oversight agency-does not rely on investigators from within the police department

Civilian-led investigations may increase community trust in the investigation process

Auditor/Monitor-focused

Often have more robust reporting practices than other models

May be more effective at promoting long-term, systemic change in police departments

Generally less expensive than full investigative agencies

Allow the agency to actively engage in many or all of the steps of the complaint process

Hybrid

Contain elements from one or more of the three models

Have been developed to address the needs of a specific community and conform to state or local laws

May be modifications of a previous oversight agency
Are increasingly common

<https://publicsafety.jhu.edu/assets/uploads/sites/9/2022/04/Presentation-to-Johns-Hopkins-Police-Accountability-Board-20220324.pdf>

Opposition To Emerging Technologies

The increasing use of emerging technologies by LEAs has been criticized by many. Critics raise concerns about:

1. Racial Bias and Disparate Impact: Facial recognition algorithms may have higher error rates for non-white people.
2. Predictive Policing Bias: Algorithms often rely on historical, biased data, leading to disproportionate surveillance and over-policing.
3. First and Fourth Amendments: The use of technology to identify people threatens constitution-protected personal liberties.
4. Persistent Tracking: Technologies like facial recognition and drones allow for tracking individuals' movements, eroding anonymity.
5. Misplaced Priorities: Funds spent on technology tools could be better used for community-based safety programs.²⁰

The Electronic Frontier Foundation (EFF) is a leading nonprofit organization defending civil liberties in the digital world. The EFF publishes "The Atlas of Surveillance" (included in Appendix I) which is a useful tool for policymakers, the media and the public to understand the scope of surveillance technologies used by LEAs throughout the country.²¹

One Los-Angeles based community organization generally opposed to police surveillance is the "Stop LAPD Spying Coalition." Its website publishes "The Architecture of Surveillance" and says, "we work to build community power

²⁰ [https://columbialawreview.org/content/police-technology-experiments/#:~:text=Critics%20have%20pointed%20out%20that,fairness%2C%20and%20transparency%E2%80%9D\);https://www.aclunorcal.org/sites/default/files/20160325-making_smart_decisions_about_surveillance.pdf](https://columbialawreview.org/content/police-technology-experiments/#:~:text=Critics%20have%20pointed%20out%20that,fairness%2C%20and%20transparency%E2%80%9D);https://www.aclunorcal.org/sites/default/files/20160325-making_smart_decisions_about_surveillance.pdf); and <https://rightoncrime.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/2025-08-ROC-Emerging-Technologies-in-Law-Enforcement-Cochran.pdf>.

²¹ <https://www.eff.org/about> Also <https://www.atlasofsurveillance.org/>

toward abolishing police surveillance.”²² It tracks numerous “human-based and electronic-based systems, technologies, programs, and spatial practices that the LAPD and policing partnerships around the world use to surveil us.”²³

What is the Architecture of Surveillance?

“Architecture of Surveillance” refers to various elements of human-based and electronic-based systems, technologies, programs, and spatial practices that the LAPD and policing partnerships around the world use to surveil us.

One way to think about how these elements work together to surveil you is through the following categories:

watching you

In your everyday environment, there are people (analog forms of surveillance) and cameras watching you, capturing your image, and judging your behavior.

data processing you

You are turned into data—whether it is by people filling out reports or using machines—that is processed within larger systems.

computing you

Within physical centers and through digital platforms, your data is analyzed, managed, stored, and shared.

targeting you

Policing models and programs justify the collection and use of your data. In turn, your data is used to justify more surveillance.

<https://architectureofsurveillance.notion.site/LAPD-Architecture-of-Surveillance-106f82e2b6568044829ed53806491be1>.

There will likely always be a natural tension between 1) supporters of law enforcement agencies, who risk legitimizing invasive surveillance technologies and 2) those who take an abolitionist viewpoint, seeking to relieve police of their surveillance tools.²⁴

We look particularly at four technologies which receive wide attention.

Technology #1. Automated License Plate Readers (ALPRs)

²² <https://architectureofsurveillance.notion.site/LAPD-Architecture-of-Surveillance-106f82e2b6568044829ed53806491be1>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ <https://itif.org/publications/2023/01/09/police-tech-exploring-the-opportunities-and-fact-checking-the-criticisms/>.

ALPRs are high-speed, camera-based systems that automatically capture, read, and cross-reference vehicle license plates against databases for investigative and public safety purposes. The cameras use artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze millions of images, including vehicle location, date, time, as well as make, model, color, and even details like dents and bumper stickers.²⁵

ALPRs have become a standard tool for law enforcement across California, adopted by more than 300 LEAs. ALPRs can be used for many purposes, such as identifying stolen cars, locating victims of kidnapping and human trafficking, locating suspects, enforcing traffic laws and investigating crimes. They also can enhance public safety and efficiency by providing valuable data insights on traffic patterns for efficiency of flow and safety.²⁶

ALPRs can also pose significant ethical challenges, including:

- Invasion of privacy: ALPRs can track and record drivers' movements and habits, creating a detailed profile of their lives and activities.
- Discrimination: ALPRs can be used to target or monitor certain groups or communities based on race, ethnicity, religion or political affiliation.
- False positives: ALPRs can potentially misidentify drivers or vehicles, leading to wrongful arrests, over-policing or harassment.
- Lack of transparency and accountability: ALPRs can operate without the knowledge or consent of the public, creating a hidden and unregulated surveillance system.²⁷

²⁵ <https://ncric.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/California-Law-Enforcement-ALPR-FAQ.pdf>.

²⁶ Rachel Myrow, "California Cities Double Down on License-Plate Readers as Federal Surveillance Grows," *KQED* (January 6, 2026). <https://www.kqed.org/news/12066989/california-cities-double-down-on-license-plate-readers-as-federal-surveillance-grows>.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Some media have reported that ALPR databases are feeding a federal surveillance system used by the Trump administration against immigrants and other persons.²⁸ The Los Angeles Board of Supervisors (BOS) passed in September 2025 a motion directing the LASD to conduct yearly privacy training for deputies with access to ALPRs and not use the data for non-criminal immigration enforcement.²⁹

Several local governments recently raised concerns about ALPRs in their jurisdictions. The West Hollywood City Council, in February 2026, considered shutting off ALPRs and ending its contract with its vendor Flock Safety.³⁰

The South Pasadena City Council, in February 2026, heard speakers and council members voice concerns about its vendor Flock Safety. The City of South Pasadena currently operates 27 fixed ALPR cameras—13 funded by the general fund in 2022 and 14 added in 2024 via an Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant.³¹

In neighboring Ventura County, an audit of Flock Safety found that the company inadvertently shared data with out-of-state law enforcement agencies, including federal agents. As a result, “the Sheriff's Office said that it will explore alternative vendors for automatic license plate readers”³²

²⁸ <https://calmatters.org/economy/technology/2025/10/los-angeles-license-plate-reader-reform/>

²⁹ https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/bc/1199754_ALPRReportBack.pdf

³⁰ Rance Collins, “WeHo considers turning off license plate cameras,” *Beverly Press-Park LaBrea News* (February 4, 2026). <https://beverlypress.com/2026/02/weho-considers-turning-off-license-plate-cameras/>

³¹ “City Council Meeting February 18 | Council Debated Flock Safety ALPR Cameras & Waived SPEF Parti Gras Fees,” *The South Pasadenan* (February 20, 2026). <https://southpasadenan.com/city-council-meeting-february-18-council-debated-flock-safety-alpr-cameras-waived-spef-parti-gras-fees/>.

³² Matthew Rodriguez, “Flock license plate readers shared data with out-of-state agencies, Ventura County audit finds,” *CBS News*, February 27, 2026. <https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/flock-license-plate-readers-shared-data-with-out-of-state-federal-agencies/>.

Technology #2. Drones (Unmanned Aerial Vehicles - UAVs)

Approximately 1,500 LEAs in the United States are using drones as “eyes in the skies.”³³ Drones’ aerial surveillance capabilities allow officers to access situations from a safe distance and gather intelligence in real time. Drones were first developed for use by the military, with some of the earliest drones being airplanes with bolted-on radio controls.³⁴

The development of computerization, miniaturization and GPS technologies led to the types of drones used today. Police drones can deploy a variety of payloads such as cameras, thermal sensors, loudspeakers and spotlights or beacons. LEAs use drones for a variety of purposes including:

- Drones as First Responder (DFR). DFR programs act as “force multipliers,” meaning that when responding to a 911 call, drones help officers assess a situation before they arrive, providing valuable information about when and where to deploy.
- Search and Rescue. Drones can arrive on a scene quickly, hover over a search area, and provide high quality photographs and videos. They also help and coordinate information with searchers. Drones with thermal sensors can spot the heat from a body lying on the ground. Drones with a camera can search for clues at the scene of a disappearance.

³³ https://www.motorolasolutions.com/en_us/blog/police-drones#:~:text=Once%20a%20niche%20tool%2C%20drone,enforcement%20agencies%20operate%20drone%20programs.

³⁴ Matthew N. O. Sadiku, Paul A. Adekunle and Janet O. Sadiku. “Emerging Technologies in Law Enforcement”. *International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development*, Volume 9 Issue-4, (August 2025), pp. 160-171; www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd97209.pdf.

- Accident and Crime Scene Reconstruction. Drones can capture hundreds of photos in a single flight and quickly obtain more evidence than conventional methods. Drones capture crime scenes in a third of the time of traditional methods and can also create three-dimensional models that can be accessed later for review.³⁵

LEAs' use of drones is opposed by some people. A bit of history: the LAPD was gifted in 2014 with two DragonFlyer X6 drones from the city of Seattle, where they had been rejected after intense pressure from the community.³⁶ The "Stop LAPD Spying Coalition" and the "Drone-Free LAPD/No Drones, LA! Campaign" then issued "The Drone Report." This Report argued that drones posed a serious threat to and cost to public resources, public safety and the mental and physical health of communities, particularly targeted ones.³⁷

³⁵ https://www.motorolasolutions.com/en_us/blog/police-drones#:~:text=Once%20a%20niche%20tool%2C%20drone,enforcement%20agencies%20operate%20drone%20programs. Also interviews with LASD officials on November 20, 2025.

³⁶ <https://www.kqed.org/news/11610663/lapd-using-drones-the-police-commission-is-considering-it>.

³⁷ "The Drone Report" (December 8, 2015). <https://stoplapdspying.org/the-drone-report/>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

Technology #3. Real Time Crime Centers (RTCCs)

RTCCs receive data from stationary cameras, body-worn cameras, automated license plate readers, drones and facial recognition programs. Depending on the community's needs and desires, camera feeds also can include data from cameras located at businesses and private residences.³⁸

RTCCs use computers with access to 1) the LEA's computer-aided dispatch system, 2) the record management system, and usually 911 call centers. Access to the CAD system allows officers to be actively involved with a case in "real time" before arriving at a crime scene. RTCCs can process data initially by AI algorithms, which is then screened by trained civilian staff, before being finalized by sworn officers.³⁹

The benefits of RTCCs are said to include: 1) more timely responses and investigations, 2) faster and more effective decisions, 3) a central repository for investigative data, 4) improved officer safety, and 5) partnerships with public agencies, businesses and residents.⁴⁰

To gain public trust, RTCCs should involve stakeholders from the beginning and have transparent policies regarding the RTCC's purpose, operational procedures, chain of command, and how the data is stored and used.⁴¹

³⁸ "The Mission of a Real Time Crime Center.":

<https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/RealTimeCrimeCenterinformation.pdf>

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See "Evaluating the Use of Public Surveillance Cameras for Crime Control and Prevention," *The Urban Institute, Justice Policy Center* (2011). <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412403-Evaluating-the-Use-of-Public-Surveillance-Cameras-for-Crime-Control-and-Prevention.PDF>.

⁴¹ <https://law.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Emerging-Police-Technology-A-Policy-Toolkit.pdf>.

Several local LEAs have or soon will have RTCCs. LASD has created its first “Real Time Watch Center.” LAPD intends to set up an RTCC in each of its 21 divisions. The police departments of Pasadena and Long Beach are planning their RTCCs. The Beverly Hills Police Department has a highly developed one.⁴²

Technology #4. Facial Recognition (FR)

Facial recognition is the automated searching of a facial image in a biometric database, typically resulting in a group of facial images ranked by a computer-evaluated similarity - also known as a “candidate list.” The use of FR has led to many concerns, including privacy issues and high rates of inaccuracy.⁴³

Software manufacturers have sought to address these complaints, particularly regarding darker complexioned individuals. Manufacturers have worked to improve their algorithms by using Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN). CNNs are a type of deep learning model designed for processing structured grid data, such as images, by automatically learning spatial patterns through layers of filters. CNNs can detect features such as edges, textures, and objects, reducing the need for manual feature identification.⁴⁴

While the use of CNNs addresses the inaccuracy issue, serious privacy concerns remain. The ACLU is particularly vigilant in this area, opposing Assembly Bill (AB) 2261 (2020), which died in Chamber.⁴⁵ The Bill’s author

⁴² Site visits and interviews with officials from the LASD, LAPD, Pasadena, Long Beach and Beverly Hills Police Departments.

⁴³ <https://www.nist.gov/news-events/news/2018/11/nist-evaluation-shows-advance-face-recognition-software-capabilities>.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ <https://statescoop.com/facial-recognition-bill-falls-flat-in-california-legislature/> The ACLU said “AB 2261 would have allowed companies to use face scans to deny people jobs, financial services, health care, and even basic necessities. Troublingly, it would also permit companies to sell face recognition technology to law enforcement even when they know their tech to be flawed and racially biased.” <https://www.aclunorcal.org/legislation/facial-recognition-technology-ab-2261/>, Accessed April 3,2026.

had said AB 2261 was “the long overdue solution to regulate the use of facial recognition technology by commercial, state and local public entities.”⁴⁶

Investigators match candidates found by FR to individuals found in the Los Angeles County Regional Identification System (LACRIS). LACRIS is maintained by the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department and is responsible for the identification of all criminals arrested in the County.⁴⁷

METHODOLOGY

We researched the field of emerging technologies and their use in various law enforcement agencies in the County. We reviewed the Sheriff’s Civilian Oversight Commission’s minutes and reports, the LAPD’s Comprehensive Technology Reports (CTRs), and extensive literature about law enforcement technologies. We interviewed officials and representatives from the following LEAs and groups:

- The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department (LASD)
- The Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC)
- The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and Board of Police Commissioners (BPOC)
- The Long Beach Police Department (LBPD) and Office of Police Oversight (OPO)
- The Pasadena Police Department (PPD)
- The Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD)
- The South Gate Police Department (SGPD)

⁴⁶ Ed Chau, “Facial recognition regulation: AB 2261 is a long overdue solution,” *CalMatters* (June 2, 2020). <https://calmatters.org/politics/2020/06/facial-recognition-regulation-ab-2261-is-a-long-overdue-solution/>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

⁴⁷ <https://www.lacris.org/>

- The Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority (LA Metro)
- The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

DISCUSSION

We focus on the seven law enforcement agencies in the County named in our methodology: LASD, LAPD, LBPB, PPD, BHPD, SGPD and LA Metro. Los Angeles County has over 45 city police departments. We include in Appendix II a list of these departments to show the great variety of sizes and ratios of residents per sworn officer for these LEAs.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD)

LASD is the largest Sheriff's Department in the United States, with a \$4 billion budget and approximately 17,000 positions. It provides law enforcement services for 42 contract cities and 140 unincorporated communities, covering 4,084 square miles.⁴⁸

Oversight. Civilian oversight is a huge issue for LASD. LASD is subject to oversight from multiple entities, including the Civilian Oversight Commission (COC),⁴⁹ the Office of the Inspector General (OIG),⁵⁰ outside monitors of lawsuits and settlement agreements, the Sybil Brand Commission,⁵¹ and the

⁴⁸ <https://www.la101.guide/sheriff> Also https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/lac/1206154_ByDepartmentBasicBudgetFacts2026-27.pdf

⁴⁹ <https://coc.lacounty.gov/what-we-do/>

⁵⁰ <https://oig.lacounty.gov/>

⁵¹ <https://sbc.lacounty.gov/>

federal courts. The Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP) is tasked with enhancing internal accountability and procedures.⁵²

The County created in 2016 its first civilian oversight body, the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, with powers to investigate complaints against the Sheriff and subpoena witnesses to give live testimony under oath. The COC’s mission is to provide “robust opportunities for community engagement, ongoing analysis and oversight of the department's policies, practices, procedures, and advice to the Board of Supervisors, the Sheriff's Department and the public.”⁵³

The Commission members are all adults who come from diverse backgrounds, and include community and faith leaders, a retired Sheriff's Department Lieutenant, executives from nonprofit organizations, and attorneys with a broad range of experiences.⁵⁴

The COC receives from time-to-time reports from LASD and the OIG about emerging technologies. At two recent COC meetings, there were discussions of drones and ALPRs, and a formal motion was passed.⁵⁵

October 23, 2025	“Technology Ad Hoc Committee – Update on the review of various documents relating to LASD’s Draft Drone Policy and other areas of technology deemed relevant...”
March 19, 2026	“Motion to approve assigning the ALPR topic to the Technology Ad Hoc Committee to plan and coordinate a community forum in fulfillment of the Board of Supervisors motion dated September 16, 2025, titled “Safeguarding Automated License Plate Readers (ALPR) Data to Restore Community Trust and Prevent Improper Civil Immigration Enforcement.”

⁵² <https://lasd.org/sheriff-luna-creates-office-of-constitutional-policing/>

⁵³ <https://coc.lacounty.gov/>.

⁵⁴ <https://coc.lacounty.gov/who-we-are/>

⁵⁵ <https://coc.lacounty.gov/commission-meetings>.

The COC, along with the OIG and the Sybil Brand Commission, are facing the possibility of downsizing or sunseting by the Board of Supervisors.⁵⁶

LACRIS. LASD maintains the Los Angeles County Regional Identification System. This is a law enforcement database that provides to other LEAs biometric identification services, including facial recognition, fingerprinting, and iris scanning. LACRIS purchases, installs, and maintains equipment, such as Livescan machines, mobile fingerprint devices, and facial recognition systems—for 64 law enforcement agencies and over 150 locations throughout Los Angeles County.⁵⁷

LACRIS uses FR technology to search through the database of known individuals in seconds to find potential leads. LASD officials emphasize that FR is not a form of positive identification and is used only to develop investigative leads. LACRIS sworn staff teach an 8-hour California Peace Officer Standardized Training (POST) certified course that meets FBI requirements for FR training.⁵⁸

RTCC – RTWC. LASD opened its first Real-Time Watch Center (RTWC) on September 27, 2024, at the Malibu/Lost Hills Sheriff’s Station.⁵⁹ This is a pilot program utilizing live-streamed, private, and public security cameras to enhance emergency response and crime prevention. When Civil Grand Jurors visited this station, we noted the RTWC is designed to display cameras when

⁵⁶ “Ten Years of Failed Law Enforcement Oversight in Los Angeles County,” Loyola Marymount University, *Policing Los Angeles Forum* (November 7, 2025).
<https://www.lmsu.edu/policing/tenyearsoffailedlawenforcementoversightinlosangelescounty/#:~:text=In%202015%2C%20the%20County%20inaugurated,give%20live%20testimony%20under%20oath>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

⁵⁷ <https://www.lacris.org/>.

⁵⁸ Interview with LASD officials on October 21, 2025.

⁵⁹ <https://malibutimes.com/sheriff-robert-luna-and-malibu-lost-hills-sheriffs-station-unveil-their-new-real-time-watch-center>.

triggered by motion detectors, ensuring a fast response and not needing constant surveillance.⁶⁰

LASD officials said this RTWC is one of the first privately funded crime watch centers in the nation, with over \$500,000 raised from private sources. Participating individuals, businesses, schools, cities and religious institutions can give the sheriff's station access to their public-facing cameras and have them integrated with the RTWC's platform. The RTWC also has access to livestreams to keep tabs on potential wildfire activity throughout the Santa Monica Mountains.⁶¹

Residents who register their home cameras can now integrate their cameras with the RTWC by purchasing an Axon Fusus-CORE device, with no subscription fee. Both LASD and Axon Fusus policies require the camera owner to give explicit written permission to access cameras for any reason.⁶²

ALPRs. LASD's Advanced Surveillance and Protection (ASAP) Unit is responsible for its ALPR systems. As of late 2025, the OIG said LASD operated approximately 1,200 fixed cameras, the majority located in contract cities. The fixed ALPRs use direct power from a power pole. Solar ALPRs can be attached anywhere. Some ALPRs are also mounted on moveable trailers. In addition, up to 90 out of 2,800 patrol cars are equipped with mobile ALPR cameras, each costing about \$25,000.⁶³

⁶⁰ Visit by CGJ members on September 5, 2025.

⁶¹ Interview with LASD officials on November 26, 2025.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Interview with LASD officials on November 21, 2025.



LASD patrol vehicle with an ALPR

The OIG published on August 26, 2025, and February 26, 2026, two reports entitled "Reform and Oversight Efforts: Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department,"⁶⁴ both of which discussed LASD's ALPR policies. The reports discussed: 1) data access, 2) data sharing, 3) data retention.

1. Data access. The OIG noted LASD's ALPR Privacy Policy directs employees on how to "handle, operate and manage"⁶⁵ ALPR data, which "shall be available only to authorized users for legitimate law enforcement purposes."⁶⁶
2. Data sharing. The OIG noted LASD's "ALPR Inter-Agency Sharing Agreement [complies] with SB 34 [which] prohibits the sharing of ALPR information with federal authorities, out-of-state agencies and private entities."⁶⁷
3. Data retention. LASD original policy was to retain ALPR data for five years.⁶⁸ The OIG said, "accepting the Board's directive to reduce the

⁶⁴ <https://oig.lacounty.gov/publications/publications-sheriffs>.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Interview with LASD officials on November 21, 2025.

retention period of these stored images, the Sheriff’s Department settled on a two-year period; the same retention period as LAPD.”⁶⁹

Drones (also called Unmanned Aircraft System– UAS). The CGJ Committee interviewed LASD officials and obtained important information about LASD’s use of drones. LASD drones are operated by the Special Enforcement Bureau (SEB - equivalent to SWAT “Special Weapons and Tactics”). LASD primarily uses drones for search and rescue, suspicious activity and critical incidents. LASD does not yet use drones as first responders but is planning to do so.⁷⁰

LASD uses three types of drones, all supplied by one vendor, DJI.⁷¹

Matrix	Requires two operators and is used for search and rescue situations. It can fly for up to 50 minutes and features an all-new video transmission system and control experience. One limitation is that it is not maneuverable enough to fly under the tree line. The Matrix was used after the Eaton fire and took 10,000 photos.
Mavic 3T	A smaller version of the Matrix drone. It is used in similar situations but is more maneuverable in tighter places.
Avata	A small drone designed for indoor use. Its propellers are protected by plastic rings, so it can bounce off walls.

LASD officials said its current UAS program has these limitations:

- Drones are deployed solely for critical incidents: fires, suspicious activity, bomb threats, barricades, etc.
- Drones are under-utilized for routine or priority calls.
- Field deputies cannot deploy drones directly.

⁶⁹ Office of the Inspector General, “Reform and Oversight Efforts: Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department, October Through December 2025.” (issued February 26, 2026).

⁷⁰ Document received and interview with LASD officials on November 20, 2025.

⁷¹ As of December 23, 2025, the U.S. Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has effectively banned new drones from Chinese manufacturer DJI by prohibiting new equipment authorizations. This action, citing national security concerns over data surveillance, restricts future DJI models but does not immediately ground or prohibit the sale of existing, already authorized drones. <https://uavcoach.com/dji-ban/>, Accessed April 3, 2026.

- Drone deployment is delayed due to centralized control by SEB.

