	Case 4:01-cv-01351-JST Document 3605	Filed 06/25/21 Page 1 of 15	
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18	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		
19	NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA		
20	OAKLAND DIVISION		
21	MARCIANO PLATA, et al.,	CASE NO. 01-1351 JST	
22 23	Plaintiffs,	JOINT CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE STATEMENT	
24 25 26 27	v. GAVIN NEWSOM, et al., Defendants.	Judge: Hon. Jon S. Tigar Date: June 30, 2021 Time: 2:00 p.m. Crtrm.: 6, 2nd Floor	
28	JOINT CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE STATEM	1- Case No. 01-1351 JST	
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- The parties submit the following joint statement in advance of the June 30, 2021 Case Management Conference.
- I. VACCINES

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As of June 25, 2021, approximately 98% of the California Department of 4 5 Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) incarcerated population has been offered at least one dose of the vaccine, and approximately 73% of those offered have accepted it. (Those 6 not offered vaccine are almost entirely either out-to-court and thus not physically present 7 8 in a CDCR prison, or are Reception Center new arrivals pending a vaccine offer.) This 9 amounts to 73% percent of the incarcerated population having received at least one dose of the vaccine, and 71% of the population being *fully* vaccinated. Vaccination rates of 10 medically high-risk incarcerated people are as follows: over 99% of all COVID-19-naïve 11 patients aged 65 or older have been offered the vaccine, 90% of patients in this category 12 are fully vaccinated, and another 1% of await the second dose of the vaccine; over 99% of 13 all COVID-19-naïve patients with a COVID-19 weighted risk score of 6 or higher have 14 15 been offered the vaccine, 91% of patients in this category are fully vaccinated, and another 1% await the second dose of the vaccine; and 99% of COVID-19-naïve patients with a 16 COVID-19 weighted risk score of 3 or higher have been offered the vaccine, 84% of 17 patients in this category are fully vaccinated, and another 2% await the second dose of the 18 vaccine. Additionally, as of June 15, 2021, at least¹ 52% of staff who work in CDCR's 19 institutions have been given at least one dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. Employees and 20 21 incarcerated people are still required to wear personal protective equipment and practice physical distancing even after receiving the vaccine.² 22

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This percentage includes those for whom CDCR and CCHCS, working with the
Department of Public Health, have determined have been vaccinated outside CDCR's
system. Because individuals may decline to share their medical information, it may not be
possible to reflect every vaccinated staff member in this percentage.

- ²⁶ Defendants' section on this topic states that the percentage of vaccinated staff is 54%, ²⁷ based on internal data collected on June 25, 2021.
- The Receiver's office and CDCR lifted the mask-wearing requirement for those 28

JOINT CASE MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE STATEMENT

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Plaintiffs' Position:

<u>Patients</u>

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We continue to be pleased with CCHCS's efforts to vaccinate incarcerated people
against COVID-19. As of June 25, CCHCS's Vaccine Registry shows that 98% of the
98,500 people in CDCR custody have been offered a vaccine.³ It also shows that 71% of
the population is fully vaccinated, and another 2% have received one dose of a two-dose
regimen, so will be fully vaccinated in no more than 30 days. .

The Registry also shows that the COVID vaccine refusal rate among the CDCR
population is now 26%.⁴ We appreciate that CCHCS continues to re-offer vaccine to
patients, that they continue to plan an outreach event at Salinas Valley State Prison to
promote the vaccine to people who have thus far refused it (two of that prison's four main
yards have relatively high refusal rates among residents), and is sending its Corrections
Services Director to four prisons with relatively high refusal rates in an attempt to identify
what might work to increase vaccine acceptance.

15 CCHCS on June 16 said it anticipates an EHRS upgrade will be implemented this
16 month which will auto-populate a patient's vaccine status directly to the medical provider
17 at the time of an appointment. CCHCS also said it will update its guidance to providers to
18 require that the vaccine be discussed and offered at any appointment with a patient who is
19 unvaccinated.

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who are outdoors and at least six feet away from others. And as of June 15, 2021, the State
no longer requires fully vaccinated people to wear masks in most circumstances, but still
requires mask-wearing by fully vaccinated people who live or work in correctional
facilities, consistent with public health guidance.

As indicated above, those not offered vaccine are almost entirely either not physically present in a CDCR prison, or are Reception Center new arrivals pending a vaccine offer.

As of June 11, there were ten CDCR "yards" (as sub-facilities within each prison are commonly called) with populations of greater than 500 at which between
approximately 45% to just over 50% had refused a vaccine offer. There are also about three dozen small units or yards, most housing less than 100 people, with refusal rates of 45% or higher.