LASD is in the process of revising its policy to allow drones to be used as first responders by patrol stations and specialized units.⁷² The new policy will establish a UAS Administrative Unit focused on compliance with laws and policies, and reporting usage to oversight bodies and the public website. LASD's new policy will enhance transparency in these ways:

- A LASD station must implement a community outreach plan before using UAS.
- The UAS Operations Unit shall maintain a dashboard on LASD's website to include "information on all UAS deployments except for those related to investigations."⁷³
- "The Department will provide the Civilian Oversight Commission with an annual report summarizing UAS usage."⁷⁴

Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)

LAPD employs over 8,000 sworn officers and 3,000 civilian staff. The five-member Board of Police Commissioners (BOPC) functions like a corporate board of directors and works with the Chief of Police. There are five civilian members appointed by the Mayor, all adults, who set policies and oversee LAPD's operations.⁷⁵ The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for LAPD is an independent entity, established through a voter-approved amendment to the Los Angeles City Charter in 1995, to provide civilian oversight of the department.⁷⁶

⁷² Interview with LAPD officials and PowerPoint document received on November 21, 2025.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ <https://www.lapdonline.org/police-commission/>.

⁷⁶ <https://www.lapdonline.org/police-commission/office-of-the-inspector-general/>.

Oversight. LAPD has strong oversight and transparency procedures. The Department’s Manual (Section I/140/15) mandates an Annual Comprehensive Technology Report (CTR). The most recent CTR of May 16, 2025, said “the following technologies have specific Department policies governing their use”⁷⁷ and require periodic audits:

- Automated License Plate Reader systems
- Photo Comparison Technology
- Small Unmanned Aerial Systems [drones]

Donations. LAPD officials claim that “we are way behind in emerging technologies.”⁷⁸ LAPD gets some technology funding from the federal UASI program and other federal grants. It also gets donations from the Los Angeles Police Foundation (LAPF) and business improvement districts.

For example, the Cheviot Hills Neighborhood Association raised over \$200,000 for the Police Foundation (LAPF) to enable LAPD to purchase ALPRs. An *LA Times* article cited unnamed sources, saying an LAPD Deputy Chief believed the LAPF had overstepped its bounds with this donation. The Deputy Chief allegedly objected to the limitations on where the cameras could be used, and that the Foundation pushed to buy the ALPRs from a specific contractor, Flock Safety.⁷⁹

LAPD officials said donations do not always cover the maintenance cost of these technologies, which must be borne by LAPD’s operating budget.

⁷⁷ LAPD, “Comprehensive Technology Report,” completed by Information Technology Bureau, May 16, 2025.

⁷⁸ Interview with LAPD officials on December 15, 2025.

⁷⁹ Libor Jany, “A rich L.A. neighborhood donated surveillance technology to the LAPD — then drama ensued,” *Los Angeles Times* (April 10, 2025). <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-04-10/cheviot-hills-license-plate-readers-lapd>.

Furthermore, donations from private groups may have restrictions (“strings attached”) on where the technology is to be employed.

RTCC. LAPD officials said it does not have a robust Closed Circuit TV network. LAPD currently operates about 100 of its own cameras. LAPD plans to locate an RTCC at its downtown headquarters. This would improve officer deployment and be more effective than roving “cops on the map.” LAPD would like an RTCC in each of its 21 community stations (divisions) ⁸⁰

We learned a reason for the planned RTCC is the problem of “data silos,” meaning that the LAPD cannot easily access cameras and systems operated by public agencies, private businesses and individuals. Among other agencies mentioned specifically were those of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power (LADWP) and the Bureau of Street Services. ⁸¹

Drones. LAPD currently operates about ten drones in three locations. ⁸² The BOPC recently approved a \$2.1 million donation to expand LAPD’s “Drone as First Responder” pilot program. These drones will have high-definition cameras and thermal imaging to reach emergency scenes before ground units, allowing officers to gain real-time situational awareness. ⁸³

The donation will cover a three-year contract with Skydio Inc. for equipment, warranty coverage and service. ⁸⁴ LAPD intends to install 23 drone docking

⁸⁰ The LAPD would ultimately like a European style “smart city technology.” Also mentioned favorably was the “Connect Atlanta” program that integrates private cameras into a public system.

⁸¹ Interview with Los Angeles City official on January 14, 2026.

⁸² Some LAPD funding for drones comes from the State SB 154 Organized Retail Theft Prevention Grant Program.

⁸³ Interview with LAPD officials on December 15, 2025.

⁸⁴ <https://lapd.com/article/lapd-receives-21-million-donation-expand-drone-program-creates-website-track-use-0>, Accessed April 1, 2026.

stations in eight divisions. LAPD has created a website that logs every time a drone is used and provides the drone's flight path.⁸⁵

ALPRs. LAPD currently has ALPRs on approximately 1,500 police vehicles and 300 on poles on City-owned properties. It retains ALPR data for two years for "active searches," and an additional three years for ongoing investigations. All data is purged after five years.⁸⁶ Special Order No. 31 (December 2020) established the Department's procedure for "Automated License Plate Recognition Usage and Privacy Policy."⁸⁷

In March 2026, LAPD's relationship with a leading ALPR vendor, Flock Safety, came under scrutiny from the BPOC.⁸⁸ Flock Safety is the nation's largest provider of automated digital license plate readers, and has aggressively marketed its services to LEAs, homeowners' associations and businesses.⁸⁹

LAPD wrote a memorandum accompanying its 2023 Annual Comprehensive Technology Report, saying: "On July 11, 2023, the Department and Flock Safety signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in which Flock Safety agreed to provide its ALPR data to the Department for investigative purposes, consistent with the Department's policies and the law."⁹⁰ We do not know whether this MOU is still in effect. The BPOC has ordered a study

⁸⁵ Interview with LAPD officials on December 15, 2025.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ https://lapdonlinestrgeacc.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/lapdonlinemedia/2022/09/SO_31_2020_AUTOMATED_LICENSE_PLATE_RECOGNITION_USAGE.pdf

⁸⁸ Libor Jany, "LAPD's relationship with Flock Safety under scrutiny from oversight body," *Los Angeles Times* (March 3, 2026). <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-03-03/lapd-flock-safety-police-commission>

⁸⁹ <https://www.aclu.org/news/privacy-technology/flock-roundup#:~:text=The%20cloud%20Automatic%20License%20Plate,out%20for%20several%20years%20now.>

⁹⁰ Memorandum of January 11, 2024, to accompany LAPD's 2023 Comprehensive Technology Report.

of LAPD's use of ALPRs and relationship with Flock Safety - expected summer 2026.⁹¹

Long Beach Police Department (LBPD)

LBPD is the second largest municipal LEA in the County and provides law enforcement services to approximately 466,000 residents.⁹² Its Strategic LBPD Initiatives Bureau includes the Office of Constitutional Policing (OCP), responsible for addressing community-public safety concerns and current policies, procedures and training, but not technologies specifically.⁹³

Oversight. The City of Long Beach has a hybrid model of oversight, using an auditor/monitor focused system. The previous Citizen Police Complaint Commission (CPC) was transformed in 2023 into an independent Office of Police Oversight (OPO) and a seven-member civilian Police Oversight Commission (POC), under voter-approved Measure E.⁹⁴ The civilian POC commissioners, all adults, will have increased access to police files, help craft auditing priorities, and go into communities to learn the concerns of the public.⁹⁵

The OPO's new role is "to audit investigations completed by the Long Beach Police Department's (LBPD) Internal Affairs Division (IAD) for timeliness, thoroughness, and quality; review IAD's intake of complaints to ensure appropriate allegations are included in IAD's investigations; prepare annual

⁹¹ Libor Jany, "Surveillance company Flock generates controversy — and a roster of L.A. clients," *Los Angeles Times* (March 1, 2026). <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-03-01/surveillance-company-flock-safety-los-angeles>

⁹² <https://www.longbeach.gov/police/>.

⁹³ Interview with Long Beach PD officials on February 5, 2026.

⁹⁴ <https://www.longbeach.gov/policeoversight>.

⁹⁵ <https://www.longbeach.gov/policeoversight/about-us/cpc-to-opo-transition/>.

reports with a focus on statistical trends and special reports and provide such reports to the Police Oversight Commission (POC) and City Council.”⁹⁶

The OPO, however, has not fully turned its attention to emerging LEA technologies, saying “we don’t yet have a structure in place to review police technology.” One OPO concern is that officers had been arbitrarily turning their body cameras on and off. The OPO is reviewing LBPDP vendor contracts following concerns about vendors not allowing access to their algorithms. ⁹⁷

Facial Recognition. LBPDP accesses the LACRIS system to identify suspects. LBPDP investigators are trained in the LACRIS system, and accountability is an important part of the log-in process.⁹⁸ LBPDP has a specific policy that holds employees accountable for proper FR use only in criminal investigations. One policy requirement is that two people must verify a lead before accessing the database. LBPDP officials explained the use of FR was like traditional “mug shot” technology whereby police took a photographic portrait of a person under arrest from the shoulders up.⁹⁹

RTCC and Drones. LBPDP is in the process of establishing a Real Time Crime Center. The Long Beach Community Camera Partnership (CCP) program currently allows businesses and residents to share their security camera feeds with the LBPDP, providing police with direct or archived access to monitor specific areas. Once the RTCC is established, the private CCP cameras will be incorporated into the system. The RTCC will be staffed by reallocating eight officers needing light-duty assignments.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Interview with OPO officials on February 5, 2026.

⁹⁸ Interview with LBPDP officials on November 25, 2025.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

LBPD currently has five drones and uses them for two main purposes: 1) to search indoors for potential threats, and 2) to monitor a crowd, looking for possible trouble, and 3) sending officers towards the possible trouble spot. LBPD drones are not yet used as “first responders.”¹⁰¹

ALPRs. LBPD uses an increasing number of ALPRs, including vehicle-mounted ALPRs and trailers with ALPR camera systems. LBPD has retained the ALPR data for two years. LBPD says it has been using ALPR technology for nearly 20 years, and Councilmembers have defended the need for this surveillance technology, citing high crime rates and public safety.¹⁰²

Some members of the community have vigorously opposed LBPD’s use of ALPRs. Groups like the Anti-Surveillance Coalition of Long Beach say LBPD cannot be trusted with surveillance technology.¹⁰³ At one point the Long Beach Equity and Human Relations Commission voted to ban the use of ALPR technology and to delete all existing data gathered from them.¹⁰⁴

Digital Rights Platform. The Long Beach Department of Technology and Innovation has created a Digital Rights Platform (DRP).¹⁰⁵ The DRP is a city webpage that describes the City’s “Smart City” technologies and data collection practices, such as Public Wi-Fi, the Integrated Library System, Traffic and Security Cameras, and ALPRs. The DRP describes but does not

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Shay Sharan, “Long Beach City Council Dismisses Public Demand to Curb Surveillance Network Expansion,” *For The Org*, (February 9, 2023). <https://forthe.org/journalism/lbpd-to-expand-alpr-systems/>

¹⁰⁴ Kristen Farrah Naheen “Long Beach police gets approval for \$1.2 million purchase of new license plate recognition technology,” *Signal Tribune* (February 8, 2025). <https://sigtrib.com/long-beach-police-gets-approval-for-1-2-million-purchase-of-new-license-plate-recognition-technology/>.

¹⁰⁵ <https://longbeach.gov/smartcity/projects/digital-rights-platform/>.

provide detailed information about LBPD’s use of technologies such as ALPRs and drones.¹⁰⁶

Pasadena Police Department (PPD)

PPD has 220 sworn officers, over 100 civilian employees, and serves a population of 130,000. PPD also provides services for the Pasadena Unified School District and patrols notable events, such as the Rose Bowl and the Tournament of Roses Parade.¹⁰⁷

Oversight. Pasadena has three levels of oversight, providing overall good civilian review of PPD: 1) The Public Safety Committee of the City Council, 2) the Independent Police Auditor (IPA), who serves as a best practices advisor and reviews all uses of force, and 3) the Community Police Oversight Commission (CPOC), with eleven adult members, has as its purpose to enhance community-police relations.¹⁰⁸

The CPOC is creating a Work Plan to give residents a voice in police technology decisions before equipment is purchased. The Plan will directly address community concerns about surveillance technologies.¹⁰⁹ The goal is to provide a transparent process and platform for the community to understand and provide feedback on policies related to new technologies.

¹⁰⁶ <https://longbeach.gov/smartycity/>.

¹⁰⁷ https://pusd.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=15&clip_id=160&meta_id=23874#:~:text=Incidents%20involving%20allegations%20of%20criminal,the%20PPD%20Chief%20of%20Police:

¹⁰⁸ Interviews with PPD officials on November 13, 2025.

¹⁰⁹ “Updated Annual Work Plan Goes Before Police Commission,” *Pasadena Now* (March 9, 2026). <https://pasadenanow.com/main/updated-annual-work-plan-goes-before-police-commission>.

RTCC and ALPRs. PPD believes it lies in the middle of LEAs adopting emerging technologies. It is creating its new RTCC, estimated to cost \$5 million, to be located as part of the existing dispatch center. PPD has ALPRs at major intersections and plans to have more.¹¹⁰

Drones. PPD has a “SWAT” drone and drones launched from police cars when there is a barricaded suspect or a kidnap/hostage situation. The CPOC is preparing a comprehensive set of priorities to set future policy governing drone use.¹¹¹ To test this new process, the commission has selected traffic reconstruction drones — a technology PPD is anticipated to acquire — as a pilot case.¹¹² PPD also has special 3-D cameras used to reconstruct traffic/rail collisions and document crime scenes.¹¹³

Other technologies: Helicopters. We learned PPD has five helicopters used for patrols (two owned and three loaned). PPD is in the process of buying new ones with the ability to broadcast livestream to the ground (video downlink). This technology was tested during the “No Kings” protests in 2025. Helicopters are considered military-style equipment. AB 481 requires LEAs to inform the public of any new military-style equipment 30 days prior to purchase/use and hold public hearings, which PPD does.¹¹⁴

Shot-Spotters. We learned about PPD’s “ShotSpotter” technology - a detection system that uses acoustic sensors and machine algorithms to triangulate the location of a gunshot within 60 seconds. PPD says it is the first LEA in the County to use this technology, which is controversial in some

¹¹⁰ Interviews with PPD officials on November 13, 2025.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/commissions/community-police-oversight-commission/past-agendas/>

¹¹³ Interviews with PPD officials on November 13, 2025.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

places such as Chicago.¹¹⁵ The sensors can cover 3.5 square miles. PPD says it has the community's support, and gunshot homicides have gone down.¹¹⁶

Cell-Site Simulators. Also known as "Stingrays" or "Triggerfish," these technologies are truck-mounted surveillance devices used to track cell phones and intercept data by mimicking cell towers. PPD says it is one of three LEAs in the County using these tools. They force nearby phones to connect, revealing unique identifiers and precise locations. Often used without warrants, this technology sparks privacy concerns.¹¹⁷

Beverly Hills Police Department (BHPD)

Beverly Hills has 32,000 residents and a daytime population of over 100,000.¹¹⁸ It typically hosts large events such as the Golden Globes and the Academy Awards Party. Retail sales are estimated at \$4.5 billion annually, approximately \$125k per capita. Beverly Hills is one of the most desired targets of sophisticated Organized Retail Theft (ORT) in the state.¹¹⁹

BHPD has 154 sworn officers and 4.7 officers per 1,000 residents. Beverly Hills has historically been a technology-driven city. The first ALPR cameras were used in 2006, and the Closed-Circuit TV cameras first used in 2009.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ Thao Nguyen, "Mayor says Chicago will stop using controversial gunshot detection technology this year," *USA Today* (February 14, 2024). <https://yahoo.com/news/mayor-says-chicago-stop-using-041904611.html?fr=syscrp-catchall>.

¹¹⁶ Interviews with PPD officials on November 13, 2025.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Document provided by BHPD officials in interview of October 16, 2025.

¹¹⁹ <https://www.bscc.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/9-Beverly-Hills-Police-Dept.pdf>

¹²⁰ Interview with BHPD officials on October 16, 2025.

BHPD has 2,900 connected cameras – one for every 11 residents – that are monitored 24/7 by Virtual Patrol Officers who monitor all city cameras, ALPRs and drones, providing real-time surveillance. The City’s FY 2025-26 budget¹²¹ shows the City plans to:

1. Continue expanding and enhancing the City’s License Plate Reader (LPR) system.
2. Continue to expand the City’s Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) camera network.
3. Expand the analytical capabilities of the City’s CCTV camera system.
4. Implement a software solution that integrates privately owned camera systems into the City’s network.
5. Continuing to develop and expand the Real Time Watch Center (RTWC).¹²²

Oversight. BHPD’s Policy Manual has well developed transparency policies and procedures.¹²³ The City of Beverly Hills has no BHPD Civilian Oversight Commission. BHPD oversight is provided by the City Council. We were told most residents strongly support LEA technologies and give little pushback. In fact, the City of Beverly Hills has an abundance of voluntary citizen bodies (such as the Architectural & Design Review Commission and the Arts & Culture Commission; and committees, such as the Affordable Housing and the Audit & Finance Committee. ¹²⁴

Real Time Watch Center. BHPD officially launched its RTWC, a monitor-packed policing hub, on June 7, 2022. Prior to then, BHPD determined it

¹²¹ <https://www.beverlyhills.org/DocumentCenter/View/11153/FY-2025-2026-Budget-PDF>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ The BHPD Policy Manual includes Policy 337 – “Public Safety Video Security System” and Policy 427 – “Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR).” The City Administrative Regulations No. 4C.21 addresses the “Closed Circuit Television Video System CCTV.”

¹²⁴ <https://www.beverlyhills.org/1192/Commissions-Committees>.

lacked coordination of the camera feeds from the 2,900 connected cameras and its drones. BHPD received funding for the RTWC from the State's Organized Retail Theft (ORT) Prevention Grant Program. Businesses and homeowners pay annual fees to integrate their security cameras with the RTWC.¹²⁵

All 911 calls feed directly into the RTWC, which is manned by a dozen Virtual Police Officers (VPOs). VPOs are non-sworn civilian employees who receive training in how to respond to 911 calls and other alerts, speeding up patrol response time to under 30 seconds.¹²⁶



ALPRs. BHPD operates over 60 ALPR cameras and plans to obtain another 120 to be placed at key City locations and on its perimeter. The system includes mobile, fixed and portable ALPRs. The ALPRs are leased on a subscription model from three leading vendors: Flock, Vigilant and 3M. The ALPRs do not look up the plates of every car entering the City but are used to detect that they are either stolen or wanted in other crimes. The

¹²⁵ Interview with BHPD officials on October 16, 2025.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

information is shared with neighboring cities because many vehicles pass through the City to other destinations.¹²⁷

Drones. BHPD uses drones as first responders (the DFR program) to provide rapid aerial surveillance and live, high-resolution video to the Real Time Watch Center. The cameras use FLIR thermal imaging technology to see in total darkness. Deployed between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. daily, the drones arrive to incidents before officers, enhancing officer safety and providing situational awareness. Drones are particularly used to provide security for religious buildings such as Jewish synagogues.¹²⁸

The drones are launched from the City's tallest building. Their rapid deployment takes only 60 to 90 seconds. The drones fly below 400 feet, can see 1 to 1.5 miles, and can read license plates from 2,000 feet away. BHPD officials said, "the drone cameras are phenomenal." They also affirmed "we do not look in back yards."¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Interview with BHPD officials on October 5, 2026.

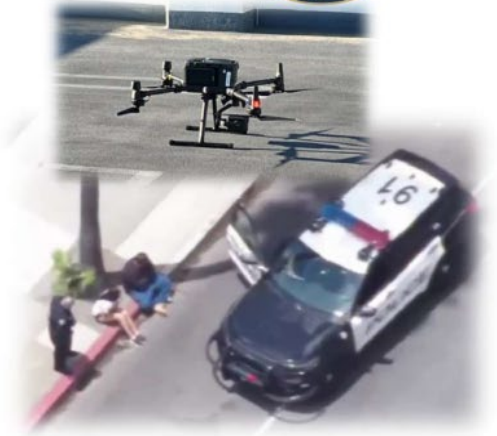
Drone Operations thru October 2025



1 Drone Operator 12 hours a day

- Flights completed: 17,295
- *Virtual First On-scene*: 8,538
- Cleared prior to patrol response: 937
- 'Special Watch' patrols: 8,027
- Officer Requests/Assists: 9,564
- Call response: 13,048
- Completed 122 field deployments thru October 20,

2025. *Flight statistics are from January 2022 to October 20, 2025.



Updated: 10/20/2025

Exhibit provided to the CGJ by the BHPD.

South Gate Police Department (SGPD)

South Gate has a Police Department with over 80 sworn officers who provide services to 98,000 residents, 95% of whom are Hispanic or Latino.¹³⁰ SGPD is the largest part of the City's budget, with 55% of the City's General Fund (\$43.3 million) going for the Police Department. The City of South Gate has an ongoing structural budget gap of approximately \$9 million.¹³¹

¹³⁰ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/southgatecitycalifornia/PST045224>.

¹³¹ <https://www.cityofsouthgate.org/files/sharedassets/public/v/1/government/city-manager/documents/uut/understanding-south-gates-fiscal-challenge-english.pdf>.

Given this budget shortfall, SGPD does not adopt new technologies readily, rather waiting for other LEAs to try out technologies.¹³² SGPD is not high on vendors' lists to sell technologies. SGPD officials said the Department needs a new CAD system. SGPD has no police foundation but engages with the community through several specialized groups, including the South Gate Police Officers Association and the South Gate Police Explorers.¹³³

Oversight. SGPD does not have a dedicated civilian oversight commission. SGPD handles its internal administration, budgetary analysis, and compliance issues through its Internal Administration Division.¹³⁴

SGPD has a Citizen's Academy Program (CAP) that allows residents to be exposed to various aspects of law enforcement through a 6-week course taught by SGPD staff. The curriculum includes topics ranging from Disaster Preparedness, Jail Operations, and Detective Bureau functions to Range Training and Narcotic Investigations.¹³⁵

Traffic Collision technology. SGPD uses the "Crossroads" traffic collision analysis tool. The system provides a wide variety of queries and reports to summarize traffic collisions and citations and produces report listings on any relevant data in collision and citation records. It also uses a "FARO ZONE 3D" laser scanner on tripod mount to reconstruct events, analyze evidence, and create courtroom-ready presentations.¹³⁶

¹³² Interview with SGPD officials on December 15, 2025.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ <https://www.cityofsouthgate.org/Engage-South-Gate/Get-Involved/Police-Safety>.

¹³⁶ Interview with SGPD officials on December 15, 2025.

Drones, ALPRs and other technologies. SGPD has four drones used for basic surveillance, but not yet for Drone First-Responder use. As drones become more common, South Gate residents have not expressed concerns.

SGPD has just five ALPRs located at key intersections. They cost about \$30,000 each, and the maintenance cost is added to future City budgets. SGPD has an ALPR Administrative Directive 16-03 covering the use of ALPRs within its jurisdiction.

SGPD uses “Axon Signal Sensor” (formerly Signal Sidearm), a device that fits into an officer’s holster and wirelessly alerts nearby Axon cameras to begin recording the moment the officer draws the weapon. It also uses Axon’s “Evidence.com,” a cloud-based digital evidence management system.¹³⁷ SGPD has no Shot-Spotter technology, no cell-site simulator technology (Stingray or Triggerfish) and no immediate plans for an RTCC.¹³⁸

Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority

LA Metro’s System Security and Law Enforcement department utilizes a multi-agency contract model for law enforcement services with LAPD, LASD, and Long Beach Police. In May 2025, LA Metro announced appointment of its first-ever police chief, tasked with establishing a dedicated in-house transit police force, with the new department fully operational by 2029.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ <https://www.metro.net/about/la-metro-names-william-bill-scott-as-inaugural-chiefto-lead-new-public-safety-departmentveteran-law-enforcement-leader-to-launch-metros-first-dedicated-police-department-in-decades-advan/#:~:text=The%20Los%20Angeles%20County%20Metropolitan,technology%20systems%2C%20and%20deployment%20strategies.>

Oversight. LA Metro’s existing oversight committee, the Public Safety Advisory Committee (PSAC), was formed in 2020 “to help reimagine public safety across the transit system. PSAC includes a diverse group of riders and professionals with experience in racial justice, mental health, accessibility, housing, law enforcement and social services.” PSAC does not specifically focus on law enforcement technologies.¹⁴⁰

When announcing its plan for a new transit police force, LA Metro said: “We will also establish a **civilian oversight committee** [emphasis added] and a plan to become an accredited law enforcement agency ... by year 5 of operation.”¹⁴¹

Video Analytics. LA Metro officials concede they will never have enough human resources to monitor 31,000 surveillance cameras and 2,000 buses on the system. To help meet this challenge, LA Metro is rapidly adopting the technology of Closed-Circuit TV analytic intelligence software, also known as Video Analytics. LA Metro previously had up to eight different video systems. It now uses Genetec Omnicast™ video management system (VMS), a unified security suite of products developed as one unit.¹⁴²

LA Metro’s video analytics technology analyzes human behavior at key locations, detects threats and immediately raises alerts for criminal activities, such as vandalism, suicide, assault, trespassing, and brandished weapon (knife/gun). It does not use Facial Recognition. It can provide

¹⁴⁰ <https://www.metro.net/about/public-safety-advisory-committee/>.

¹⁴¹ <https://thesource.metro.net/our-transit-community-public-safety-department-tcpsd-implementation-plan-was-just-approved-by-the-metro-board-of-directors-heres-the-lowdown/>.

¹⁴² Interview with LA Metro officials on December 1, 2025.

security incident management for a wide range of issues and concerns shown in the following chart.¹⁴³

Issues and Concerns	
Glass Breakage on Rail System	Vehicle Search by Plate Number and Attribute
Elevator and Wall Graffiti	Video smoke/flames detection
Fare Evasion	Sexual Assault
Rail Platform - Suicide Attempts	Suspect Description - Clothing Attributes
Loitering	Pedestrian Count and Speed
Overdose/Collapse	Radiation Detection
Copper Cable Theft	Gun Shot Detection
Abnormal sudden crowd clustering or Egress	Unattended Bag/Package
Restricted Area Intrusion (aka Trespassing)	Brandishing Weapons(knife/gun)
Tailgating (Doors/Fare Gates)	Entering Secured Room
Door Propped Open	Fighting
Interacting with Secured Equipment	Operator Safety
Security Resource Tracking Based on Uniform & Communication	

Exhibit provided to the CGJ by LA Metro

Weapons Detection. Prompted by violent attacks on Metro's buses and light rail, LA Metro launched, in late 2024, a new safety program to detect concealed weapons. The technology is like that used in amusement parks. Primary screening of passengers takes less than two seconds, while secondary screenings of a passenger's belongings, if flagged, also generally takes less than 15 seconds.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ Document provided to the CGJ by LA Metro. Interview with LA Metro officials on December 1, 2025.

¹⁴⁴ Sahana Patel, "LA Metro rolling out concealed weapons detection pilot at Union Station," *Los Angeles* (October 23, 2024). <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/news/local/los-angeles-metro-rolling-out-concealed-weapons-detection-pilot-union-station/3542691/#:~:text=Prompted%20by%20violent%20attacks%20on,Wednesday%20to%20detect%20concealed%20weapons.>

CONCLUSION

While LEAs face funding challenges, many local LEAs are already using ALPRs and drones, and some are developing RTCCs. These emerging technologies raise questions about the balance of privacy and public safety that can erode public trust in law enforcement. Every LEA should have an oversight structure, such as a Commission or Civilian Oversight Board, that makes the community an equal partner in adopting and using emerging technologies. The Civilian Oversight body at a minimum should:

- Give effective notice that the law enforcement agency is considering a technology.
- Regularly publish the number of various technologies in use, frequency of use, and the data collected.
- Report the efficiencies and positive results regarding the protection of public safety.
- Communicate the LEA's policies regarding technologies, their capabilities and limitations, if any, imposed on their use.

FINDINGS

Finding 9.1

LASD's Civilian Oversight Commission generally focuses on incarceration and officer use-of-force issues but does not regularly review and report on LASD's use of technologies at every meeting.

Finding 9.2

LASD's ALPR system has kept data for two years.

Finding 9.3

The BOS has directed the Sheriff's Civilian Oversight Commission to host at least one multi-lingual forum a year on LASD's ALPR Privacy policies.

Finding 9.4

LAPD sometimes receives donations specifying the technology types and vendors, which restricts LAPD's ability to choose technologies best suited to its needs and mission to serve all residents.

Finding 9.5

LAPD cannot easily access cameras and systems operated by some other public agencies, such as the cameras of the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power and the Bureau of Street Services.

Finding 9.6

The Long Beach Office of Police Oversight does not have a structure in place to review police technology, which provides less than ideal oversight of LEA technology.

Finding 9.7

The Long Beach Digital Rights Platform describes the Long Beach City's "Smart City" technologies and data collection practices but does not provide detailed information about the use of LEA technologies.

Finding 9.8

The Pasadena Community Police Oversight Commission is in the process of creating a Work Plan to directly address community concerns about surveillance technologies but has not yet completed that process.

Finding 9.9

The City of Beverly Hills has many citizen commissions and committees, but oversight of BHPD is provided by the City Council, resulting in less involvement by civilians in BPHD technology oversight.

Finding 9.10

The South Gate Police Department has no civilian oversight commission and handles compliance through its Internal Administration Division, resulting in less involvement by civilians in SGPD technology oversight.

Finding 9.11

LA Metro plans to establish a civilian oversight committee when it launches its new in-house transit police force but has not yet established that oversight body.

Finding 9.12

Civilian oversight commissions have adult members who are interested in law enforcement. These oversight bodies generally do not include young people, like high school students, who are interested in and knowledgeable about technologies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 9.1

LASD's Civilian Oversight Commission should fortify its oversight of technologies by creating a permanent AI, Data Gathering and Drones Committee that reports regularly to the COC.

Recommendation 9.2

LASD should re-examine its ALPR data retention period of two years to determine when stored data provides the most value in crime prevention and investigations.

Recommendation 9.3

The COC should host frequent Town Hall meetings to inform residents about LEA technologies and gain community input.

Recommendation 9.4

LAPD should work with potential donors to encourage technological donations that match LAPD's needs and mission to serve all residents.

Recommendation 9.5

The Mayor of Los Angeles and LAPD should develop policies to facilitate LAPD's access to the cameras of other City departments such as the Los Angeles Department of Water & Power and the Bureau of Street Services when needed.

Recommendation 9.6

The Long Beach Office of Police Oversight should develop a program to proactively oversee LBPD's use of emerging technologies.

Recommendation 9.7

The City of Long Beach should expand its Digital Rights Platform to provide detailed information about the use of LEA technologies, such as drone usage, maps and data.

Recommendation 9.8

The Pasadena Community Police Oversight Commission should complete its Work Plan to directly address community concerns about surveillance technologies, including the shot-spotter and cell-site simulator technologies

Recommendation 9.9

The City of Beverly Hills should develop a civilian oversight commission to augment the City Council's oversight of BHPD's current and planned technologies.

Recommendation 9.10

The City of South Gate should develop a civilian oversight commission to augment the City Council's oversight of SGPD's current and planned technologies.

Recommendation 9.11

LA Metro should proceed to establish a civilian oversight committee in tandem with forming its new in-house transit police force.

Recommendation 9.12

All Law Enforcement Agencies with civilian oversight should actively recruit young people, like high school students, to serve as non-voting members on the civilian oversight body.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made no later than ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court.

All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 County of Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury must be submitted to:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation #
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.12
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department	9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.12
Los Angeles City Mayor	9.4, 9.5, 9.12
Los Angeles City Police Department	9.4, 9.5, 9.12
Long Beach City Mayor	9.6, 9.7, 9.12
Long Beach City Police Department	9.6, 9.7, 9.12
Pasadena City Mayor	9.8, 9.12
Pasadena City Police Department	9.8, 9.12
Beverly Hills City Mayor	9.9, 9.12

Beverly Hills City Police Department	9.9, 9.12
South Gate City Mayor	9.10, 9.12
South Gate City Police Department	9.10, 9.12
Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority	9.11, 9.12

Acronyms

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
AI	Artificial Intelligence
ALPR	Automated License Plate Reader
BHPD	Beverly Hills Police Department
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
CCP	Community Camera Partnership
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CNN	Convolutional Neural Network
COC	Civilian Oversight Commission
CPOC	Community Police Oversight Commission
CTR	Comprehensive Technology Report
DFR	Drones as First Responders
DOJ	Department of Justice
DPR	Digital Rights Platform
EFF	Electronic Frontier Foundation
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FR	Facial Recognition
GPS	Global Positioning System
IAD	Internal Affairs Division
LACRIS	Los Angeles County Regional Identification System
LADWP	Los Angeles Department of Water and Power
LA METRO	Los Angeles Metropolitan Transportation Authority
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LAPF	Los Angeles Police Foundation

LASD	Los Angeles Sheriff Department
LBPD	Long Beach Police Department
LEA	Law Enforcement Agency
OCP	Office of Constitutional Policing
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OPO	Office of Police Oversight
POC	Police Oversight Commission
PPD	Pasadena Police Department
PSAC	Public Safety Advisory Committee
RTCC	Real Time Crime Center
RTWC	Real Time Watch Center
SEB	Special Enforcement Center
SGPD	South Gate Police Department
SWAT	Special Weapons and Tactics
UAS	Unmanned Aircraft System
UASI	Urban Area Security Initiative

Committee Members

James Bukowski, Chair
 Jenalea Smith, Vice Chair
 Michael S. Stefanko

APPENDIX I. The Atlas of Surveillance

The Atlas of Surveillance uses crowdsourcing, data journalism and public records to create a huge repository of information about LEAs' use of technologies.¹⁴⁵ To illustrate how the Atlas works, a search of its database for the City of Long Beach yields the following partial results.¹⁴⁶

Showing data for: Long Beach, CA

Download this dataset
1 - 100 of 197

Sort results by ▾
1 2 [Next](#) [Last](#) »

AGENCY ▾	CITY ▾	COUNTY ▾	STATE ▾	TECHNOLOGY ▾	VENDOR ▾
Long Beach Police Department	Long Beach	Los Angeles County	CA	Real-Time Crime Center	
<p>The Long Beach Police Department's real-time crime center is called the Common Operating Picture. According to LBPB, "With just the click of a computer mouse, the Long Beach Police Department has the capability to access live video of locations throughout the city to be used as a visual aid in the event of a crime."</p> <p>Links: Government information (Long Beach Police Department)</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 5px;">more info</div>					
Long Beach Police Department	Long Beach	Los Angeles County	CA	Face Recognition	
<p>The Long Beach Police Department has used multiple face recognition systems on a trial basis, but is only authorized to use Los Angeles County's LACRIS system.</p> <p>Links: Policy (City of Long Beach) Nonprofit report (CheckLPBD)</p> <div style="text-align: right; margin-top: 5px;">more info</div>					

¹⁴⁵ The Atlas web site says: "We specifically focused on the most pervasive technologies, including drones, body-worn cameras, face recognition, cell-site simulators, automated license plate readers, predictive policing, camera registries, and gunshot detection."

¹⁴⁶ The Atlas is a collaborative effort between the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the University of Nevada, Reno Reynolds School of Journalism. <https://www.atlasofsurveillance.org/about>.

APPENDIX II. L.A. County Municipal Police Departments¹⁴⁷

Department	Sworn Officers	No. of Residents per Officer
Alhambra	84	979
Arcadia	61	919
Azusa	54	921
Baldwin Park	55	1,285
Bell	31	1,076
Beverly Hills	138	232
Burbank	152	696
Claremont	40	933
Covina	55	920
Culver City	105	384
Downey	113	990
El Monte	115	931
El Segundo	61	279
Gardena	83	725
Glendale	236	812
Glendora	50	1,026
Hawthorne	91	944
Hermosa Beach	35	544
Huntington Park	48	1,109
Inglewood	175	609
Irwindale	27	56
La Verne	38	4,596
Long Beach	663	695
Los Angeles	8,820	433
Manhattan Beach	66	517
Monrovia	45	848
Montebello	71	877
Monterey Park	68	873
Palos Verdes Estates	17	766
Pasadena	220	637
Pomona	143	1,063
Redondo Beach	97	704
San Fernando	33	714
San Gabriel	50	771
San Marino	28	441
Santa Fe Springs	34	545
Santa Monica	213	437
Sierra Madre	20	545
Signal Hill	30	382
South Gate	74	1255
South Pasadena	32	821
Torrance	179	801
Vernon	44	5
West Covina	93	1,179
Whittier	130	915

¹⁴⁷ <https://www.laalmanac.com/crime/cr69.php>.

VISION ZERO TRIES, SPEED CULTURE SURVIVES



2025-26

**Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**



Photo 24 Artificial Intelligence (AI) image of a “ghost bicycle” memorializing a bicyclist killed by a reckless driver at this location

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Travel and personal choices are two of the driving forces that have shaped the Los Angeles Basin and created its current metropolitan landscape. This is reflected in road systems designed for individual cars to travel everywhere as quickly as possible. By the turn of the 21st century the human costs of prioritizing speed over safety were becoming increasingly severe, illustrated by the photo of a “ghost bicycle” above. Cycling advocacy groups place “ghost bicycles” at sites where a cyclist was killed by a reckless motorist to remind us of the costs of focusing on speed over safety.

Vision Zero (VZ) is a multi-faceted program that seeks to reduce, if not eliminate, traffic deaths by reforming traffic culture from a focus on speed to

a focus on safety, from being auto centric to “sharing the road.” The VZ program has **four components: education, enforcement, engineering, and evaluations**. Begun in Europe, the VZ program has spread to 47 cities across the United States. In 2015 Mayor Eric Garcetti had the City of Los Angeles become one of those VZ program cities, pledging to reduce traffic deaths to zero by 2025.

In the initial development phase, the Mayor’s Office and the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) shared leadership and guidance over program development. Engineering was emphasized from the beginning with some focus on enforcement and minimal on education and evaluation. Leadership became increasingly centered on the LADOT and by the time the Steering Committee ceased meeting in 2018, the four components of a VZ program had become compressed into **an engineering program with some traffic enforcement**.

Between 2017 and 2025, the LADOT identified areas for improvement projects and completed hundreds of projects yet Killed or Severely Injured (KSI) collisions increased. Two audits were conducted, one commissioned by LADOT and the other by the City Administrative Officer (CAO), and subsequently many recommendations were made.

A review of these documents was followed by a series of interviews with engineering staff, enforcement officers, and staff in the Mayor’s office. These interviews reinforced the view that the VZ program was mainly an **Engineering** program with a secondary traffic enforcement component. **“Evaluations”** were found to focus on determining where and what projects should be conducted, with no true evaluation of the **effectiveness** of completed projects. The **Enforcement** component was found hampered by poor communication between the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD),

LADOT and the Mayor's Office, with funding delays being another problem area. Finally, there was no broad-based **Education** component.

The most important recommendations emanating from our findings concern **Governance**. We propose the Mayor's Office retake leadership of the VZ program and establish a **Program Oversight Committee** with the **goal of developing a full four-component program**. This development will de-emphasize the engineering component, create a better coordinated and consistent enforcement component, and work to develop an extensive, multi-faceted, and fully funded education component.

BACKGROUND

Some Historical Observations

Since the time it changed from the 1781 pueblo to a small city in the early 1900s, the City of Los Angeles developed from the dual concepts of movement and individual freedom. The geography of Los Angeles led to sprawling development. Movement has been expressed through industries such as motion pictures, tourism, and aeronautics (then aerospace), while individual choice was increasingly expressed through an automobile-centric culture. Businesses associated with this culture gained political and cultural influence. These include automotive sales/repairs, contracted road construction, and parking lot/garage construction (with private ownership).

The geographic ability to spread outward allowed for the development of an extensive road system beginning in the 1920s that kept traffic moving smoothly and, at the speeds and volumes of the times, quite safely. A side effect of this was the transformation of transit from a trolley system (the "Red Cars") to a road system. The road system remained geared to

automobiles, leading to mass transit riders being those without automobiles or political influence.¹

By the 1960s, Los Angeles' love affair with cars was well embedded. Freeway expansions, street widening, and traffic flow were paramount to residential development, mass transit be damned.² What had yet to be learned was how deadly that love affair would be for the City's residents.

As the City's population grew throughout the late 20th century, traffic slowed and moved less efficiently, with increasing traffic volumes and driver frustrations. These frustrations appeared to fuel an increase in dangerous driving habits. Increased speeding and distracted driving led to increases in those killed or severely injured on roads designed to expedite rapid travel rather than make travel safer. The introduction of the term "road rage" into our lexicon has come to be understood as an expression of aggressive driving and extreme driver frustration.³

Vision Zero

In 2015, then Mayor Eric Garcetti added the City of Los Angeles to an international program called **Vision Zero**.⁴ The VZ program seeks to reduce the number of persons killed or severely injured in traffic collisions by focusing street improvement projects on safety over speed. The program's goal is to eliminate traffic deaths, and the Mayor set a goal of reducing traffic deaths within the City of Los Angeles to zero by 2025. Funds were

¹ Kenn Bicknell, "Past Visions of Los Angeles' Transportation Future: 1920s". Metro Transportation Research Library and Archive, <https://metroprimaryresources.info/past-visions-of-los-angeles-transportation-future-1920s/>.

² Colin Marshall. "Story of cities #29: Los Angeles and the 'great American streetcar scandal'". *The Guardian*. 25 Apr 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/apr/25/story-cities-los-angeles-great-american-streetcar-scandal#>.

³ "Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education," County of Los Angeles Public Health. http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/bike_ped_safety.htm.

⁴ City of Los Angeles Executive Directive No. 10, Vision Zero, August 24, 2015.

pledged for the four aspects of the VZ program: **education, enforcement, engineering, and evaluation.**

The first two years (2015 and 2016) were involved with planning, via the creation of a Steering Committee that included representatives from the Mayor's office, the Department of Transportation (LADOT), three Bureaus in the Public Works Department (Engineering, Street Services, and Street Lighting), and the LAPD Traffic Coordination Division (TCD). The main planning involved identifying intersections and road corridors having the most KSI collisions. After the planning phase, the Steering Committee eventually ceased to meet (2018) and LADOT became the expected driver of all four VZ project components.⁵

Most of these VZ components were not in their area of expertise. Planning and design staff in the LADOT put together some **educational** materials but given the engineering focus of the LADOT and Public Works Bureaus staff, a broad, public-oriented education component of the VZ program effectively ceased to exist. Some education efforts by LAPD were mentioned in interviews with LAPD TCD.⁶ Some personal education occurs during the one-on-one encounters with traffic violators. There are also some opportunities for officers to speak with civic organizations, school groups, and seniors about pedestrian safety.

It was learned from multiple interviews with LAPD officers that because traffic enforcement was LAPD's area of expertise, organizing the **enforcement** component was left to the LAPD TCD, with little or no coordination with the engineering component. The LAPD used overtime funds to finance the extra enforcement focused beyond traffic violations to the VZ goals of reducing KSI collisions. A small amount of these funds was "carved

⁵ Multiple interviews with LADOT staff, December 1, 2025, February 18, 2026, February 24, 2026

⁶ Interview with LAPD Traffic Coordination Division staff, January 29, 2026.

out” in the Mayor’s budget for VZ, but eventually State grants became the main source of additional overtime funds.⁷

As for an **evaluation** component, LADOT used crash data from 2013 through 2015, to identify High Injury Networks, or HINs, (the 7.5% of the road network that were the sites of 61.8% of KSI collisions). The LADOT staff used those to prioritize the locations for improvement projects. Evaluation, therefore, only consisted of determining the “where” and “what,” but never proceeded to the all-important evaluation aspect of “how effective” the projects were in realizing improvements towards VZ’s goals.⁸

Very basic projects that only involved painting (crosswalks, bikeways and bus-only lanes) were completed by the LADOT. Other projects were mainly designed by the Bureau of Engineering and then constructed by either Street Services or Street Lighting. Some more complex projects involved both Bureaus.⁹

During this period, KSI collisions increased (except for a dip during the COVID-19 pandemic). Media coverage focused on the deaths, which continued to increase to a level where they annually exceeded the deaths by homicide. The largest KSI increases have occurred in collisions involving pedestrians, particularly those with children or older adult victims.¹⁰ Substantial increases occurred in collisions involving individual transport like bicycles and scooters.¹¹ These disturbing upward trends are a significant and

⁷ Interview with LAPD TCD staff, January 29, 2026.

⁸ Vision Zero Safety Study”. Vision Zero Los Angeles | 2015-2025. January 2024. <https://ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/la-vision-zero-safety-study-2024.pdf>.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

growing public health crisis in Los Angeles County with pedestrians and bicyclists disproportionately affected.¹²

LADOT reports on VZ have listed the many projects completed to improve the safety of identified dangerous intersections and road corridors (HINs).¹³ Again, **no evaluation** of the **effectiveness** of any of these projects has ever been reported. It is unclear what type of completed projects have led to a reduction in KSI collisions. A recent article noted that more money is paid out each year to victims than is spent on VZ projects.¹⁴

LADOT conducted a study of projects completed between 2017 and 2021 and produced a report that expanded the identifying criteria for HINs and created a revised list of these areas.¹⁵ In addition, a Safe Systems Approach was used to create 24 “collision profiles” (collision resulting from different sets of factors).¹⁶ The Safe Systems Approach seeks to eliminate KSI collisions by anticipating human errors and managing crash impact forces. The profiles developed were matched with sets of improvement projects. Reports listed the types of projects, but still no analysis of effectiveness of these projects was reported.

One story illustrates the resilience of our speed culture. In 2017, a major transformation occurred in a main artery serving residents, visitors, tourists, and commercial drivers. On a high speed four lane street with ocean vistas, surfers, beach goers, bike riders and airplanes departing LAX overhead, a tragic accident took the life of a young female pedestrian walking above the

¹² “Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education”. County of Los Angeles Public Health.

http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov/place/bike_ped_safety.htm.

¹³ “LADOT Annual Report, January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023”.

<http://Ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/annual-report-year-2023.pdf>.

¹⁴ Michael Schneider. “How many kids must die before L.A. makes streets safer?”. *Los Angeles Times*. August 14, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-08-14/los-angeles-koreatown-street-safety>.

¹⁵ “LADOT Annual Report, January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023”.

<http://Ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/annual-report-year-2023.pdf>.

¹⁶ <https://www.ots.ca.gov/the-safe-system/>.

curb between Playa Del Rey and Manhattan Beach. Commuters, sightseers, vacationers, beach users traverse Vista Del Mar relentlessly. It is an artery connecting the south bay to the entire west side of Los Angeles. It is a four-lane road with some curbside parallel parking, entrances to beach parking lots on the west side, and “back door” access streets to the Los Angeles International Airport on the east side. Its posted speed limit is 40 mph, though to Los Angeles drivers that “reads” as 55-65 mph. The woman was killed by an out-of-control vehicle.¹⁷ It’s what happened next which crystallizes the tragic intersection of Vision Zero and the Speed Culture.

Following the accident, the street was subject to a major redesign by LADOT supported by the City Councilman from the applicable district. It reduced the street to just two lanes and angled in parking along parts of one side. Speed was significantly reduced, yet the improved condition was short-lived.

Commuters were outraged at the disruption of their regular route. Lines to get into the parking lots inconveniently affected beach visitors. Local travelers, thinking they had an insider’s quick access to LAX, were miffed. The Councilman became the focus of a recall campaign, and the City was threatened with litigation over lost business. It grew to such a crescendo that Vision Zero’s initiator, Mayor Eric Garcetti, ordered the changes undone and the road returned to its previous configuration.¹⁸

Thus, we have a prime example: speed kills and yet it survives, at least in Los Angeles. Within three years of initiating VZ, even the Mayor at the time lacked the fortitude to show support for an improvement project. An initial VZ success was soon a resounding defeat, but subsequent events pointed

¹⁷ Rachel Weiner, *et. al.* “America’s plan to protect pedestrians failed. A young woman’s death reveals why.” *The Washington Post*. December 4, 2025. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/interactive/2025/pedestrian-deaths-vision-zero-roads>.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

the way towards success, as a couple of encouraging things happened in 2023.

First, current Mayor Karen Bass directed the LADOT improving the safety of the routes to and from schools, including drop-off and pick-up areas.¹⁹ Improvement projects, she said, should be prioritized for areas where there have been a higher-than-average number of collisions. While comprehensive effectiveness analysis is still being compiled, what is clear from the Mayor's involvement is the resulting energy it infused into direct action and consequent projects completed on the streets of Los Angeles.²⁰

The other significant 2023 event was a comprehensive audit of the VZ program commissioned by the CAO and conducted by the KPMG firm.²¹ This audit followed the 2022 audit commissioned by LADOT that was conducted by Fehr and Peers that listed 57 "actions and strategies" for LADOT to complete. The KPMG audit was a comprehensive review of 13 program areas including governance, project completion, and effectiveness in reducing KSI collisions. It also included a comparison of comparable features in 10 other cities. In December of 2023, KPMG published a 130-page evaluation, which included 37 "improvement opportunities." Interestingly, KPMG did not prioritize the importance of any one individual "opportunity."

In 2024, a LADOT Safety Study Report presented a more detailed analysis of factors that contribute disproportionately to KSI collisions. These profile factors included speeding, traffic volume, non-signalized intersections, lane width, and pedestrian destinations. A review of collision data revised the intersections and road corridors that were designated as HINs. Five collision

¹⁹ ladot.lacity.gov/annual-report-yr-23

²⁰ Interview with LADOT staff, December 1, 2025.

²¹ KPMG LLP. "Vision Zero Program Independent Evaluation Report". December 1, 2023. <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/d3/54/bdc16d7846f1a3ad50e1012a39a8/06240035-cao-dot-vision-zero-program-reportfinalrevised.pdf>.

profiles contained over 500 KSI collisions each, **four involving pedestrians**. Suggested countermeasures included mid-crosswalk islands, signalized intersections, and improved mid-block crossings.²²

The VZ program has been extended to 2035 with the same zero KSI goal, with some interest in modifying elements of the program to increase its positive impact.²³ We hope our recommendations help modify the program to increase its success.

METHODOLOGY

The inquiry began with researching news articles noting the VZ program of the City of Los Angeles had failed to meet its goals. That failure is highlighted by the fact that there are now more traffic deaths in the City than there are homicides.²⁴ This led to reading several reports published by the lead agency for VZ, the LADOT. After noting these reports listed many completed improvement projects, but lacked analyses of the effectiveness of these projects, an inquiry was proposed and approved.

As part of the discussion of the inquiry process, a comprehensive audit of VZ was reviewed.²⁵ The audit, performed by KPMG, was initiated by the CAO and evaluated projects completed between 2017 and 2021. Extensive notes were made of the 130-page audit report, focusing on the 37 “improvement opportunities” described across 13 aspects of the program. The audit also

²² LADOT Annual Report 23-24 fiscal year, <https://ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/2025-02/annual-report-yr-2023-to-yr-2024.pdf>.

²³ Interview with LADOT staff, December 1, 2025.

²⁴ Kavish Harjai, “Once again, more people were killed in collisions on LA streets than by homicide last year”. LAist, February 11, 2026.

²⁵ KPMG, “Vision Zero Independent Program Evaluation”. December 1, 2023, <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/d3/54/bdc16d7846f1a3ad50e1012a39a8/06240035-cao-dot-vision-zero-program-reportfinalrevised.pdf>.

included a comparison of a few key parameters between the Los Angeles VZ program and the programs of 10 comparison cities. The websites and action plans of three of those cities, San Diego,²⁶ San Jose,²⁷ and Chicago,²⁸ were later reviewed with a particular interest in their education component. By far the most detailed and extensive program Action Plan was that of Chicago. An attempt was made to determine budget allocations between the four VZ components in Chicago, but it was impossible to separate out VZ program items in that Chicago's budget document.

A second audit, also focused on 2017-21 data, was reviewed. This audit was commissioned by the LADOT the year before the CAO's audit and was performed by Fehr and Peers.²⁹ This audit noted that fewer than half of 56 "actions and strategies" designed to be completed between 2017 and 2020 had been accomplished by 2023.

Both reports had been published by the end of 2023, and the Vision Zero Committee focused on seeing how the LADOT responded to them. The Committee noted that 37 "improvement opportunities" and 56 "actions and strategies" seemed to be too many for any organization to effectively process. The Vision Zero Committee decided to prioritize the 37 "improvement opportunities" and focus on five which we want to address in our report. These five opportunities became the core of an interview with staff members of the LADOT having VZ responsibilities.

After meeting with LADOT staff, we were provided with contact information for people in several Department of Public Works Bureaus. We attempted to

²⁶ <https://www.sandiego.gov/vision-zero>.

²⁷ <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/Home/Components/News/News/6488/4765>.

²⁸

www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdot/CDOT%20Projects/VisionZero/2022/VZDT_PlanDocument_online.pdf.

²⁹ "Vision Zero Safety Study". VisionZero Los Angeles | 2015-2025. January 2024.

<https://ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/la-vision-zero-safety-study-2024.pdf>.

arrange interviews with members of the Bureaus of Engineering (BOE), Street Services (BSS), and Street Lighting (BSL). After several attempts, interviews were conducted with staff in two of the three Bureaus (BSL could not be reached). We also arranged an interview with people in the LAPD Traffic Coordination Division (TCD) knowledgeable about the VZ program.

Discussions following the LADOT interview and conversations with LAPD Traffic Coordination personnel led to the conclusion that significant changes to VZ require a major re-energizing of the program from the Mayor's office. This led to conversations with people in the Mayor's Office that provided insight.

DISCUSSION

Some Vision Zero Facts

Traffic deaths in the City of Los Angeles increased from 186 in 2015 (the first year of the VZ program) to 333 in 2023, averaging about 285 over the past ten years. The number of those severely injured has remained steady at around 1,500 per year.³⁰ Thus, in the ten years of the VZ program, The VZ Committee calculates that there have been over 2,800 deaths and around 15,000 people were severely injured. If each of these victims has, on average, three family members (parents and siblings) impacted by lives ended or dramatically changed, over 50,000 persons have had their lives significantly disrupted by a driving culture that emphasizes speed over safety.

It is difficult to determine the entire amount spent on VZ each year because the City budget document has VZ line items scattered across multiple pages

³⁰ Vision Zero Safety Study, LADOT, January 2024, <https://ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/la-vision-zero-safety-study-2024.pdf>.

of a lengthy document (the 2025-26 proposed budget has VZ items on 13 pages of the 546-page document). A review of several years of VZ budget figures indicates that approximately \$30 million has been devoted to the program each year. This means that over the past eight years of operations, hundreds of millions of dollars have been spent on several thousand VZ improvement projects. This does not include over \$50 million in extra traffic enforcement (about \$7.5 million per year). In addition, it has been reported that more is now spent on resolving lawsuits relating to traffic collisions than is spent on the VZ program itself.³¹

Serious impacts on the lives of tens of thousands of citizens and the expenditure of hundreds of millions of dollars have produced little impact on the problem. This would indicate **the Mayor's Office needs to allocate meaningful staff time and energy to lead and motivate a VZ program with all four components sufficiently funded to ensure program success.**

Vision Zero Reports And Audits

The Department of Transportation (LADOT) reports clearly focus on determining the types of collisions involved and where they occur.³² The "what" focuses on victims: pedestrians, bicyclists, motorcyclists, automobile drivers and passengers. These analyses led to a determination of where to focus improvement projects (HINs) and what projects should be designed. For example, the 2024 Vision Zero Safety Study describes a revised list of HINs and a list of 24 project profiles that had been developed. The entire report focused on the improvement of engineering projects that have been completed by LADOT, BOE, BSS and BSL. VZ has become almost exclusively

³¹ Michael Schneider. "How many kids must die before L.A. makes streets safer?". *Los Angeles Times*. August 14, 2025. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2025-08-14/los-angeles-koreatown-street-safety>.

³² Vision Zero Safety Study, LADOT, January 2024, <https://ladot.lacity.gov/sites/default/files/documents/la-vision-zero-safety-study-2024.pdf>.

an engineering-focused program, even though it is well recognized, as expressed in several studies (e.g. the KPMG audit previously cited) and interviews (with various current and former LADOT staff members), it is neither practical nor possible to simply engineer a path to VZ success.

A better path to success was suggested by the achievements reported by the Vision Zero program in the City of Chicago and its VZ program balanced between the four program components.³³ This balance contrasts with the lack of balance noted in the KPMG audit of the Los Angeles VZ program.

The Los Angeles program began by establishing a Steering Committee and a Task Force. The Steering Committee, led by representatives of the Mayor's Office and the Department of Transportation, was tasked with setting the basic goals, principles and project areas of the program. The Task Force focused on the details of the projects and the communication and collaboration between the involved agencies.³⁴

With the LADOT leading the Steering Committee, and representatives from the LADOT and the Bureaus of Engineering, Street Services and Street Lighting constituting the major component of the Task Force, the focus of Los Angeles' program appeared from the beginning to have centered on the engineering component. While there appears to have been some initial representation from the City Planning Department (the extent and focus of which is unknown), the education component appeared to land in the planning section of LADOT. After a few small education programs (primarily

³³

www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdot/CDOT%20Projects/VisionZero/2022/VZDT_PlanDocument_online.pdf.

³⁴ Interview with LADOT staff, December 1, 2025.

billboards), the planning group interacted with persons in the construction zones of improvement projects and termed those interactions “education.”³⁵

In a similar fashion, the LAPD was the only agency with expertise in traffic enforcement. The LAPD TCD was left to develop its own enforcement and program activities and supply most of its own funding.³⁶

As previously noted, the Vision Zero Committee decided to focus on just five audit findings. The audit noted that by 2018 the Steering Committee and Task Force had ceased to meet and the Mayor’s office turned leadership over to the LADOT. This led the KPMG auditors to note **serious deficiencies in the governance** aspect of the VZ program. The five recommendations on which the Vision Zero Committee focused are:

- A clear program mandate and guidance needs to come from the Mayor’s Office.
- Improve interagency communication and coordination by constituting a Program Oversight Committee and a Work Group Task Force.
- Create a database to allow before-and-after analyses of completed projects, enforcement activities, and the like. Determining the effectiveness of projects and activities should guide the VZ agencies to develop projects and activities that will lead to program success.
- Identify City departments and staff with education or marketing expertise who can create educational materials and marketing campaigns. These materials and campaigns would inform affected groups and begin to develop a traffic “culture” focused on safety rather than speed, on having drivers share the road. Preliminary information suggests that the staff of the External Affairs Unit in the City Planning Department are likely to have the necessary expertise.

³⁵ Multiple interviews with LADOT staff, December 1, 2025, February 18,2026, February 24,2026

³⁶ Interview with LAPD TCD staff, January 29, 2026.

- Work to align the education and enforcement efforts with the engineering projects through the efforts of the Work Group Task Force.³⁷

Our Committee felt the depleted staff of LADOT was too overwhelmed to adequately respond to 37 “improvement opportunities” and 56 “actions and strategies.” This reinforced the Committee’s desire to focus on just five areas that we felt particularly needed to be addressed.

A Mayoral Request

An observation regarding the input the Mayor can make to the Vision Zero program is easily discernable in the 2023-24 fiscal year. It evinces the impact Mayoral action has on the governance issues described in the audits. In 2023, Mayor Bass expressed her concerns over the safety of children traveling to and from school, including drop-off and pick-up areas.³⁸ This led LADOT to identify schools where collisions (minor and serious) had been more frequent and to prioritize the designing and construction of improvement projects at those schools.

“For the last two years, we’ve added local funding and investment expanding on the grant-funded Safe Routes to School program to develop and implement a comprehensive safety plan for all schools in Los Angeles. By prioritizing streets and intersections with the highest risk, we’ve installed speed humps, repainted crosswalks, reduced speed limits, adjusted signal timing, and assigned trained crossing guards to support the safety of children biking and walking to school throughout the City. This improves

³⁷ KPMG LLP. “Vision Zero Program Independent Evaluation Report”. December 1, 2023. <https://ca-times.brightspotcdn.com/d3/54/bdc16d7846f1a3ad50e1012a39a8/06240035-cao-dot-vision-zero-program-reportfinalrevised.pdf>.

³⁸ ladot.lacity.gov/annual-report-yr-23.

safety at a scale beyond individual, grant-awarded schools by addressing unsafe driving behaviors district-wide.”³⁹

Interviews

The initial interview occurred with several staff members of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation. The interview began with a question regarding the status of the VZ program, since it was supposed to achieve its goal of eliminating traffic deaths by 2025. We learned the program was being extended, but a new “horizon year” had not been determined (it was subsequently extended to 2035).

In responding to a question as to why traffic deaths continued to increase after all these improvement projects, we left with the impression that while the LADOT staff the committee interviewed were very knowledgeable about engineering and construction, their analytic skills only involved design and build rather than statistical analysis. Effectively, in our interviews the LADOT staff expressed anecdotal beliefs the engineering projects were effective, there was a sense they recognized that engineering alone cannot fulfill Vision Zero’s goal of zero traffic fatalities.

The next issue addressed was money. We learned that continued funding for the program is not an issue. Funding was always based on LADOT developing projects, determining how many to propose to the Mayor, and requesting funds to complete them. Further, there are grant opportunities that could be pursued.

Regarding staffing, we were informed it was adequate, though vacancies existed that were difficult to fill. We asked about the relation of VZ to other LADOT programs: Active Transportation, Safe Routes to Schools, and Safe

³⁹ Laura Rubio-Cornejo, LADOT General Manager. “LADOT | Weekly Brief”. August 14, 2025. <https://ladot.lacity.gov/dotnews/weekly-update-august-14-2025>.

Routes for Seniors. These overlap in some ways with engineering goals, which focus on problem intersections and road corridors, while the other programs have their individualized specific goals.

When asked about the audit recommendation for re-establishing the Steering Committee, the response we received from LADOT staff noted it was good for starting up the program. After a while, the roles became clear and the Steering Committee found less to talk about. At present, the heads of the different agencies maintain some regular interagency communication. While the system works to everyone's satisfaction (with LAPD being an exception), the goal keeps moving further away.

The Mayor's Office role has been up and down as other issues come to the fore and then recede. A path forward needs to include a plan for higher level meetings.

When we asked the LADOT staff about creating a database to evaluate the program, we were told it already existed. As to the education component, we were informed available resources were limited and there was more of a focus in addressing traffic enforcement rather than educational endeavors. Education was seen as within the purview of the County Department of Public Health. While some work with City Council offices and community groups had occurred, developing messaging specific to various audiences was outside the LADOT skill set.

We asked if there was any interaction with the County Vision Zero program. We learned there are few roads where County Collision Concentration Corridors meet up with the City's High Injury Networks. There was little overlap between the two.

We discussed how problem locations were identified. Essentially, historical collision data is digested by both planning personnel and engineers to

develop project plans. These plans are prioritized based upon staffing and resources. A primary focus for determining projects is the number of opportunities to save lives. There is also regard given to community demands. For example, South Los Angeles to Downtown has the most trafficked corridors and the most crashes by number.

The areas assessed to be in most need have projects developed in three phases. The first phase consists of simple projects like painting and signage that are low cost and quick to implement. The second phase consists of projects of moderate size and scope, while projects requiring more extensive planning, longer implementation times, and greater amounts of resources, form phase three.

Subsequently, we spoke with several other LADOT staff as well as staff in the Bureau of Engineering and the Bureau of Street Services. LADOT staff were also very helpful in sending us pictures to use in our report.

We have gotten a very basic overview of the improvement project process: LADOT determines, BOE designs, BSS constructs. This was given greater context and better understanding of project complexity by a BOE staff person. Examples include: LADOT has painters on staff, so projects only requiring painting (like crosswalks) can be completed by them; BOE does not have civil engineers on staff and needs to go to Public Works for them. There is a lot of interagency mix.

The photos that follow illustrate a few of the types of engineering improvement projects that have been completed by the VZ.



Photo 25 Reconfigure a street to add a “bus only” lane prioritizing/promoting mass transit flow



Photo 26 A protected bike lane supplies added security for cyclists over just a painted lane

The above photographs show attempts to give priority to forms of transportation other than cars, from simple painting to more engineered separations. While increasing the safety and mobility of these modes, a secondary effect is to reduce the width of traffic lanes which reduces traffic

speed. This can increase driver frustration and more reckless driving behavior.



Photo 27 Construction of a “speed table,” an elongated speed hump designed to more reduce traffic speed while maintaining traffic flow

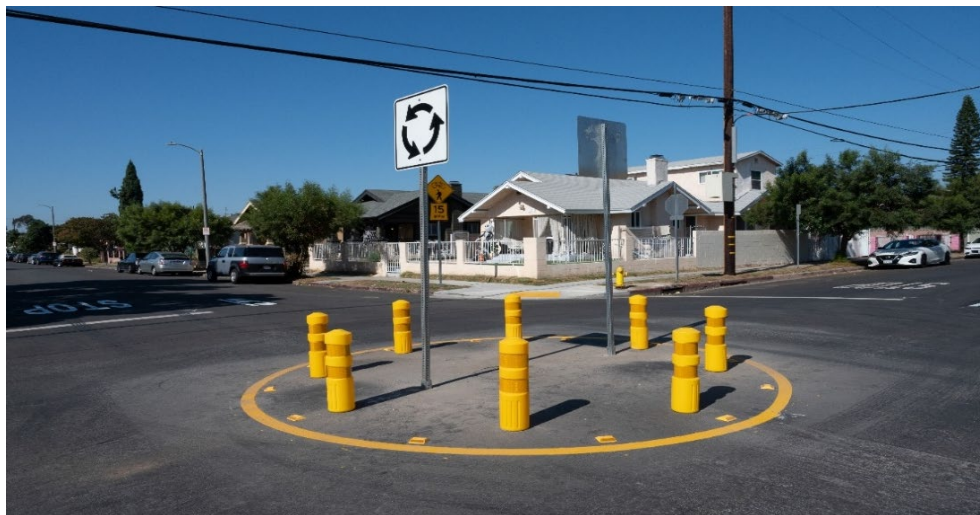


Photo 28 A Mini-Roundabout slows traffic and reduces potential conflict collisions through a moderately busy intersection at much less cost and construction than a full roundabout

Speed tables and mini roundabouts (depicted above) are more extensive construction efforts at reducing speeds and collision opportunities. Speed tables are used in less traveled areas where dangerous situations for children at play exist.



Photo 29 Another approach to significantly lower traffic speeds through lane restriction, width reduction, and signage while including warnings to watch for cyclists and pedestrians

Photo 6 illustrates multiple treatments occurring in one location that address several issues. In these more complex projects, there are a lot of regulations and other factors that must be considered. Chief among these factors is a strict, conservative interpretation of the American Disability Act requirements. The new Mobility Plan has additional requirements and there are special orders and considerations relating to the public right-of-way that also need to be addressed.

Upon further investigation, we learned that the design and construction complexities mentioned above are addressed by the VZ design team. However, several factors, including a mayoral change, have impacted on the team's ability to complete their designs in a timely manner. The VZ design team used to be an independent unit but is now part of an "all design teams" unit, creating another layer of bureaucracy. In addition, Councilmembers can have veto authority on projects proposed for their district. Adding on to these impediments are the considerations being made for projects that affect 2028 Olympic transit corridors.

Attendant to design and construction complexities, and while addressing project effectiveness, we also learned that anything that reduces speed decreases the number of KSI collisions. Speed humps/tables, narrowing lane widths, or using vertical elements like pylons, are all effective at causing drivers to slow down. The pilot program for installing 125 speed cameras (for which locations have been identified) should also be effective. Recommendations we heard for improving the VZ program, like analyses that quantify effectiveness, mirrored ones we were already considering.

To illustrate the positive effects of reduced speed, compare the results of a low speed (10mph) crash with a moderate speed (35mph) one.



Photo 30 AI image of a slow speed collision



Photo 31 AI image of a crash at moderate speed

This illustration of the damage resulting from a moderate speed crash clearly demonstrates the need to reduce the speed of collisions. If the moderate speed crash above had involved a pedestrian or cyclist, it certainly would become a KSI (killed or severely injured) collision.

A culmination of our many conversations was provided by a staff person with a good overview of the VZ program. They noted most of the original people designing and implementing the program have been replaced over time, so the people who agreed to one set of goals and means have become a group “not on the same page”. This leads to a layer of miscommunication that hampers the implementation of projects directed to a set of VZ goals.

They further noted that Los Angeles is the only major US city without a comprehensive capital infrastructure plan while: 1) spending on staffing and projects is around \$1 billion per year; 2) funding is for one year, even for multi-year projects; 3) over fifteen departments work in the public right-of-way, each with their own priorities; 4) there is no clear vision or shared priorities among the 15 Council districts and the Mayor’s office. Through 2021, there were monthly meetings at the Mayor’s office focused on the Safe Systems Approach and discussion of “mistakes” that needed correction. This is not a recipe for steady improvement or VZ success but rather makes our argument on the need to create better program oversight.

Enforcement Activities And Funding

A final set of interviews were conducted with officers in the LAPD with additional information in one area from staff in the Mayor’s Office. Officers in the Traffic Coordination Division began by discussing their frustration with a lack of ability to have effective communication with the staff of LADOT. The communication gaps involved funding issues and continued through the utilization of enforcement resources.

The officers felt that it had been decided the LAPD Vision Zero activities should be funded by the LAPD through the department's overtime funds. At some point, two grants focused on traffic enforcement became the primary source of overtime funds dedicated to VZ: the STEP (Selective Traffic Enforcement Program) and the Cannabis Tax Fund Grant Program (the part that focuses on impaired driving). The extent of the communication disconnect is illustrated by the time Mayor Bass focused on Safe Routes to Schools and ordered the LAPD to increase enforcement around schools but failed to provide any additional funding.

Direct education efforts by the LAPD were discussed. Shared in a telephone conversation was the fact that officers attempt to do some one-on-one education as part of traffic stops. In our interview, officers noted they regularly participate in community outreach through events and scheduled presentations. These presentations include ones at schools that focus on how to be safe walking to and from school. However, LAPD safety programs for pedestrians and cyclists are hamstrung by lack of funds. There are "Safer Stops" brochures distributed in areas where high levels of distrust of police have been reported. Finally, each Bureau has a Community Traffic Services Unit dedicated to addressing traffic concerns.

With regards to data sharing, there was a strong expression that most "sharing" was from LAPD to LADOT, with little flowing in the opposite direction. It was noted that recently there seemed to be a change for the better at LADOT, following some administrative staff changes.

When asked about LADOT HINs as a way of allocating resources, one officer noted that most enforcement occurred in the Central and South Bureaus because there is a concentration of HINs in these two areas. LADAR (Laser Detecting and Ranging) seems to be a primary means of enforcement.

Message boards (including “speed back” signs) are primarily sources of data collection, leading to allocations of resources.

When asked if LAPD had noted any positive effects from LADOT engineering projects, two were described. First, there has been a notable decrease in complaints relayed to the LAPD from the Los Angeles Bicycle Coalition. This means many fewer driver/cyclist confrontations and therefore fewer collisions. This is most likely due to the increased miles of designated bikeways completed (especially protected ones).

A second type of engineering project that led to observations of decrease in incidents is the development of “scrambler crosswalks.” These are intersections where, in addition to regular crosswalks, diagonal ones have been painted, traffic signals changed to have an additional mode where all signals are red, and all crosswalk signals indicate “walk.” These “scramblers” have greatly reduced incidents between impatient drivers and inattentive walkers.

Another area of interview focus was on the mismatch between effective funding allocation and funding availability. This mainly occurs because of the different fiscal years for the State (October 1 through September 30) and the City (July 1 through June 30). This has two major impacts: 1) they miss being able to expand enforcement activities during the holidays (especially around Christmas and New Year’s) when traffic issues greatly increase; and 2) certain funds must be spent by the end of the City fiscal year (June 30) or be lost, when there are fewer unallotted LAPD resources to allow increased enforcement.

Interviews with Fiscal Group of the Administrative Services Bureau and CAO staff helped clarify, to some degree, the funding difficulties faced by TCD. Focusing on the City’s fiscal year, the Mayor’s budget includes funding for

overtime for the LAPD. A small part of this funding (about \$1.5 million) is a “carve out” for VZ enforcement. Although this could be spent throughout the fiscal year, if special situations (like championship parades or protest activities) arise, “carve outs” like the VZ funds can be taken to cover them. As mentioned, additional resources often are not available towards the end of the fiscal year, encouraging their use in the early months.

On the other hand, while grant funds should be available from October 1 on, approval must be acquired first from the Board of Police Commissioners, then the CAO, then the City Council, and finally from the Mayor. Because this process overlaps with the City’s proposed budget discussion process, it has a much lower priority in being addressed. Approval is usually not achieved until late February, five months into the grant fiscal year.

The push to use “carve out” funds occur during the same months grant funds need to be used up, but the need for extra funds at the end of the calendar year means “carve out” funds should be held until then. Year-end enforcement focuses on impaired driving, but Cannabis Tax Funds, which must be used only for this enforcement, are not available because of the delay in obtaining approval.

Communication among Program Oversight Committee members, the Mayor’s office, and LAPD command staff is the best solution to the current funding need and availability.

The Road Ahead

In January 2026, a “die-in” was staged in front of downtown Los Angeles’ landmark City Hall for a sobering look at 290 deaths on the City’s streets in 2025.⁴⁰

Street-safety advocates demanded the city deploy speed cameras, protective bike lanes and redesigned crosswalks — tools that they say remain underutilized in Vision Zero efforts.

Traffic fatalities have surged 26% since Vision Zero launched in 2015 with the goal of eliminating deaths on L.A. streets by 2025.⁴¹

Road safety advocates and others, led by the group Streets Are for Everyone (SAFE), gathered on the steps of Los Angeles City Hall for a “die-in” demonstration. The event was partly in remembrance of the 290 individuals who, according to the LAPD’s current tally, died last calendar year in traffic incidents in Los Angeles. And it was partly a vociferous call for safer streets throughout the city. “We’re out here today because the city of Los Angeles signed Vision Zero as a directive in August 2015 to prioritize saving lives on our roads — to achieve zero traffic fatalities by 2025,” said SAFE founder and executive director Damian Kevitt, who lost his right leg in a violent traffic incident in 2013. “Not manage or reduce [them] but eliminate traffic fatalities. We are a decade later and we are at 290 traffic fatalities. ... It’s a 26% increase in traffic fatalities since the start of Vision Zero.”⁴²

“The city has tools, it’s just not using them,” Kevitt told The Times. “In 2024, voters approved measure HLA by a two-thirds margin. It requires the city must follow its own mobility plan ... to make roads safer for cyclists, for

⁴⁰ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2026-01-24/safe-streets-die-in-protest-traffic-deaths#:~:text=Dozens%20lay%20still%20on%20the,underutilized%20in%20Vision%20Zero%20efforts.>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

pedestrians, for better transit.” He also cited state measure AB 645, which in 2023 authorized a pilot program for speed cameras in a handful of California cities including Los Angeles, as “a tool the city could be implementing — it’s speed safety systems.”⁴³

As a committee, we hope the findings stated and the recommendations made will allow for Vision Zero to take a positive turn in the future. Stay safe and aware on the streets, in your cars, on bikes, scooters or walking. Los Angeles’s love affair with its cars deserves a happier ending than what its traffic currently allows. Good luck to us all.

FINDINGS

Finding 10.1

The Vision Zero Steering Committee, co-led by representatives from the Mayor’s Office and the Department of Transportation, never developed a program balanced between the four components of the Vision Zero program. The engineering component predominated while enforcement was relegated to a secondary role. After the Steering Committee ceased functioning and LADOT took sole leadership of Vision Zero, this imbalance became even more pronounced, compounded by poor communication between LAPD and LADOT, and no broad education and evaluation efforts. Only with the formation of a Program Oversight Committee led by mayoral staff can Vision Zero be effectively directed toward easing the inherent tension between speed and safety necessary to save lives.

⁴³ Ibid.

Engineering alone cannot coerce safe driving nor protect pedestrians. The current “failed” status of Los Angeles’ engineering focused VZ effort testifies to that fact. The Mayor’s involvement in 2023 regarding Safe Routes to Schools infused energy into direct action and the resultant projects completed on the streets of Los Angeles demonstrated that leadership makes a difference to program success.

Finding 10.2

The lack of balance among program components becomes most apparent in the line-item amounts in the Mayor’s proposed budget. This is difficult to discern in a proposed budget as the Vision Zero line items are found on 13 pages scattered across the 546-page 2025-26 proposed budget document.

Finding 10.3

While many hundreds of street improvement projects have been completed under the auspices of the Vision Zero program, KSI collisions have not been eliminated nor even reduced; they increased significantly. Either many projects are of limited effectiveness in reducing collisions, or factors beyond engineered projects need to be considered. Because the program only reports on the number of completed projects, rather than including the efficacies of projects, future systemic solutions are hard to replicate. Los Angeles’ failure to engage in virtually zero project efficacy evaluation efforts, inescapably leads to a conclusion more attentive oversight is needed.

Finding 10.4

The VZ program's education component has been shown by VZ programs in other cities to have the biggest impact on reducing KSI collisions relative to the amount of funding used. Los Angeles's VZ "education" component consists of some LADOT efforts to inform those immediately affected by the construction of an improvement project of the intended effects and expected benefits. Traffic enforcement officers inform individual drivers during violation stops and speak to community groups through a limited number of outreach efforts. Los Angeles's VZ failure to promote broad public education campaigns is due to a lack of emphasis on the importance of creating and implementing such campaigns.

Finding 10.5

Programs in other Vision Zero cities have found that a viable, well-funded and sustainable education component is key to achieving positive program results. Education and enforcement efforts in combination along with engineering projects are shown to provide positive measurable decreases in KSI incidents in the cities with the fortitude and funds to engage them. Los Angeles' failure to engage in virtually zero project efficacy evaluation efforts, inescapably leads to a conclusion that more attentive oversight is needed.

Finding 10.6

Because Los Angeles VZ's approach primarily focused on engineering, the traffic enforcement component has been only marginally supported with tenuous mayoral funding. This results in the bulk of funding coming from grants, where timing of approval does not align with when the funds could be most effectively spent. In addition, the Traffic Coordinating Division of LAPD, hampered by inconsistent, irregular, and frustrating inter-departmental and agency communications, has been left to devise their own VZ enforcement activities.

Finding 10.7

Los Angeles can and must do better on behalf of its residents. A properly constructed, well-coordinated, fully functional, four component VZ program can improve the current tragic state of life and death on the City's streets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 10.1a

To create a successful Vision Zero program, the Mayor's Office should create a Program Oversight Committee, led by the Senior Transportation Director, including representatives from the CAO, LADOT, the City Planning Department, the LAPD (TCD), and the Public Works Department administrative staff. Meetings should be bimonthly. The Mayor's

representative should motivate and direct the Committee in a way that gives equal status to each of the four VZ program components: education, enforcement, engineering, and evaluation.

Recommendation 10.1b

A Vision Zero Work Group Task Force should be instituted and meet monthly with the goals of improved communication and collaboration between all agencies involved in implementing the VZ program. The agencies should include City Planning – External Affairs Unit (education), LADOT, the Bureaus of Engineering, Street Services, and Street Lighting (engineering), LAPD Traffic Coordination Division (enforcement), and either the City Administrative Office or the Mayor’s Transportation Unit (evaluations). A representative from the Los Angeles County’s Vision Zero program should be considered as an ex officio member (to develop a consistent program focus across the City and the rest of the County).

Recommendation 10.1c

The Mayoral Senior Transportation Director needs to facilitate improved communication between the LAPD TCD and LADOT so they can identify the intersections and road corridors where traffic enforcement activities are most needed and determine the most effective enforcement strategies for these areas.

Recommendation 10.2a

An easily readable, standalone Vision Zero budget needs to be compiled from all items in the Mayor’s budget as well as other funding (such as the

LAPD STEP grant). This budget spreadsheet should display the four components of the VZ program in the columns with agencies and line items in the rows. The rows for the LAPD TCD funds should have one line for funding from the Mayor's budget, and one displaying grants.

Recommendation 10.2b

Funding needs to be distributed in a proportional manner which considers the efficacy of the four program components' contribution towards success. Evaluation funding should be directed toward performance evaluations.

The following is a suggested distribution that would achieve what our study found to be an appropriate balance between VZ components. A theoretical \$40 million budget (\$32.5 million Mayoral funds, \$7.5 million traffic grant funds) would have the following rough proportions for each facet: Evaluations 4% (\$1.5 million), Education 20% (\$8 million), Enforcement 24% (\$9.5 million - \$2 million Mayoral funds as a "carve out" of LAPD overtime funds, \$7.5 million State grants), Engineering 52% (\$21 million). This budget should be displayed for the public as part of the annual Vision Zero report.

Recommendation 10.3a

The LADOT needs to create a database that will allow before-and-after analyses of at least the 10 most common Vision Zero improvement projects. Staff under either the Transportation Director or the CAO should perform analyses to determine the effectiveness of projects completed two years prior, which should become part of the Vision Zero annual report.

Recommendation 10.3b

The results of the effectiveness analyses should be used to prioritize future projects.

Recommendation 10.3c

The results of the effectiveness analyses should be used to revise the HIN (High Injury Network) on a recurring three-year basis.

Recommendation 10.4

Utilizing the allocated funding recommended to the education component, staff should be hired for the External Affairs Unit of the Department of City Planning to create and implement public education programs for Vision Zero. These programs should have both materials for distribution and widely distributed marketing campaigns.

Recommendation 10.5a

Those tasked with creating educational campaigns for the Vision Zero program should begin by creating a “culture of traffic safety” (as described by the Los Angeles County Vision Zero program) brand consisting of a color (or two) and a logo. The idea of the need to “share the road” should also be incorporated. These elements should be featured on the different parts of the overall campaign, including brochures, group presentations, and media campaigns (billboard and other postings, radio and TV spots, social media blogs and posts). It is suggested that the education elements of the City of Chicago Vision Zero Chicago Downtown Action Plan be viewed as a source of possible elements for a Los Angeles VZ education plan.

Recommendation 10.5b

Those planning the elements of the educational component need to ensure materials and marketing are designed specifically to each street user group: public /commercial / private vehicle operators, motorcyclists, bicycle riders, scooter users, skaters, and pedestrians from young schoolchildren to older adults.

Recommendation 10.6a

Traffic enforcement needs to be treated as a more important part of the total VZ program by having the funds for the Vision Zero “carve out” of total LAPD overtime funds in the Mayoral budget equal at least 5% of the total Mayoral funding of the Vision Zero program. These funds are separate from the grant funds the LAPD TCD can obtain.

Recommendation 10.6b

To ensure the most effective use of Vision Zero traffic enforcement funds, the Chief of LAPD should ensure that the Vision Zero “carve out” overtime funds remain untouched by other users until the end of January in each fiscal year.

Recommendation 10.6c

Another way to increase the importance and positive impact of the enforcement component would be to have City Councilmembers identify schools in their districts with drop-off and pick-up problems (irrespective of LADOT identifications) and work with LAPD TCD to increase enforcement in those areas (utilizing Councilmembers discretionary funds).

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses shall be made in accord with Penal Code Sections 933.05(a) and (b). All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 Los Angeles CGJ must be submitted to:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
 Grand Jury Administration
 222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles City Mayor	10.1a, 10.1b, 10.2a, 10.2b, 10.6a, 10.6b
Los Angeles City Senior Transportation Director	10.1a, 10.1b, 10.1c, 10.3a, 10.3b
Los Angeles City Chief Administrative Officer	10.1b, 10.2a, 10.2b, 10.3a, 10.3b
Los Angeles City Department of Transportation	10.1a, 10.1b, 10.1c, 10.3a, 10.3b, 10.3c
Los Angeles City Department of Public Works	10.1a, 10.1b
Los Angeles City Planning Department	10.1a, 10.1b, 10.1c, 10.4, 10.5a, 10.5b
Los Angeles Police Department	10.1a, 10.1b, 10.1c, 10.2b, 10.6a

Acronyms

CAO	City Administrative Officer
HIN	High Injury Network
KSI	Killed or Severely Injured
LADOT	Los Angeles City Department of Transportation
LAPD	Los Angeles City Police Department
TCD	Traffic Coordination Division
VZ	Vision Zero

Committee Members

Michael S. Stefanko, Chair
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MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY JAILS



2025-26

**Los Angeles County
Civil Grand Jury**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Board of Supervisors (BOS) and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) have for years been fighting lawsuits to correct and provide adequate mental health services to inmates.¹ The number of inmates with mental health problems, and the severity of those problems, has increased. LASD has worked diligently to improve the services provided and the care of those imprisoned with mental illness.

The 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) had the privilege of touring Twin Towers Correctional Facility (TTCF), the largest mental illness jail in the United States, housing over 2200 men with mental health issues.² During the visit, the jury was shown an area where the Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Program (FIP) was in operation.³ FIP was established in 2016 as a pilot project to help inmates deal with the stresses of their mental illness.⁴

FIP was created by two inmates along with the assistance of a Sheriff deputy and mental health psychiatric staff.⁵ Inmates volunteer to be selected and screened to receive extensive six-month training as Mental Health Assistants (MHAs).⁶ MHAs, upon graduation, are assigned to reside in a pod (a specialized unit in TTCF), where 22-24 inmates with mental health issues are assigned in High Observation Housing (HOH). They provide peer-to-peer support and help calm the inmates. MHAs encourage HOH inmates to use proper hygiene, take their medication, prepare them for their court

¹<https:// Attorney General Bonta Sues Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Over Inhumane Conditions at County Jails | State of California - Department of Justice - Office of the Attorney General>.

² Interview with LASD 10/28/25.

³ https:// lacounty.gov/SPSinter/dmh/159285_ASC-IMDStepdownInformation-2_.pdf.

⁴ <https:// lacounty.gov-la-county-improves-jail-mental-health-services>.

⁵ <https://csmonitor.com.usa.justice>.

⁶ Ibid.

appearance, and provide any other assistance as needed. MHAs work closely with the mental health staff and all the deputies assigned to the pod.

The program has gained local and national attention. Expansion of the FIP Stepdown Program was adopted unanimously by the BOS on July 25, 2023.⁷ Since its inception, the program has been additionally extended and implemented at the women's jail - Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF).⁸

The Committee attended the FIP graduation ceremony on December 16, 2025. This was for 114 inmates who had completed the six months training. They gained the title of Merit Masters and help as needed and work with the MHAs.

This report focuses on the FIP Stepdown Program, the services it provides, and what is needed. What is needed most is education, awareness, understanding, and acceptance among Los Angeles Sheriff staff to ensure the mental health services received and administered to the inmates are of the highest quality, and that respect is given and shown to all involved in the program.⁹

⁷ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/189036.pdf>.

⁸ <https://lynwoodjail.com>.

⁹ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/18195.pdf>.

BACKGROUND

The County's jail system faces a staggering challenge; nearly half of its inmate population struggles with mental health issues, making it America's largest non-hospital mental health facility.¹⁰ With the dismantling of nationwide psychiatric hospitals in 1967, jails and prisons have largely become *de facto* mental institutions.

In 1967, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act was signed into law in California which sets the rules when the state can detain and treat someone against their will for a mental health crisis. The Act limits involuntary holds to people who, because of a mental disorder, are a danger to themselves, a danger to others or gravely disabled.¹¹ Provisions were included for intervention and services necessary to individuals displaying imminent harm to themselves, danger to others, or potential of being gravely disabled. At the same time, public mental health institutions were being closed, not only by California, but nationwide as well, due to various political and budgetary agendas.¹²

California County has the largest jail system in the nation, along with L.A County's Twin Towers Correctional Facility as the largest mental health institution. The number of inmates in the jail system with mental health problems increased 58% in a 10-year period (2015-25). With few other options in the criminal justice system, a growing number of individuals with mental health issues in LACO end up in jail.¹³ In the first quarter of 2025, the average number of inmates with mental health problems accounted for 46% of the total County jail inmate population (up from 29% in 2015).¹⁴

¹⁰ <https://csmonitor.com/USA/Society/2025/0514/inmates-mental-health-california/>.

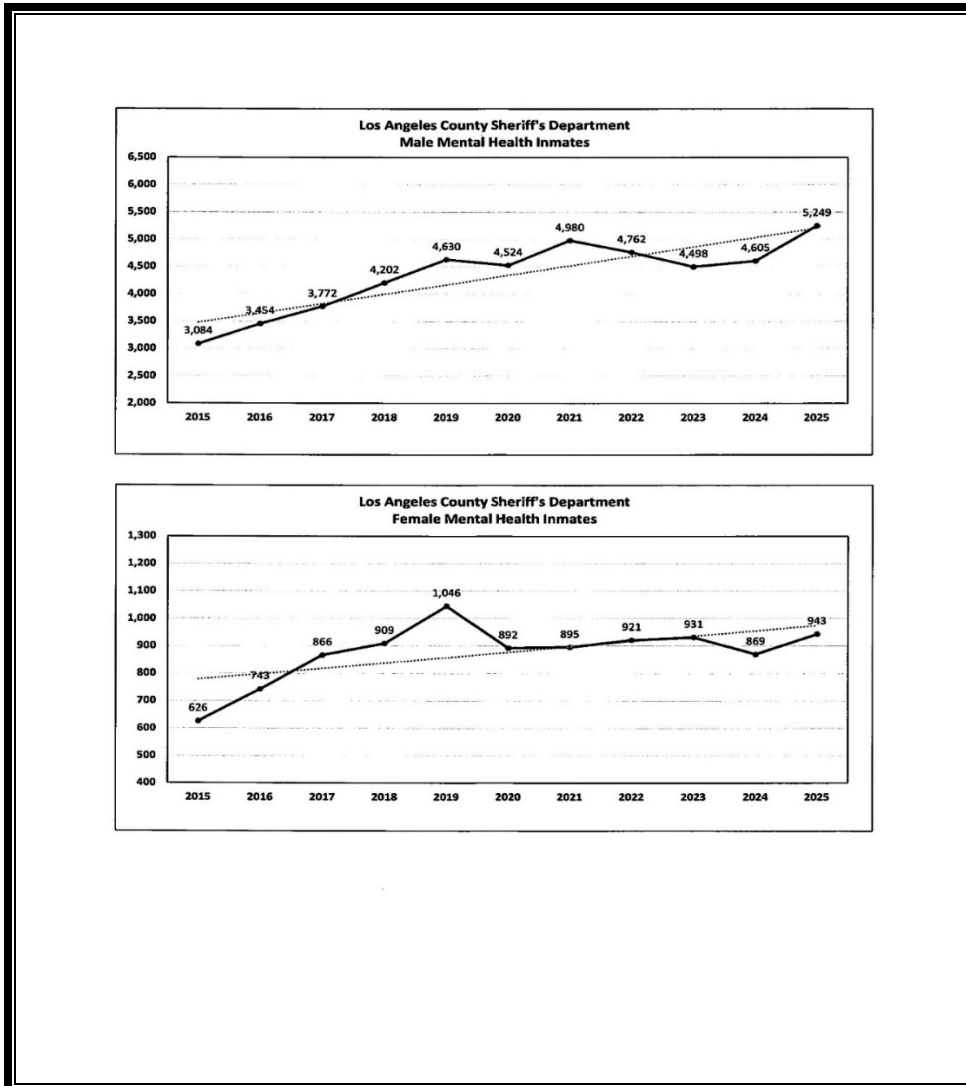
¹¹ <https://legalclarity.org/lanterman-petris-short-act-in-california-key-rules-and-rights/>.

¹² <https://legalclarity.org/who-shut-down-the-mental-hospitals-and-why/>.

¹³ <https://www.laalmanac.com/crime/cr25b.php#google-vignette/>.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

The challenge of handling this growing number of inmates with mental health issues further strains an already crowded jail system.



Male and Female Inmates with Diagnosed Mental Illness in Los Angeles County Jails from 2015 to 2025. ¹⁵

¹⁵ Information provided by LASD.

Inmate Reception Center

When a male individual is arrested, he is taken to the Inmate Reception Center (IRC) located in downtown Los Angeles across from the Twin Towers Correctional Center (TTCF). The IRC processes inmates into and out of the County jail system, which includes maintenance and storage of their court records, clothing and property. IRC is the transfer and pick-up point for inter-facility transfers, custody transfers, custody releases to the state prison system, Homeland Security, and other governmental agencies. In addition to processing newly arrested individuals at the IRC, they must be evaluated for mental health and any other medical conditions before they can be assigned to housing.¹⁶ Once the evaluation is complete, the inmate is either assigned to TTCF or Men's Central Jail (MCJ).¹⁷

In the past, conditions at the IRC booking facility for incarcerated people with a mental illness had been called particularly appalling. Attorneys with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) reported "failure to provide adequate health care, including failure to provide people with serious mental illness, chronic medical conditions with their medications and to provide care to people dangerously detoxing from drugs and alcohol".¹⁸ In response, LACO reached an agreement in June 2023 to improve conditions at the IRC and to create nearly 2,000 new mental health treatment beds in non-jail situations as alternatives to jailing people with mental illnesses.¹⁹

Note: Females that are arrested are taken to CDRF for processing and evaluation.²⁰

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <https://inmateaid.com/prisons/los-angeles-county-jail-inmate-reception-center>.

¹⁸ <https://theappeal.org/los-angeles-jail-inmate-reception-center-aclu/>.

¹⁹ <https://www.aclu.org/press-releases/aclu-reaches-landmark-settlement-in-l-a-county-jails-case/>.

²⁰ CGJ Group Tour on August 12, 2025.



Picture of Inmate Reception Center

Twin Towers Correctional Facility (TTCF)

TTCF is a 1.5 million sq. ft. complex built in 1997. It is one of the world's largest jail complexes holding up to 5,000 inmates. TTCF consists of two towers, a Medical Services Building and the Medical Jail Ward. The Medical Service Building provides inpatient housing for inmates with acute health issues along with a large population of the County's mental health inmates. Such an environment can be challenging, and staff must be constantly alerted to the possibility of danger to themselves, along with inmate self-harm and attempted suicide.²¹

TTCF has 20 HOH pods holding a total of 1400 inmates with mental health problems. This area houses inmates with acute mental illness, who are observed more frequently by mental health staff.²²

²¹ <https://www.guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/107798-largest-prison-building-single-building>.

²² Interview with JMET October 28, 2025.



Twin Towers Correctional Facility in Downtown Los Angeles

Men's Central Jail (MCJ)

MCJ, which opened in 1963 and expanded in 1976, became a notoriously overcrowded downtown jail. It was known for harsh conditions, housing thousands beyond its capacity, and facing legal challenges for inmate abuse and in-custody deaths. These conditions led to plans for its demolition and replacement. Its history reflects a long struggle with managing Los Angeles' massive inmate population, evolving from early basic lockups in the 1800s to a sprawling, problematic modern jail complex.²³

MCJ has a history of severe overcrowding. The maximum capacity of 15,000 was at 19,000 in August 2015. This created problems for inmates. There was a lack of shower facilities, limited recreation times out of their cells, not being able to change clothes for a week, and sleeping on their cell floors. For deputies, the overcrowded conditions created a more dangerous and challenging work shift.²⁴

²³ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-12-16-mn-9280-story.html>

²⁴ <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-03-14-me-38194-story.html>.

In July of 2020, the BOS voted to close the MCJ within 12 months; however, that initiative has not been able to move forward. The BOS decided they wanted to focus on programs that would treat mental health challenges of inmates entering and leaving the jail. ²⁵

MCJ provides some services to inmates, including self-help classes on domestic violence, alcohol abuse and substance abuse. Religious services are provided to inmates in the wake of several lawsuits from the ACLU. ²⁶ Selected inmates can pass a General Educational Development (GED) test, which equates to a traditional high school diploma while incarcerated. ²⁷



Men's Central Jail in Downtown Los Angeles

Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF)

The Committee toured CRDF in Lynwood, California and was provided important information about the facility including that CRDF has a rich history that began with the transformation of the former Lynwood jail into a women's only facility, opening as such in March 2006. This change was made

²⁵ <https://abc7.com/post/la-county-votes-to-create-plan-to-close-mens-central-jail/6304934/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ <https://LASD.org>.

to relieve the overcrowding at the Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center and to provide an environment tailored for female inmates. CRDF was built in 1994 with approximately 470,000 sq. ft. and has the capacity to house 2,100 inmates. It is comprised of East and West Towers, an industrially equipped kitchen, a large-scale power generator, and a medical and mental health service floor.

When a female is processed into CDRF, she undergoes a mental health screening and receives other required services.²⁸ It is estimated that since COVID-19, approximately 70% of the incarcerated women have mental health issues, double from before the pandemic.²⁹



Pictures of Inmates walking CRDF jail hallway
<https://pbs.twimg.com/media/BLrjR-fCIAAQ-93?format=jpg&name=900x900> (February/March 20, 2026)

²⁸ CGJ Group Tour on August 12, 2025.

²⁹ Statistics for females listed on chart received from Los Angeles Sheriff's Department on December 15, 2025.

Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center

Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center is an all-male County jail located in Castaic, California. The 2,620 acre site is divided into four sections:

North Facility – built as a maximum security section of four modules containing four dormitories designed to house 90 criminals per dormitory for a total of 1,450 inmates. Its function is to handle overflow from the other three facilities.

East Facility – maximum security facility that houses sentenced and pre-sentenced inmates with serious “holds” or escape records. It is designed to accommodate over 850 inmates.

South Facility- medium security facility offering inmates vocational training programs. It was designed to house 85 criminals per dormitory per block with a capacity for 1,700 inmates.

North County – different from North Facility, it is considered a state of the art for maximum security. The 16 bed hospital is in this building and is designed to hold 58 criminals per dorm with a capacity for 3,700 inmates.³⁰

³⁰[https:// LASD.org](https://LASD.org) and tour of facility on September 16,2025 and November 18,2025.



Aerial picture of Peter J. Pitchess campus

Legal Background Of Mental Health Services

The BOS and the LASD have struggled for years to respond to lawsuits and to comply with court orders to provide adequate mental health services to inmates.³¹ The Justice Department's investigation was originally opened in 1996, under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act. The Justice Department found constitutional deficiencies in mental health care, suicide prevention and the use of excessive force against prisoners with mental illness. In 2002, the Justice Department entered into a memorandum of agreement with the County and the Sheriff to address these concerns. Despite considerable progress over the years of monitoring the memorandum of agreement, the Justice Department concluded in 2014 that the jails were failing to provide adequate mental health care, including

³¹ [https://Justice Department Reaches Agreement with Los Angeles County to Implement Sweeping Reforms on Mental Health Care and Use of Force Throughout the County Jail System.](https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-los-angeles-county-implement-sweeping-reforms-mental) Dept of Justice Press Release: Updated February 5, 2025; <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-los-angeles-county-implement-sweeping-reforms-mental>.

suicide prevention, and that conditions under which prisoners with mental illness were housed exacerbated the risk of suicide.”³²

On August 5, 2015, the Justice Department reached a landmark comprehensive settlement agreement with LACO and LASD to protect prisoners from serious suicide risks and excessive force in the jails.³³

The settlement followed an earlier class action lawsuit filed in January 2012 by the ACLU (Rosas v. Baca). The settlement expands critical reforms agreed to by LACO and the Sheriff to cover all facilities within the jail system.³⁴

“This historic settlement represents a renewed commitment by the County and Sheriff McDonnell to provide constitutionally adequate care for prisoners with serious mental illness,” said Deputy Assistant Attorney General Kappelhoff. “The agreement also puts in place a structure that will help turn around a persistent culture in which the use of excessive force on prisoners was sometimes tolerated.”³⁵

The settlement agreement includes many requirements for the County, including:

- Additional steps to recognize, assess and treat prisoners with mental illness, from intake to discharge
- Significant new training on crisis intervention and interacting with prisoners with mental illness for new and existing custody staff
- Improved documentation in prisoners’ medical and mental health records to ensure continuity of care

³² <https://www.justice.gov/usao-cdca/pr/justice-department-reaches-agreement-los-angeles-county-implement-sweeping-reforms/>.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ <https://www.aclu.org/cases/rosas-v-luna>

³⁵ Ibid.

- Improved communication between custody and mental health staff and increased supervision of prisoners with mental health issues and suicidal prisoners
- Steps to mitigate suicide risks within the jails
- Increased access to out-of-cell time for prisoners with mental health issues
- Improved investigation and critical analysis of suicides, suicide attempts and other critical events
- Enhanced training for custody and mental health staff³⁶

On April 2, 2023, the Federal Court issued an Order Setting Deadlines for Substantial Compliance with the settlement date of September 3, 2025.³⁷

The court ordered more specific remedial relief including:

- By the end of the fourth quarter of 2024, 90% of incarcerated individuals must wait no more than seven days in mental health housing intake areas.
- By the end of the second quarter of 2025, 100% of HOH inmates will receive a minimum of ten hours of structured out-of-cell time per week.³⁸

In September 2025, citing “inhumane conditions” and a “shocking rate of deaths,” California Attorney General Rob Bonta announced that the State was suing LACO over conditions in its jail system. The lawsuit seeks to compel the LASD and the Los Angeles County Department of Health Services

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ https://lasd.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Transparency_Custody_Settlement_DOJ-Pregerson-Order-Imposing-Compliance-Deadlines-04202023.pdf.

³⁸ Ibid.

to implement widespread changes, including inmate health care, conditions of confinement and grievance procedures.³⁹

LACO Sheriff Robert Luna has said, in reply to the lawsuit, that the LASD is working with the California Department of Justice⁴⁰ to comply with multiple settlement agreements related to jail conditions.

In a written statement, Sheriff Luna said, “Despite ongoing challenges, including a rising inmate population and an aging MCJ, our staff have remained committed to providing constitutional, humane care to those in our custody. We are not waiting for mandates, we are proactively advancing reforms to build a safer, more accountable custody environment. I’m proud of the progress we’ve made and confident in our ability to continue delivering meaningful change for our community.”⁴¹



Men's Central Jail in downtown Los Angeles <https://calmatters.org/justice/2025/09/los-angeles-jail-lawsuit/>

³⁹ <https://calmatters.org/justice/2025/09/los-angeles-jail-lawsuit/>.

⁴⁰ [https://LA County sued over 'deplorable conditions' at jails – NBC Los Angeles. <https://yahoo.com/news/articles/california-sues-la-county-sheriff.>](https://LA County sued over 'deplorable conditions' at jails - NBC Los Angeles. https://yahoo.com/news/articles/california-sues-la-county-sheriff.)

La County Agencies That Provide Mental Illness Support

There are several agencies within LACO that support mental illness treatment in jails. The following departments collaborate with LASD to provide assistance:⁴²

- Los Angeles County Department of Health Services (DHS)
- Los Angeles County Correctional Health Services (CHS)
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Los Angeles County Jail Mental Evaluation Team (JMET)

Department Of Health Services (DHS)

DHS administers regular health services for the County at large. It also provides and services the medical needs of incarcerated individuals facing mental and medical challenges. Medical staff are located at all four jails:

- Twin Towers Correctional Facility
- Men's Central Jail
- Century Regional Detention Facility
- Pitchess J. Pitchess Detention Center

The in-custody mental health department has more than 300 jail-based DHS staff members including psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, psychiatric nurses and technicians, service coordinators, case workers, substance abuse counselors, recreation therapists, and administrative staff.⁴³

⁴² Interviews with DMH October 16,2025, CHS October 29,2025 and November 17,2025.

⁴³ Interview with DHS/CHS on October 29,2025 and November 17,2025.

Correctional Health Services (CHS)

CHS is an agency under the umbrella of DMH which has responsibility for providing mental and medical health services for inmates of the jail system. Services begin with the arrested individual arriving at IRC and continue through the booking process, until they are assigned at one of the facilities and the duration of time in jail. The CHS staff provides evaluations, treatment programs, and distribution of medication.

Department Of Mental Health (DMH)

The DMH is the largest mental health department in the United States. CHS, which is part of DMH, **supports inmates with mental health issues during incarceration.** Mental health services are available and offered to inmates upon their release from County jail. DMH works closely with CHS to provide continuation of services needed after release. DMH offers a very wide range of organizations and programs providing support, counseling, and re-entry services for formerly incarcerated individuals.⁴⁴

Jail Mental Evaluation Team (JMET)

The Jail Mental Health Evaluation Team (JMET) is a team of mental health professionals and deputies who address the mental health needs of inmates within the custody of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department. The team is responsible for referring inmates to be housed in the appropriate section within the jail for those suffering or exhibiting mental health problems.⁴⁵

When a person has been arrested, they are brought or transferred to the IRC for processing. If, during the processing, the inmate demonstrates any questionable action indicating possible mental health issues, they are then

⁴⁴ <https://dmh.lacounty.gov>, Interview with DMH October 16,2025.

⁴⁵ Interview with JMET 10/28/25 and <https://pars.lasd.org/Viewer/Manuals/14249/Content/13611>.

evaluated by JMET. The primary responsibility of JMET is to identify and properly locate inmates who may need mental health attention.⁴⁶

From screening inmates during their initial intake process at IRC, to cell-by-cell rounds, the team identifies inmates in need of mental health intervention. Their evaluation determines where the inmate will be housed. If an inmate has been assigned to general population at MCJ, and the MCJ staff is concerned, JMET will be called to evaluate the inmate. An evaluation is completed and upon recommendation by JMET, the inmate may be transferred to Twin Towers.⁴⁷

Agencies In General Support Of Incarcerated And Released Inmates

We visited and learned much from the departments listed below. They play a part in helping inmates upon release and/or identifying an issue while in custody. We would be remiss in not acknowledging their contribution.

Justice Care And Opportunities Department

On March 1, 2022, a motion was introduced to the BOS establishing the Justice Care and Opportunities Department (JCOD). This department was established as part of the on-going concern of the BOS's priority to create a Care First, Jails Last Vision⁴⁸ alternative response to the handling of individuals with mental health issues and released jail inmates.

Using a First Care approach, JCOD is a central and collaborative agency serving and focusing on person-centered prevention, diversion, rehabilitation and re-entry program over incarceration.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ <https://jcod.lacounty.gov/up-contact/uploads/2024/board-motion.pdf>.

⁴⁹ <https://jcod.lacounty.gov/program>.

JCOD offers case management and key reentry programs and support services such as housing, benefits, employment support, mental and physical care, legal aid, housing, education, cognitive behavioral interventions, and substance use treatment.⁵⁰

Services are principally offered through the following dedicated programs:

- Justice Connect Support Center – provides resources connecting individuals to community-based organizations, personalized care, and educational resources
- Workforce and Training Programs
- Providing Opportunities for Women in Reentry - services for women addressing gender specific reentry needs
- Community Engagement and Wellness Events – sponsoring community events such as workshops, wellness programs, and access to resources⁵¹

JCOD concentrates on reducing recidivism, improving outcomes in behavior, employment, housing, and mental health services to released inmates.

Office Of Diversion And Reentry (ODR)

The ODR reports to DHS. Since 2015, it develops and implements programs to divert individuals with serious mental, physical or behavioral health concerns away from County jail into a specific program for their care. This program offers inmates with serious mental problems a chance to enter a personally tailored/long term service with permanent housing, case management and treatment, and support care through a community-based organization. The determination is made pretrial through the Superior Court

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

to divert an inmate from jail into the program.⁵² The goal is assisting the number of inmates suffering from mental illness and reducing recidivism.⁵³

It also assists those inmates who are incompetent to stand trial to be released and receive services from community-based programs.

Sybil Brand Commission On Institutional Inspections

The members of the CGJ Mental Health In Jails Committee attended several Sybil Brand for Institutional Inspection Commission (Commission) meetings. We wanted to see what we could glean from their jail inspection reports which could better inform us of present conditions of a person with mental health issues.

The Sybil Brand Commission for Institutional Inspections⁵⁴ provides an invaluable service in support of the conditions of the jails. They conduct unannounced inspections of LACO jail facilities and sheriff-maintained adult courthouse lockups. These inspections examine cleanliness, discipline, and inmate conditions. The inspections have proven to invoke action when an alarming condition is identified such as dirty water, worms in the water, and patients being left unattended with medical/mental issues.

Each Commissioner is expected to perform two monthly inspections, as well as additional inspections upon request from the Civilian Oversight Commission or the Office of the Inspector General. These inspections help identify a situation that may require follow-up.⁵⁵

⁵² <https://dhs.lacounty.gov/office-of-diversion-and-reentry/our-services/office-of-diversion-and-reentry/who-we-are>.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ <https://sbc.lacounty.gov>.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Their findings are reviewed in monthly meetings attended by the designated Commissioner for each BOS district, along with an attending sheriff deputy who reports on previous inspections requiring action.

Note: As of March 2026, this Commission is reportedly being disbanded due to a cost-cutting plan proposed by the BOS. The plan aims to save an estimated \$40,000 a year by eliminating the Commission, which has been monitoring jail conditions for over six decades. ⁵⁶

METHODOLOGY

The focus of this report was to determine how the various LACO agencies and jail facilities support inmates with mental health issues. Members of the 2025-26 CGJ Mental Health in Jails Committee held in-person visits, Zoom or phone calls with various County agencies and facilities to gain a thorough understanding of how mental illness in jails is addressed, including monitoring, reporting and procedure protocol.

- Los Angeles County Sheriffs (Captains & Sergeants) at Twin Towers
- Department of Mental Health (DMH)
- Department of Correctional Health Services (CHS)
- Jail Mental Evaluation Team (JMET)
- Sybil Brand Commission for Institutional Inspections
- Heart Forward LA (Non-profit Agency)
- Century Regional Detention Facility (CRDF)
- Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Graduation Ceremony

⁵⁶ <https://www.californiacountynews.org/news/2025/09/la-county-could-eliminate-jail-watchdog-after-66-years>.

We also read various reports such as from the Office of Inspector General February 21, 2024, report, plus articles in the Los Angeles Times, the Christian Science Monitor, and the USC Center for Health Journalism.

DISCUSSION

Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Program

As a result of the staggering challenge of maintaining thousands of inmates struggling with mental issues, the LACO Jail system developed an innovative peer mental health program called “Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Program” (FIP).⁵⁷ FIP offers an innovative solution to correctional mental health care. The program begins by training inmates as Mental Health Assistants (MHAs). The inmates apply, volunteer, and complete an intensive six-month training program. The MHAs live with the inmates, providing daily support for those suffering with various mental disorders.⁵⁸

FIP was established in 2016 as a pilot program in the Twin Towers Correctional Facility. It was created by two inmates Craigen Armstrong & Adrian Berumen along with a County employee and a sheriff deputy. The training received by the inmates is quite extensive and in-depth. The training curriculum is outlined in the book, *The Solution: Mental Health Assistants by Craigen Armstrong and Adrian Berumen (2020)*.

The book outlines FIP and how Craigen and Adrian trained inmates as assistants to support peers with severe mental illness in correctional facilities. It highlights how peer-led care improves treatment delivery,

⁵⁷ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSInter/bos/supdocs/181914.pdf>.

⁵⁸ <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/our-work/reporting/incarcerated-volunteers-are-caring-peers-mental-health-la-county-wants-expand>.

reduces isolation, and assists with rehabilitation. Kudos to Craigen and Adrian!

Craigen and Adrian are known as MHAs. FIP expanded its housing area from 14 to 18 pods at Twin Towers in 2024. The program requires High Observation Housing which is only implemented at Twin Towers and CRDF.⁵⁹

During the Committee's interview with LASD employees, we learned the Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Program was named to reflect its focus on providing a step-by-step approach to mental health care for incarcerated individuals with severe mental health needs. The term "Forensic In-Patient" signifies the program's role in providing inpatient care for individuals with mental health issues, while "Stepdown" indicates the gradual transition from more restrictive to less restrictive environments. The program's name also emphasizes the goal of helping inmates stabilize their mental health and prepare for release by providing structured daily activities and peer mentorship.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Interviews with LASD and CHS and <https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2021/0518/From-LA-jail-two-inmates-pioneer-care-for-mentally-ill-peers>.



Picture of FIP Stepdown pod – provided by LASD

Mental Health Assistants (MHAS)

Who Are They? How Are They Recruited? What Do They Do?

During the Committee’s interviews with the Sheriff’s at Twin Towers and CHS, along with the Committee’s tour of Twin Towers, we learned that the MHAs are incarcerated individuals who live in the modules and are specially trained and certified. The MHAs receive a certification of completion, but no other formal accreditation. Based on what we learned and witnessed, MHAs should receive formal accreditation from a California State-certified institution. They are there to help care for and mentor people in custody with severe mental health needs. Working alongside the MHAs is CHS staff, vital partners of the FIP program who provide support and expertise. Training for MHAs involves a unique environment where incarcerated individuals receive intensive, hands-on-training (approximately six months) in crisis intervention and therapeutic techniques. As part of our meetings

with the Sheriff's and CHS, the committee learned there are no formal documented procedures that outlines the 6-month training program.

MHAs are recruited from the general inmate population, specifically those housed in FIP Stepdown Units, through a program run by the LASD and CHS. The recruitment process involves identifying potential inmate candidates with a good track record and an interest in helping. Newly recruited MHAs receive training and ongoing mentorship from seasoned MHAs and staff. They learn to support their peers in attending therapy, manage daily life, and prepare for release. ⁶¹

MHAs within the FIP modules provide peer support, education, and motivation to participate in programs with the goal of independence and self-sufficiency. Positive outcomes of the MHA program within the modules track closely with inmate quality of life improvements, and together they provide a less stressful environment for the deputies. MHAs also say that replacing ⁶²steel institutional fixtures with correctional furniture, allowing the walls to be decorated with art, and having books and games available all serve to create a more therapeutic living space for the inmates. In addition, the MHAs encourage the use of hygiene products, such as shampoo, soap, deodorant, and oral health products, diminishing the stigma associated with mental illness. MHAs are on call 24 hours a day in case a patient is experiencing a crisis. ⁶³

FIP was created to help these inmates deal with the stresses of their mental condition. Inmates who have been assigned to Twin Towers have been diagnosed with mild or severe mental illnesses: schizophrenia, bipolar

⁶¹ <https://centerforhealthjournalism.org/our-work/reporting/incarcerated-volunteers-are-caring-peers-mental-health-la-county-wants-expand>

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Interviews with CHS and LASD and the book "The Solution: Mental Health Assistants Bridging The Gap to Effective Treatment" authorized by Craigen Armstrong & Adrian Berumen."

disorder, major depression, Post Traumatic System Disorder/PTSD and more.⁶⁴

MHAs do not include jail staff. While in custody, Craigen and Adrian spent time educating themselves on how best to provide peer-to-peer support to calm the agitated inmates for deputy sheriffs, doctors, clinicians, and social workers.⁶⁵

Due to the success of FIP at Twin Towers, as explained below, the program has also now been implemented at the women's jail (CRDF). In September 2022, four pods were designated to train MHAs for about 300 inmates. CRDF currently provides three months' training through a program originally known as "Getting Out by Going In". There are 22 to 24 inmates in a CRDF pod.⁶⁶

Note: Craigen Armstrong and Los Angeles Twin Towers FIP Stepdown co-authored a recently published book titled, "FIP Stepdown Policy and Operations Companion Manual (February 2026)," a guide that explains the approach to building a therapeutic environment where safety and humanity co-exist.

Forensic In-Patient Stepdown Graduation Ceremony

Members of the CGJ for the Mental Health In Jails Committee attended the FIP Stepdown Graduation Ceremony at the Twin Towers on December 16, 2025. This was the fifth graduation ceremony that recognized adult inmates in custody who completed the six-month mental health program to become an MHA.

⁶⁴ [https://REPORT BACK ON SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANTS IN FURTHERING THE SUSTAINABILITY AND SUCCESS OF THE FORENSIC IN-PATIENT STEP.pdf](https://REPORT%20BACK%20ON%20SUPPORT%20FOR%20MENTAL%20HEALTH%20ASSISTANTS%20IN%20FURTHERING%20THE%20SUSTAINABILITY%20AND%20SUCCESS%20OF%20THE%20FORENSIC%20IN-PATIENT%20STEP.pdf).

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ CGJ group tour to CDRF on August 12, 2025.

The ceremony celebrated the achievement of 13 MHAs and 150 incarcerated individuals.⁶⁷

The event was attended by several LACO dignitaries. LACO Sheriff Robert Luna spoke, saying, "There is something special happening in this place and with this program. This program does pave the way for considering a different alternative to the way to care for our incarcerated community, who does suffer from mental illness. To the best of our knowledge, there is no other County jail that provides anything similar to this FIP Step Down Program. That is a long way of saying, we are very proud of what we are doing here."

LACO District Attorney, Nathan Hochman, said: "Make this FIP Program what the entire jail system should look like, and find the resources necessary to expand the FIP throughout the County jails". Another high level County employee also spoke, stating "in 2016 the County and LASD took a risk to create FIP. The initial two pods were the longest pilot program we ever had. Supported by the Compliance Office of the CEO, this should be the standard of care".

At the ceremony, all the CGJ members in attendance were allowed to speak with the inmates and learn more about the program.

This was an enlightening event and experience that spoke to the fact that FIP is a unique program held only in LACO within the State of California, and to our knowledge, there is no other program like it in the United States.

⁶⁷ <https://SCVNews.com> LASD Custody Division Honors Inmates on the Path of Recovery and Success December 17,2025.



Twin Towers – Audience from FIP Stepdown Graduation held on 12/15/25 photo sent by LASD

Fip Stepdown Program Success

FIP has successfully offered the inmates a therapeutic program of care. The BOS voted on June 27, 2023, to adopt, expand, and triple the number of FIP Stepdown Program pods from 10 to 30 by 2025, expanding the HOH modules at Twin Towers Correctional Facility and CRDF.⁶⁸

CHS officially told the committee that the inmates who participate in the program benefit from the following:

- Increased unrestricted out-of-cell time so inmates can socialize with one another and more readily engage in therapeutic, educational and other programmed activities
- Area and space featuring murals, aquariums, soft furniture, plants and activity tables

⁶⁸ <https://file.lacounty.gov/SDSIntel/bos/supdocs/181914.pdf>.

- Pro-social behavior to prepare inmates for less restrictive placements such as community diversion⁶⁹



FIP Stepdown pod in Twin Towers -California inmates are improving mental health behind bars - CSMonitor.com

While FIP has gained much publicity and acknowledgement for its success, there are several factors that must be addressed for it to successfully continue in its goal to help and treat inmates with mental health issues:

1. Dedicated Director of the FIP Stepdown Program – The program is managed by inmates and overseen by the Sheriff’s Department. The program was run by a former dedicated employee. A dedicated full-time employee should be on staff to manage the program. ⁷⁰
2. High Observation Housing - While Twin Towers has done a good job in converting space to accommodate the FIP area for inmates with mental health issues, more space is necessary to fully support the program for High Observation Housing.

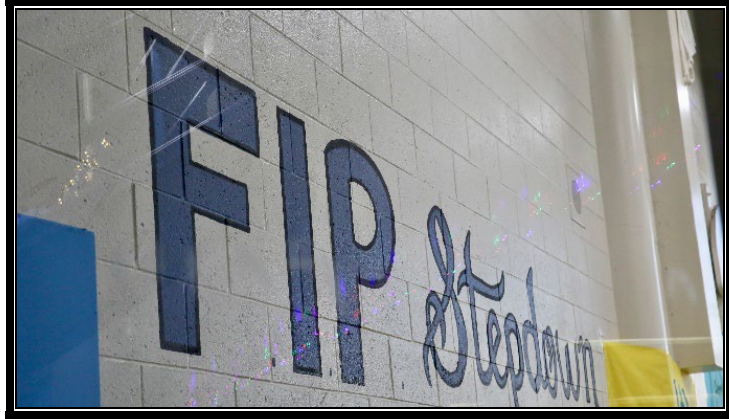
⁶⁹ Interviews with CHS and LASD on October 29,2025.

⁷⁰ <https://www.medangel.org/redefining-mental-health-care-with-peer-support-in-la-county-jails/>.

Special Recognition

The 2025-26 CGJ would like to recognize and formally commend the following teams for their dedication and support of mental illness treatment in jails:

- **The Correctional Health Department staff** tirelessly support the inmates throughout LACO jails. The committee met with CHS multiple times to gain an understanding of their involvement with mental illness. Their team is actively engaged in providing attention and utmost care to inmates with mental health issues.
- **The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department** supports the FIP Stepdown Program by partnering with CHS clinical staff to manage the high observation units, allowing for more out-of-cell time, daily activities and improved safety. It was evident during our visits at Twin Towers they are supportive of the program.
In addition, the Sheriff deputies at CRDF (women's detention center in Lynwood), fully supports inmates with mental health issues. They partner with CHS staff to provide on-site mental health treatment and substance abuse care, aimed at promoting wellness before release.
- **Heart Forward LA Staff**, a non-profit organization, plays a crucial role in supporting FIP at Twin Towers by providing funding, resources, and community engagement. Additionally, Heart Forward LA supports the MHAs by funding their podcast, which exposes the brokenness of the mental health system in America and highlights the work of transformation.



Picture provided by LASD

FINDINGS

Finding 11.1

The FIP Program has been managed up to now by its MHA inmate founders, together with Correctional Health Services and sheriff staff. However, as MHAs are sentenced to state prisons or released, the FIP program loses continuity, resulting in weakened leadership.

Finding 11.2

CHS needs more staff to assist in the ongoing needs of inmates with mental health issues at TTCF and CDRF.

Finding 11.3

The FIP program lacks written and fully documented procedures, resulting in uneven and differing operational standards.

Finding 11.4

The inmates who participate in the six-month MHA training receive a certificate of completion, but do not receive any recognized accreditation from a school, which is a disincentive for some to participate in the program.

Finding 11.5

The FIP program requires high observation housing to operate effectively, but the HOH space in jails is limited, which restricts the program's expansion.

Finding 11.6

Sheriff deputies are rotated into the Twin Towers mental health issues section as part of their duty tours. They do not always understand or appreciate the FIP's purpose and operations, resulting in their disinterest and non-support of the FIP program.

Finding 11.7

The CRDF has a modified version of the FIP program. It does not operate the same as Twin Towers and results in less than optimal provision of mental health services.

Finding 11.8

The Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center in Castaic does not have capability for MHA peer-assisted mental health services, resulting in less than optimal providing of mental health services.

Finding 11.9

To support the FIP stepdown program, LASD needs various supplies (e.g, Computers/laptops, dry erase boards, musical instruments, office supplies, books, art supplies, board games, holiday decorations, etc.) to reduce stress and make for a more calming environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 11.1

Appoint a permanent Correctional Health Services staff member to fully manage the FIP Stepdown Program. A full-time director/coordinator should be hired to ensure the integrity and continuity of the program.

Recommendation 11.2

CHS should conduct an analysis of current staffing and projected needs to fully support inmates with mental health issues that are part of the FIP Stepdown Program in other jail facilities, and hire staff, as needed.

Recommendation 11.3

Develop procedures that fully outline how FIP works. Create detailed procedures and training for MHAs and Sheriff deputies. An easy to follow manual and directive that describes and outlines all the procedures, policies, instructions and program information for MHAs should be created.

Recommendation 11.4

Develop a certification program with a local community college or school. The program provided in jail could become a class taught at the college level.

The inmates who successfully complete the training should receive accreditation for completing the program. This formal accreditation would be helpful if the inmate is sentenced to a state prison and helps them in establishing a program there. For those fortunate to be released, certification may assist them in obtaining gainful employment.

Recommendation 11.5

Develop more High Observation Housing units to grow the FIP Stepdown Program to accommodate the increasing number of inmates with mental health issues.

Recommendation 11.6

Develop specialized training for sheriff deputies assigned to the HOH where FIP operates. Deputies transferring into the section should receive a modified class of training as given to the prospective MHAs. The deputy should be trained to be sensitive to the special needs of the inmate with mental health issues. If possible, the department should create a voluntary rotation position for those deputies who want to work specifically in FIP as their on-going assignment.

Recommendation 11.7

Expand the training for the women at CDRF with the FIP model used by the MHAs at Twin Towers.

Recommendation 11.8

Develop a modified version of the FIP program at Peter J. Pitchess Detention Center to assist in mental health support of inmates who are not transferred to Twin Towers.

Recommendation 11.9

LASD should help coordinate getting supplies in support of the FIP Program by hosting donation drives, etc.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

California Penal Code Sections 933(c) and 933.05 require a written response to all recommendations contained in this report. Responses by elected County officials and agency heads shall be made no later than sixty (60) days after the Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court. Responses by the governing body of public agencies shall be made no later than ninety (90) days after the CGJ publishes its report and files with the Clerk of the Court.

All responses to the recommendations of the 2025-26 County of Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury must be submitted to:

Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles
 c/o Grand Jury Administration
 222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
 Los Angeles, CA 90012

Agency	Recommendation
Los Angeles County Sheriff Department	11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.7, 11.8, 11.9
Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors	11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.5, 11.7, 11.8, 11.9
Los Angeles County Department of Health Services	11.1, 11.2, 11.3, 11.4, 11.5, 11.6, 11.7, 11.8, 11.9

Acronyms

ACLU	AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
BOS	BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BSCC	BOARD OF STATE AND COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS
CGJ	LOS ANGELES CIVIL GRAND JURY
CHS	CORRECTIONAL HEALTH SERVICES
CRDF	CORRECTIONAL REGIONAL DETENTION FACILITY
DHS	DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
DMH	DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
HOH	HIGH OBSERVATION HOUSING
IRC	INMATE RECEPTION CENTER
JCOD	JUSTICE CARE AND OPPORTUNITIES DEPARTMENT
JMET	JAIL MENTAL EVALUATION TEAM
LACO	LOS ANGELES COUNTY
LASD	LOS ANGELES SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT
LPS	LANTERMAN-PETRIS-SHORT DESIGNATED FACILITIES
MCJ	MEN'S CENTRAL JAIL
MHA	MENTAL HEALTH ASSISTANTS
ODR	OFFICE OF DIVERSION AND REENTRY

Committee Members

Lisa Griffin, Chair

James Bukowski

Holly Carroll

Carolyn Cobb

Gwen D. Morgan-Smith

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS



2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury

AUDIT

To audit or not audit; that is the question. The Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury may investigate the fiscal operations and financial bona fides of Los Angeles County and City, as well as local and other city governments and their departments, agencies, school districts and special districts. To support such effort, California Penal Code Section 926 authorizes the Civil Grand Jury to retain qualified outside expert auditors to assist in that endeavor.

Audits provide independent assurance and credibility that an organization's financial statements are accurate, fairly represent its financial health, are free from material mistakes and in compliance with applicable laws. The audit may also determine if controls and procedures are satisfactory and eliminate those that are redundant or burdensome. Further, audits identify deviations from policies and procedures and identify productivity enhancements. Auditors undertaking these tasks necessarily charge all associated costs for their professional services rendered.

The Civil Grand Jury's considerations when confronting an investigative sub-committee contemplating the pursuit of an audit are time and cost. Besides identifying a focal point for an investigation, learning enough subject matter to conclude an audit is a requisite component of the investigation's efforts, determining the time auditors need to complete, and incorporating the audit's results into a final report present significant challenge.

The role of the Audit Committee is not to perform an audit but rather liaise between the investigating committee and the outside auditing firm. The Committee, with assistance from County Counsel, is responsible for managing and controlling any audit by its involvement with coordinating the

scope and cost, contracting the services, monitoring their progress, and approving billings for payment.

During the term of the 2025-26 Civil Grand Jury no contracts for work in this field were required.

Committee Members

Tom Hutchinson, Chair

Carina H. Lister

Michael S. Stefanko

CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS

SUMMARY

The Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) receives complaints from the residents of Los Angeles County who have completed the Civil Grand Jury Citizens' Complaint Form. Submission of these complaints is how citizens can petition the CGJ regarding grievances against cities, agencies, and special districts within Los Angeles County.

The Citizens' Complaint Committee (CCC) reviews the complaint paperwork to see that it pertains to matters under CGJ purview. Many complaints are focused on matters outside of CGJ jurisdiction and no further action needs to be taken. Some complaints, under CGJ jurisdiction, require further investigation by the CCC to determine if the issue was extensive enough to be considered for a formal inquiry.

DISCUSSION

Any resident of the County of Los Angeles may ask the CGJ to investigate their complaint. The complaint must be in writing and must include detailed evidence supporting the complaint or request for investigation. All complaints are treated by the CGJ as confidential.

Residents who wish to submit complaints have been able to find the complaint form and guidelines at the CGJ website: www.lacourt.org/forms/jury. At the suggestion of a Committee member, a link to the form was added to the LA County website. It can be found at: lacounty.gov/services/report.



It is noted that while the sources of complaints cannot be tracked, the increase in the number of complaints received this year is due, in part, to the addition of the form to the County website.

While completing the complaint form online is the preferred method, handwritten complaints are accepted and all forms must meet the following criteria:

- Who or what agency is the complaint against?
- What is the nature (subject) of the complaint?
- When and where did the incident(s) occur?
- What/who/where action was improper or illegal?
- What were the consequences of this action?
- What action or remedies are required? Why/how?
- Attach relevant documents and correspondence with specifics and dates.

Completed complaints must be mailed to the CGJ office at:

Los Angeles County Superior Court
Grand Jury Administration
222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670
Los Angeles, CA 90012

In 2025-26 the CGJ received forty-five complaints. One complaint was voted on by the CGJ to be further researched. Three complaints were determined to need further review by the next Civil Grand Jury. In those cases, per our procedures, the complainant was sent a letter requesting them to resubmit their complaint after July 1st.

The CGJ findings will be published in the final report, which is available after June 30,2026.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The CGJ has established procedures for receiving, acknowledging, and processing citizens' complaints. All complaints are initially received by CGJ administrative staff, copied, and assigned a reference number. These are the procedures:

1. All citizen complaints must be in writing, signed, and mailed to the administrative office of the Jury, at 222 South Hill Street, Sixth Floor, Suite 670, Los Angeles, CA 90012.
2. The staff prepares an acknowledgement letter, makes a copy, and mails the original to the complainant. A copy of the complaint, along with the copy of the acknowledgement letter, is placed in an individual numbered folder created when the staff logged the complaint.
3. Names and identities of complainants shall be kept confidential unless otherwise authorized. Complaints are kept in a locked cabinet designated for CCC use only.

Once the complaint is passed on to the CCC, the following steps are followed to ensure an effective response to complaints:

1. Does the complaint fall under the jurisdiction of the CGJ? If it does:
2. The CCC determines if there is sufficient evidence to support the complaint. If so:
3. The CCC determines whether this complaint might become an Inquiry. Further investigation reveals the scope of the problem. If the CCC decides to continue:
4. A member of the CCC will be assigned to write up a problem statement to be presented to the entire CGJ, which can then vote to turn the complaint into an Inquiry.

Other Policies

1. There is no direct communication between a complainant and an individual grand juror. All written communications are made by the CGJ administrative staff. In rare situations where further information is desired from the complainant, and such contact is approved, interviews must be conducted by no less than two grand jurors.
2. If citizens' complaints cannot be brought to a satisfactory conclusion by the end of the CGJ term, a letter is sent by the CGJ administrative staff to the complainant requesting them to resubmit the complaint after July 1, 2026.
3. The results of the complaint reviews are tabulated and displayed in a table at the end of the Committee's Final Report.
4. The complaints are boxed, sealed, and put into storage for five years at the end of the CGJ term.

Possible Dispositions

Dispositions include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. No jurisdiction: Involves a state or federal issue
- b. No jurisdiction: Does not involve government procedures
- c. Complaint involves matter pending before a judicial body
- d. Complaint restricted to a single individual
- e. Insufficient supporting documents, lack of facts, illegible information
- f. Matter already under investigation by others
- g. No valid basis for an inquiry
- h. Approved by the CGJ to initiate an Inquiry
- i. Complainant requested to resubmit complaint after July 1, 2026

Note: Not all disposition types occur every year. The table below displays the disposition types reported for the 2025-26 CGJ year, with the number of complaints falling into each disposition category.

CITIZENS' COMPLAINTS 2025-26

DISPOSITION	NUMBER
No jurisdiction: Involves a state or federal issue	3
No jurisdiction: Does not involve government procedures	12
Complaint involves matter pending before a judicial body	7
Complaint restricted to a single individual	6
Insufficient supporting documents, lack of facts, illegible information	4
Matter already under investigation by others	4
No valid basis for an inquiry	5
Approved by the CGJ to initiate an Inquiry	1
Complainant asked to resubmit after July 1	3
Total complaints reviewed	45

Committee Members

Lisa Griffin, Chair
 Eva F. Brusa
 Susan Hale Gidlow
 Dennis R. Martinez
 Gwen D. Morgan-Smith
 Michael S. Stefanko

CONTINUITY

SUMMARY

The Continuity Committee is the bridge connecting prior, current, and future Civil Grand Juries operating in Los Angeles County. Its primary function is to determine whether County agencies and elected officials adequately and fully responded to the various findings and recommendations published in the previous year's Civil Grand Jury Final Report.

The 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Continuity Committee carefully collected, reviewed, and categorized the responses to the 2024-25 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury Final Report. Pursuant to the California Penal Code, the Committee was charged by the Civil Grand Jury to see that all relevant agencies and public officials requested to respond were in full compliance.

DISCUSSION

Beginning in July of each year, the new Civil Grand Jury collects the responses to the prior year's Final Report. The Committee contacts, as needed, the relevant public agencies and individuals asked to respond to the prior year's Civil Grand Jury findings and recommendations. Those agencies have up to ninety (90) days following their receipt of the Final Report to respond as specified under California Penal Code Section 933.05. Subsection (a) requires respondents to agree or disagree with findings, and importantly, California Penal Code Section 933.05(b) specifies the following responses to the Civil Grand Jury recommendations:

1. The recommendation has been implemented, with a summary regarding the implemented action.
2. The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future, with a time frame for implementation.
3. The recommendation requires further analysis, with an explanation and the scope and parameters of an analysis or study, and a time-frame for the matter to be prepared for discussion by the officer or head of the agency... This timeframe shall not exceed six months....
4. The recommendation will not be implemented because it is not warranted or is not reasonable, with an explanation thereof.

The Civil Grand Jury is not charged with addressing the content of prior Final Reports, findings and recommendations, only to ensure the responses are collected and catalogued for preservation. Each Continuity Committee reviews responses for compliance and completeness. Close examination is made to determine the responding individual, or agency understood the intent of the recommendation. The response should be specific, and the basis for rejection of a recommendation must be clear.

Going back as far as 1970, Final Reports of all Civil Grand Juries can be found online at: <http://grandjury.co.la.ca.us/gjreports.html>.

In cases where an agency has not responded, or only partially responded, the Committee contacts the agency or individual. If an agency still does not respond within a reasonable time frame, the non-response is noted.

Ultimately the Civil Grand Jury maintains an archive of Final Reports and responses to the recommendations, together with all Civil Grand Jury notes and correspondence, for a minimum of five (5) years in compliance with California Penal Code Section 933.05(c). The Committee is tasked by the Civil Grand Jury with passing on responses to the 2026-27 Civil Grand Jury

and with organizing the responses received for publication. After collection, but prior to publication, responses are organized and uploaded to the Jury's website.

If the current Civil Grand Jury wishes to revisit a topic addressed in a prior Final Report, a new inquiry/investigation must be proposed and approved by a vote of the body by a supermajority vote of at least 14 votes. In voting to conduct such inquiries to advance the work of its predecessor(s), the Civil Grand Jury must recognize the statute which requires that no Grand Jury may accept, without independent investigation, the recommendations of previous Grand Juries.

CIVIL GRAND JURY 2024-25 FINAL REPORT FINDINGS AND SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

1. Animal Shelters

The City and County of Los Angeles agree the recommendation for more regular shelter employees in their respective shelters cannot be implemented at this time in the budget cycle. This reason was additionally cited by the County for being unable to expand formal outreach programs (although the City reports implementation). The City of Los Angeles was sympathetic with the recommendations in favor of setting an optimal number of regular shelter employees and for maximizing donations. However, it argued budgetary constraints

and legal considerations prevented implementation as suggested. Similarly, the City of Los Angeles sees the value of adding retired veterinarians to staff but observes the existing positions have gone unfilled due to the national shortage of these professionals.

2. Emergency Room Conditions

There are substantial concerns by both the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles County with the recommendations made in this report to address Ambulance Patient Offload Time, defined as the time that elapses between the arrival of Emergency Medical Transport crews at the emergency bay and the final transfer of patient care to the hospital. In summary, the City of Los Angeles feels the recommendations are not within their jurisdiction, while Los Angeles County was only able to agree with and implement, wholly or partially, half of the recommendations.

3. Trees in Los Angeles

Rooftop tree plantings are a cause of concern for both City of Los Angeles and the County. While both partially agree, in principle, to the recommendation to purchase lots for orchards in red-lined areas, neither was willing to move forward with implementation.

4. Water Quality Issues

Of the three named small providers, one disagreed with the recommendation to accelerate implementation of the remediation plan, while a second believed further study was required and the third implemented the plan. The Los Angeles County Chief Sustainability Office disagreed with the recommendation that districts should be consolidated.

5. Our Jails

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department disagreed with the recommendation that more access to, and education about, jails should be provided. The Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission thought further study was needed as to cooperation with the Sheriff's Department to provide jail tour opportunities.

6. Los Angeles General Medical Center

The County was the only respondent for this report. The County strongly disagreed with the medical profession hiring recommendation. Similarly, the recommendation that control of purchasing strategy should be limited to fewer departments was also opposed.

Recommendations regarding hospital security concerns were, however, accepted in full and either wholly or partially implemented. Lastly, recommendations relating to increasing private financial support, as well as those on branding and public relations, were almost uniformly felt to require further study.

7. Energizing CalAIM

Half of the County-related recommendations in this Interim Report were directed to the Board of Supervisors, while the remainder were given to the Los Angeles County General Medical Center for response. The Board of Supervisors rejected the basic premise of the investigation – to wit: “The Board of Supervisors should rejuvenate the Health Agency originally approved by the BOS in 2015, empowering it to make binding decisions regarding collaboration and integration projects involving health-related County Departments.” As to the

CalAIM program recommendations, both the Los Angeles County General Medical Center and the Los Angeles County Care Health Plan expressed issues with recommendations regarding Enhanced Care Management provider status.

8. Health Authority for County Health Services

The County disagreed with all recommendations and explained a consultant was retained “to conduct an evaluation of the Alliance of Health Integration to determine best practices and areas for improvement and provide recommended options for the Board’s consideration for supporting the collaboration between the three health departments that improve access to comprehensive health care.” Thus, “no further action will be taken.”

9. The Breathalyzer

The City of Los Angeles disagreed with recommendations on the grounds their breathalyzer instruments meet current standards, and there are no plans to purchase new instruments. The County partially disagreed with the recommendation for Intoxilyser 9000 training given current budget curtailments, and due to established budget request policies and procedures.

10. Regional Centers

The seven regional centers respectfully declined to implement the recommendation to “develop a shared network of multilingual case manager advisors” on the grounds they are “independent, private, non-profit organizations that operate as private businesses...” The County objected to the recommendation to hire a case management coordinator because “there is already a system in place...” As to the

recommendations to address funding restrictions, the County also cited the status of the regional centers as private businesses.

11. Rat Infestations

Both the County and the City of Los Angeles agree wholly or in part with the recommendations. They have implemented measures to varying degrees.

12. Senior Centers

The County responded that the recommendation of a coordinated City of Los Angeles/County plan was moot as "This recommendation has already been implemented." Further, no action was seen as needed on seeking aid from non-profit organizations since "such funding is already being sought." The City of Los Angeles agreed with almost all the recommendations and reported substantial implementation.

13. City of Los Angeles World Airports Automated People Mover

The County reported the recommendation on the Airport Enterprise Fund did not pertain to County operations and was thus not within its jurisdiction. The City of Los Angeles replied that a transfer of excess Airport Enterprise Funds to the City would violate Federal law. The City of Los Angeles Controller's Office was amenable to the review of a Board of Airport Commissioners report on surplus funds if such a report were issued and its review was requested.

Committee Members

M. Gordon Seyffert, Chair
Holly Carroll
Valerie Esguerra
Tom Hutchinson
Rob Martin

DETENTION

The Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) is mandated by the California Penal Code 919⁷¹ to inquire into the condition and management of jails, courthouse holding cells, and other public detention facilities operated by various law enforcement agencies such as Los Angeles Sheriff Department and Los Angeles Police Department.

According to California Penal Code 921⁷², the Civil Grand Jury is entitled to free access, at all reasonable times, to the public prisons, and to the examination, without charge, of all public records within the county.

The purpose of these inspections is to review the overall condition of the facilities such as jail operations, policies and procedures, and health/safety. If any problems in these areas are identified, further inspection is advised.

The CGJ received a list of 131 detention facilities. The CGJ visited 56 facilities. Seven were closed and the remaining 68 were not visited. The Detention Committee developed an inspection questionnaire to be completed at each of the facilities visited. The jury was divided into eight teams of two or three members to inspect facilities geographically located in the jurors' home area.

The table on the next page lists the detention facilities in Los Angeles County.

⁷¹California Legislative Information, [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN§ionNum=919#:~:text=\(a\)%20The%20grand%20jury%20may,Effective%20January%201%2C%202016.](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displaySection.xhtml?lawCode=PEN§ionNum=919#:~:text=(a)%20The%20grand%20jury%20may,Effective%20January%201%2C%202016.))

⁷²<https://law.justia.com/codes/california/code-pen/part-2/title-4/chapter-3/article-1/section-921/>

Committee Members

Michelle M. Wilson, Chair

Gwen D. Morgan-Smith, Vice Chair

James Bukowski

Holly Carroll

Leroy R. Titus

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
77 th Street Community Station 7600 S Broadway Los Angeles, CA 90003 (323) 786-5075	LAPD	YES	9/5/2025
Alfred J McCartney Juvenile Justice Center 1040 W Avenue J Lancaster, CA 93534 (661) 945-6354	PROBATION	YES	9/12/2025
Alhambra Courthouse 150 W Commonwealth Ave Alhambra, CA 91801 (626) 293-2100	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Alhambra Police Station 150 W Commonwealth Ave Alhambra, CA 91801 (626) 570-5151	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Altadena Station 780 E Altadena Drive Altadena, CA 91001 (626) 798-1131	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Arcadia Police Station 211 1st Street Arcadia, CA 91007 (626) 574-5151	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Avalon Station 215 Sumner Ave Avalon, CA 90704 (310) 510-0174	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Azusa Police 725 Akaneda Ave Azusa, CA 91702 (626) 812-3200	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Baldwin Park Police 14403 E Pacific Ave Baldwin Park, CA 91706 (626) 960-1955	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Barry J Nidorf Juvenile Hall 16350 Filbert St Sylmar, CA 91342 (818) 364-2011	PROBATION	CLOSED	CLOSED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Bell Gardens Police 7100 Garfield Ave Bell Gardens, CA 90201 (562) 806-7700	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
Bell Police 6326 Pine Ave Bell, CA 90201 (323) 585-1245	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Bellflower Courthouse 10025 Flower St Bellflower, CA 90706 (562) 345-3300	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Beverly Hills Courthouse 9555 Burton Way #191 Beverly Hills, CA 90210 (310) 288-1279	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Beverly Hills Police 464 N Rexford Drive Beverly Hills, CA 90210 (310) 550-4951	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Burbank Courthouse 300 E Olive St Burbank, CA 91502 (818) 260-8498	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Burbank Police Station 200 Third St Burbank, CA 91502 (818) 238-3333	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Camp Clinton B Afflerbaugh 6621 N Stephens Ranch Rd La Verne, CA 91750 (909) 593-4926	PROBATION	YES	9/5/2025
Camp Glenn Rockey 1900 Sycamore Canyon San Dimas, CA 91773 (909) 599-2391	PROBATION	YES	9/5/2025
Camp Joseph Paige 6601 Stephens Rach Rd La Verne, CA 91750 (909) 593-4921	PROBATION	CLOSED	CLOSED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Camp Vernon Kilpatrick 427 S Encinal Canyon Rd Malibu, CA 90265 (818) 899-1353	PROBATION	CLOSED	CLOSED
Carson Station 21356 S Avalon Blvd Carson, CA 90745 (310) 485-3294	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Central Arraignment Courthouse 429 Bauchet St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 974-6068	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Central Community Station 215 E 6th St Los Angeles, CA 90014 (213) 486-6606	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Central Juvenile Hall 1605 Eastvale Ave Los Angeles, CA 90033 (323) 226-8611	LASD	CLOSED	CLOSED
Century Regional Detention Facility 11705 S Alameda St Lynwood, CA 900262 (323) 568-4500	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Cerritos Station 18135 Bloomfield Ave Cerritos, CA 90703 (562) 860-0044	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
City of Industry 150 N Hudson St City Of Industry, CA 91744 (626) 330-3322	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Clara Shortridge-Foltz Center 210 W Temple St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 628-7900	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Claremont Police 570 W Bonita Ave Claremont, CA 91711 (909) 399-5411	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Compton Courthouse 200 W Compton Blvd Compton, CA 90220 (310) 761-4300	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Covina Police Department 444 N Citrus Ave Covina, CA 91733 (626) 384-5595	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
Crescenta Valley Station 4554 N Briggs Ave La Crescenta, CA 91214 (818) 248-3463	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Culver City Police 4040 Duquesne Ave Culver City, CA 90232 (310) 253-6208	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Devonshire Community Station 10250 Etiwanda Ave Northridge, CA 91325 (818) 832-0622	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Dodger Stadium Security Office 1000 Elysian Park Los Angeles, CA 90012 (323) 224-2611	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED
Dorothy Kirby Center 1500 S McDonnell Ave Los Angeles, CA 90022 (323) 981-4301	PROBATION	NO	NOT VISITED
Downey Courthouse 7500 Imperial Hwy Downey, CA 90242 (562) 658-0500	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Downey Police 10911 Brookshire Drive #2700 Downey, CA 90242 (562) 861-0771	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
East Los Angeles Sheriff's Station 5019 East 3rd Street Los Angeles, CA 90022	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
East Los Angeles Courthouse 4848 Civic Center Way Los Angeles, CA 90022 (323) 780-2025	LASD	YES	9/12/2025

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Ed Edelman Children's Court 201 Centre Plaza Drive #2700 Monterey Park, CA 91754 (323) 307-8098	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
El Monte Courthouse 11234 E Valley Blvd El Monte, CA 91731 (626) 401-2298	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
El Monte Police 11333 Valley Blvd El Monte, CA 91731 (626) 580-2100	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
El Segundo Police Station 348 Main St El Segundo, CA 90245 (310) 524-2200	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Foothill Community Station 12670 Osborne St Pacoima, CA 91331 (818) 756-8861	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Gardena Police 1718 162nd Street Gardena, CA 90247 (310) 217-9670	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
George Deukmejian Courthouse 275 Magnolia Ave Long Beach, CA 90802 (562) 256-3100	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Glendale Police 131 N Isabel St Glendale, CA 91206 (818) 548-4840	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
Glendale Courthouse 600 E Broadway Ave Glendale, CA 91206 (818) 265-6400	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Glendora Police 150 S Glendora Ave Glendora, CA 91741 (626) 914-8250	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Harbor Community Station 2175 John Gibson Blvd San Pedro, CA 90731 (310) 726-7700	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Hawthorne Police Station 12501 Hawthorne Blvd Hawthorne, CA 90250 (310) 675-4444	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Hermosa Beach Police 540 Pier Ave Hermosa Beach, CA 90254 (310) 318-0360	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISTED
Hollenbeck Community Station 2111 E 1 st St Los Angeles, CA 90033 (323) 342-4100	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Hollywood Community Station 1358 Wilcox Ave Los Angeles, CA 90028 (213) 972-2971	LAPD	YES	9/5/2025
Huntington Park Police Station 6542 Miles Ave Huntington Park, CA 90255 (323) 584-6524	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Inglewood Courthouse 1 E Regent St Inglewood, CA 90301 (310) 419-5132	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Inglewood Juvenile Court 110 E Regent St Inglewood, CA 90301 (310) 419-5255	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Inglewood Police Department 1 W Manchester Ave Inglewood, CA 90301 (310) 412-5211	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Inmate Reception Center 450 Bauchet St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 893-5875	LASD	YES	9/12/2025

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Irwindale Police Station 505 N Irwindale Ave Irwindale, CA 91706 (626)430-2244	LASD	CLOSED	CLOSED
LA County Fairgrounds Holding 101 W McKinley Ave Pomona, CA 91768 (909)623-3111	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
La Verne Police Department 2061 3rd St La Verne, CA 91750 (909) 596-1913	CITY POLICE	CLOSED	CLOSED
LAC + USC Jail Ward 2051 Marengo Street Los Angeles, CA 90033 (323) 409-1000	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Lakewood Police Station 5130 N Clark Ave Lakewood, CA 90712 (562) 623-3500	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Lancaster Sheriff's Station 501 W Lancaster Blvd Lancaster, CA 93534 (661) 948-8466	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
LAX Courthouse 11701 S La Cienega Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90045 (310) 725-3000	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Lomita Station 6123 Narbonne Ave Lomita, CA 90717 (310) 539-1661	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Long Beach Police Department 400 W Broadway Long Beach, CA 90802 (562) 570-7260	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Los Angeles Airport Police Facility 9160 Loyola Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90045 (424) 646-6100	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall 7285 Quill Drive Downey, CA 90242 (562) 940-8681	PROBATION	NO	NOT VISITED
Lost Hills Station 27050 Agoura Rd Calabasas, CA 91301 (818) 878-1808	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Manhattan Beach Police Facility 420 15th ST Manhattan Beach, CA 90266 (310) 802-5140	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Marina Del Rey Station 13851 Fiji Way Marina Del Rey, CA 90292 (310) 482-6000	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Men's Central Jail 441 Bauchet St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 974-4921	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Mental Health Courthouse 5925 Hollywood Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90028 (323) 441-1898	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Metropolitan Courthouse 1945 S Hill St Los Angeles, CA 90007 (213) 745-3202	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Metropolitan Detention Center 180 N Los Angeles St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 485-0439	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Michael D Antonovich Antelope Valley Courthouse 42011 4th St Lancaster, CA 93534 (661) 974-7200	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Mission Hills Community Station 11121 N Sepulveda Blvd Mission Hills, CA 91345 (818) 838-9800	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Monrovia Police 140 E Lime Ave Monrovia, CA 91016 (626) 256-8000	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Monterey Park Police 320 W Newmark Ave (662) 573-1311 Monterey Park, CA 91754	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Newton Community Station 3400 S Central Ave Los Angeles, CA 90011 (323) 846-6547	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
North County Correctional Facility 29340 The Old Road Castaic, CA 91384 (661) 295-7810	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
North Hollywood Community Station 11640 Burbank Blvd North North Hollywood, CA 91601 (818) 623-4016	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Northeast Community Station 3353 San Fernando Rd Los Angeles, CA 90065 (323) 561-3218	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED
Norwalk Courthouse 12720 Norwalk Blvd Norwalk, CA 90650 (562) 345-3700	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Norwalk Station 12335 Civic Center Drive Norwalk, CA 90650 (562) 863-8711	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
Olympic Community Station 1130 S Vermont Ave Los Angeles, CA 90006 (213) 382-9102	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED
Pacific Community Station 12312 Culver Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90066 (310) 482-6334	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Palmdale Sheriff's Station 750 East Ave Q Palmdale, CA 93550 (661) 272-2400	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Palos Verdes Police 340 Palos Verdes Drive Palos Verdes, CA 90274 (310) 378-4211	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Pasadena Courthouse 300 E Walnut St Pasadena, CA 91101 (626) 396-3300	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Pasadena Police 207 N Garfield Ave Pasadena, CA 91101 (626) 744-4501	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Pico Rivera Station 6631 Parsons Blvd Pico Rivera, CA 90660 (562) 848-2421	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
Pitchess Detention East Facility 29330 The Old Road Castaic, CA 91384 (661) 295-7810	PROBATION	NO	NOT VISITED
Pitchess Detention North Facility 29320 The Old Road Castaic, CA 91384 (661) 295-8840	PROBATION	NO	NOT VISITED
Pitchess Detention South Facility 29330 The Old Road Castaic, CA 91384 (661) 295-8840	PROBATION	NO	NOT VISITED
Pomona Courthouse 400 W Mission Blvd Pomona, CA 91766 (909) 802-1100	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Pomona Police 490 W Mission Blvd Pomona, CA 91766 (909) 620-2155	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Rampart Community Station 1401 W 6 th Street Los Angeles, CA 90017 (213) 484-3400	LAPD	YES	9/5/2025
Redondo Beach Police 401 Diamond St Redondo Beach, CA 90277 (310) 379-2477	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
San Fernando Courthouse 900 3 rd Street San Fernando, CA 91340 (818) 256-1800	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
San Fernando Police 910 1 st Street San Fernando, CA 91340 (818) 898-1267	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
San Gabriel Police 625 Del Mar Ave San Gabriel, CA 91776 (626) 308-2828	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
San Marino Police 2200 Huntington Drive San Marino, CA 91108 (626) 399-0720	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Santa Clarita Courthouse 23747 W Valencia Blvd Valencia, CA 91355 (661) 253-5600	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Santa Clarita Sheriff's Station 26201 Golden Valley Road Santa Clarita, CA 91350 (661) 260-4000	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Santa Clarita Valley Station 23740 W Magic Mountain Pkwy Valencia, CA 91355 (661) 253-5699	LASD	CLOSED	CLOSED
Santa Monica Courthouse 1725 Main St #114 Santa Monica, CA 90401 (310) 260-3515	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Santa Monica Police Station 333 Olympic Dr. Santa Monica, CA 90401 (323) 395-9931	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Sierra Madre Police 242 W Sierra Madre Blvd Sierra Madre, CA 91024 (626) 355-1414	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Signal Hill Police 2745 Walnut Ave Signal Hill, CA 90755 (562) 989-7200	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
South Gate Police 8620 California Ave South Gate, CA 90280 (323) 563-5436	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
South Pasadena Police 1422 Mission St South Pasadena, CA 91030 (626) 403-7270	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Southwest Community Station 1546 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90062 (213) 972-7828	LAPD	YES	9/5/2025
Temple City Station 8838 Las Tunas Drive Temple City, CA 91780 (626) 285-7171	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Topanga Community Station 21501 Schoenborn St Canoga Park, CA 91304 (818) 756-4800	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Torrance Courthouse 825 Maple Ave Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 787-3700	LASD	YES	9/5/2025
Torrance Police 3300 Civic Center Drive Torrance, CA 90503 (310) 328-3456	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025

Facility	Agency	Visited	Date Visited
Twin Towers 450 Bauchet St Los Angeles, CA 90012 (213) 893-5100	LASD	YES	9/12/2025
Van Nuys Community 6240 Sylmar Ave Van Nuys, CA 91401 (818) 374-9500	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Van Nuys Courthouse West 14400 Erwin St Mall Van Nuys, CA 91401 (818) 989-6900	LASD	NO	NOT VISITED
West Covina Police Dept 1444 West Garvey Ave S West Covina, CA 91790 (626) 939-8500	CITY POLICE	YES	9/12/2025
West Hollywood Station 780 N San Vicente Blvd West Hollywood 90089 (310) 855-8850	LAPD	YES	9/5/2025
West LA Community Station 1663 Butler Ave Los Angeles, CA 90025 (310) 444-0702	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED
West Valley Community Station 19020 Vanowen St Reseda, CA 91335 (818) 374-7611	CITY POLICE	NO	NOT VISITED
Whittier Courthouse 1339 Painter Ave Whittier, CA 90602 (562)968-2699	LAPD	CLOSED	CLOSED
Whittier Police 13200 Penn St Whittier, CA 90602 (562) 567-9200	CITY POLICE	YES	9/5/2025
Wilshire Community Station 4861 W Venice Blvd Los Angeles, CA 90019 (213) 473-0476	LAPD	NO	NOT VISITED

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EDIT

According to California Penal Code 933 (a), each Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) shall submit a Final Report to the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of their jurisdiction. Reports include findings and recommendations based on investigations of County and local government during the CGJ's term of service.

The 2025-26 CGJ is charged with thoroughly examining the contents of each Investigative and Standing Committee report before it is submitted to the Edit Committee for potential revisions. The CGJ must approve the overall content of the report by a supermajority of its membership.

The Edit Committee works with CGJ members (at their request) to resolve any issues involved in writing their reports. All CGJ members are encouraged to submit suggestions for grammatical, factual, and stylistic modifications to the Edit Committee once a report's content has been approved. The Edit Committee meets with the committee that produced the original document to resolve any issues encountered during editorial review.

The Edit Committee makes suggestions for changes to the written report to improve the presentation, but ultimately, all proposed changes must be approved by the committee that wrote the report. All reports are compiled into the Final Report by the Publication Committee, which creates the layout for the printed proof of the Final Report. The report is then submitted to the Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Superior Court for final approval. For this

publication, including this report, the Edit Committee has reviewed and edited every Investigative and Standing Committee report.

Committee Members

Dennis R. Martinez, Chair

Eva F. Brusa

James Bukowski

Valerie Esguerra

Susan Hale Gidlow

Rob Martin

Gordon Seyffert

HOSPITALITY

The Hospitality Committee of the 2025–26 Los Angeles Civil Grand Jury consists of six members of the Civil Grand Jury. The Committee organized events to promote togetherness and a friendly working environment.

The Committee established a monthly voluntary contribution amount for the Hospitality Committee Fund. The monies collected were used to buy supplies such as water, coffee, tea, chips and sodas. Additionally, the Committee coordinated monthly birthday celebrations and planned a well-received winter holiday luncheon.

The Committee met monthly to discuss the best ways to meet jury requests. A treasurer's report was provided monthly to the jury detailing the income and expenses.

Committee Members

Michelle M. Wilson, Chair
Holly Carroll
George O. Davis
Lisa Griffin
Gwen D. Morgan-Smith
Michael S. Stefanko
Victor V. Vidal

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The main function of the Information Technology (IT) Committee is to provide IT-related support to the jurors of the 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) as it relates to their work in investigative committees or standing committees. To that end, these activities were performed by the members of the IT Committee:

1. Conducted basic training and demonstrated how to use Word and Excel when writing reports.
2. Provided a reference document of Word shortcut keys.
3. Backed up the CGJ folders on a regular basis and recovered files from backups when necessary.
4. Created a Word template for the jury to use when writing the Final Report. The template was created following the formats decided by the Publication Committee.
5. Provided audio/video support to guest speakers during presentations.
6. Connected jurors' laptops to printers in the jury room.
7. Assisted in setting up Zoom meetings.
8. Provided one-on-one support in IT-related matters, as necessary.

Committee Members

Valerie Esguerra, Chair
Mercedes A. Fuller
Susan Hale Gidlow
Carina H. Lister
Rob Martin

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PUBLICATION

Each year the Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) investigates local governmental functions and operations, interviews various experts and public officials, and publishes a final report at the end of the term. The job of the Publication Committee is to establish consistent standards for all reports (e.g. font size & type, use of color and report spacing). The final report, upon being authorized by the Los Angeles County Superior Court, is served upon the Board of Supervisors for the County of Los Angeles (County) and other County and local agencies being investigated by the CGJ.

This year, the final report is primarily intended to be accessed digitally at <http://grandjury.co.la.ca.us/gjreports.html>. Instead of publishing 450 bound books, produced by previous juries, the 2025-26 CGJ will publish 70 using internal County resources.

The CGJ was also charged with using the Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility standards established by the U.S. Department of Justice⁷³. The purpose of the rule is to make it easier for people with disabilities to read public documents. We were required to use a sans serif font, have 1.5-line spacing, and minimize use of color. We also added alternative text that described every chart and photo used for those who could not see them.

⁷³ <https://www.ada.gov/resources/2024-03-08-web-rule/>.

Individuals who were especially helpful to specific investigations, but were not required to respond, will receive a courtesy letter in early July 2026. These letters will contain a link to the CGJ report.

Committee Members

Rob Martin, Chair
Valerie Esguerra
Susan Hale Gidlow
Carina H. Lister
Jenalea Smith
LeRoy R. Titus

SPEAKERS AND TOURS

The 2025-26 Los Angeles County Civil Grand Jury (CGJ) enjoyed listening to numerous talented, exceptional and often high-profile decision makers who addressed us with humor, insight, and thoughtful challenges. Their topical, robust and often entertaining multi-media or supporting staff presentations, including spirited follow-up Q & A, were invaluable to the CGJ. These exchanges often included a final “what might the CGJ do for you” opportunity for their final comments and, occasionally, an invite to a location for a personalized tour. The tour locations and escorts were instructive and helpful to the CGJ’s understanding of the logistics, physicality and often visceral nature of government facilities; most particularly detention centers, which by mandate, the CGJ is directed to inspect.⁷⁴

Another CGJ statutory duty is “to investigate and report upon the operations of local government.”⁷⁵ But before that, some of the CGJ’s first actions as a body are to identify, discuss, vote for, and agree upon, agencies or individuals to invite before it, as well as determine facilities for the jury to visit and tour. So, how does that happen?

It falls upon the Standing Committee of Speakers and Tours (S&T) to make the magic happen. By necessity, S&T hits the ground running to ensure that, within a matter of weeks, the CGJ is hearing from, learning about, and seeing viable opportunities for investigation. S&T always worked in pairs and attacked its assignment by phone and increasingly more often via email. The lesson learned was the scale and size of both City and County

⁷⁴ California Penal Code sections 919 and 921.

⁷⁵ California Penal Code section 914(a).

governments of Los Angeles require the use of digital skills. Frequently, the initial use of a quaint land-line telephone tool yielded few results. S&T developed formalized invitation templates to submit via "contact us" portals on an agency's or official's government website or email. While adhering to the strict confidentiality concerns attendant to electronic contact, such communications were far more likely to generate a response since they are more difficult to ignore. To accommodate the peculiar protocols required for CGJ email, S&T, in conjunction with the Jury Foreperson and Administration, ultimately crafted an efficient communication methodology which future juries should feel free to adopt and adapt for their own benefit.

This methodology, implemented by S&T very early during its term, set into motion the sequence of distinguished speakers and informative destinations through which the CGJ bonded and educated itself about the City and County levers of government. The broad spectrum of topics, knowledge of subject matter and quality of presentation by the speakers were complemented by the impressions left via personal experiences of the off-site tours; both inspired by this CGJ's work.

The CGJ would be remiss if it did not acknowledge and thank the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and its Deputies for their hospitality, geniality, professionalism and expert driving skills in providing us with safe and trustworthy passage via their bus operations.

After a super majority vote of the Civil Grand Jury, the Speakers and Tours Committee had the responsibility of contacting and scheduling speakers to address them as to the operation of their respective agencies. Additionally, they were responsible for scheduling tours of County Detention facilities and County Departments of interest. The following chart depicts the results of the Committee's work.

DATE IN 2025, 2026	SPEAKER OR TOUR	AGENCY
August 6	Max Huntsman, Inspector General	Los Angeles County Office of Inspector General
August 12	Century Detention Center	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
August 26	Men's Central Jail	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
August 27	Dean Logan, Registrar- Recorder/County Clerk	Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
September 2	Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall	Los Angeles Probation Department
September 9	Twin Towers Correctional Center	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
September 10	Jim McDonnell, Chief of Police	Los Angeles Police Department
September 16	Pitchess Detention Center North/South Facilities	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
September 23	Los Angeles General Medical Center	Los Angeles County Medical Center
September 24	Joseph Nicchitto, Acting Chief Executive Officer	Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office
September 24	Nathan Hochman, District Attorney	Los Angeles County District Attorney
September 29	LA Harbor Tour	Port of Los Angeles
September 30	Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall	Los Angeles County Probation Department
October 1	Guillermo Viera Rosa, Chief Probation Officer	Los Angeles County Probation Department
October 2	Brandon Nichols, Director	Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services
October 2	Dr. Odey C. Ukpo, Los Angeles County Medical Examiner	Los Angeles County Department of Medical Examiner

DATE IN 2025, 2026	SPEAKER OR TOUR	AGENCY
October 7	Dorothy Kirby Juvenile Hall	Los Angeles County Probation Department
October 14	Judge Songhai Armstead (Retired), Director	Los Angeles Justice, Care and Opportunities Department
October 15	Kevin McCowan, Director	Los Angeles County Office of Emergency Management
October 21	Training Center	Port of Los Angeles
October 22	Robert Luna, Sheriff	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
October 28	Inmate Reception Center	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
October 30	Bill Scott, Chief of Police and Emergency Management	Los Angeles County Metro
November 4	Solis Care Center	Los Angeles County Homeless Services & Housing
November 6	Ballot Processing Center	Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk
November 12	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Communication Center	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
November 18	Pitchess North County Correctional Facility Detention Center	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
November 26	Dr. Alberto Carvalho, Superintendent	Los Angeles Unified School District
December 10	Jon O'Brien, Chief Deputy Emergency Operations & Julia Kim, Deputy Fire Chief Administrative Services Bureau	Los Angeles County Fire Department
December 22	Hydee Feldstein Soto, City Attorney	Los Angeles City
January 6	Eric Bates, Interim Inspector General	Los Angeles County Office of Inspector General

DATE IN 2025, 2026	SPEAKER OR TOUR	AGENCY
January 14	Peter Loo, Acting Chief Information Officer	Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Chief Executive Office

Committee Members

- LeRoy R. Titus, Chair
- Tom Hutchinson, Vice Chair
- Mercedes A. Fuller, Secretary
- George O. Davis
- Michelle M. Wilson