1 While the number of active COVID cases statewide remain low, outbreaks have occurred at a handful of prisons in the last 30 days. These outbreaks show the continuing 2 3 risk of COVID infection in the prisons, including even to the vaccinated, especially in prisons with relatively large vaccination refusal rates among the patient population and/or 4 5 staff. The largest recent outbreak, at California State Prison, Solano, occurred on a yard with a relatively high patient vaccine refusal rate (approximately 50% at the time of the 6 first positive cases in late May), and all but a few of the approximately 85 recently positive 7 8 patients were unvaccinated. In contrast, an outbreak at Mule Creek State Prison, Facility C, which has relatively low vaccine refusal rate among the patient population (just over 9 10%), was limited to fewer than 20 patients, about half of whom were unvaccinated. 10

CCHCS on June 16 reported that since approximately late May, two CDCR patients 11 had been hospitalized for COVID-related conditions. This too shows the continuing risk 12 of COVID-19 to the incarcerated. 13

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<u>Staff</u>

15 CCHCS data shows that the statewide institutional staff vaccination rate (at least one dose received) is only 52% as of June 15, 2021. The rate for custody staff is 41% 16 overall, and among correctional officers – the job classification which has the most direct 17 contact with residents – the rate is only 36% statewide. The vaccination rate for officers at 18 19 some prisons is far lower. For example, only 16% of officers are vaccinated at High Desert State Prison. There are also large numbers of unvaccinated staff among certain 20 21 medical job classifications.⁵

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We continue to believe that vaccination against COVID-19 should be mandated for 23 all CDCR and CCHCS staff in the prisons. As requested by the Receiver, we recently 24 provided a detailed statement of our position to the Receiver, Defendants, and CCPOA. See Letter from Donald Specter to J. Clark Kelso, Receiver (June 15, 2021) (attached 25

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For example, data provided by CCHCS shows that 73% of Registered Nurses, 68% 27 of Certified Nurse Assistants, 58% of Licensed Vocational Nurses, and 52% of Medical 28 Assistants are vaccinated.

hereto as Exhibit A). In essence, staff are the primary vector for coronavirus getting into
the prisons, and those who are unvaccinated pose a much higher risk of infecting residents
and other staff. In addition, when residents are infected, others, infected or not, are
impacted by quarantines, restricted programs, and limited medical care, including
postponement of previously scheduled specialty services. Further incentive programs will
not substantially increase current staff vaccination rates, based on recent experience and
studies of vaccine incentives in similar contexts.

8 Regarding COVID-19 infections among staff, CDCR recently stopped reporting
9 new staff cases on its "CDCR/CCHCS COVID 19 Employee Status" website. See Cal.
10 Dep't of Corr. & Rehab., CDCR/CCHCS COVID-19 Employee Status,

https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/covid19/cdcr-cchcs-covid-19-status. We asked CDCR and
CCHCS about this on June 23. On June 24, CCHCS responded that new COVID-19 staff
cases would no longer be reported on the public website, but would be added to CCHCS's
internal Roadmap to Reopening registry by mid-July. As we do not have access to that
registry, CCHCS also agreed to provide reports of new active staff cases to Plaintiffs'
counsel on a weekly basis.

Defendants' Position: CCHCS and CDCR's efforts to vaccinate the incarcerated
population have been successful. Defendants are particularly pleased that the vast majority
of medically high-risk patients accepted the vaccine. Defendants continue to partner with
CCHCS to encourage unvaccinated incarcerated people to accept the vaccine.

Since the last case management conference, 2,946 more staff members have
accepted at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, increasing the percentage of staff with
at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine from 49% to approximately 54%. This trend is
encouraging—staff vaccination numbers increased by about 5% between late April and
late May,⁶ and by another 5% between late May and late June.

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<sup>27
&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> (See ECF No. 3592 at 9:6-8: between late April and late May, 2,574 staff members accepted at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, increasing the percentage of staff with at least one dose of the vaccine from 44% to 49%)

1 As reported in the last statement, the Receiver's office and CDCR believe it is 2 necessary to do everything reasonably possible to educate and encourage voluntary 3 vaccine acceptance by staff before determining whether to mandate the vaccine as a condition of employment. Indeed, the Prison Litigation Reform Act requires as much. 4 5 The Receiver's office reiterated this view in a call with the parties on June 16, 2021, and is moving forward with its plan for medical professionals to have one-to-one, face-to-face 6 consultations with unvaccinated CDCR staff in an effort to address their specific concerns 7 8 about the vaccine. Going forward, those who continue to decline to vaccinate will be 9 required to participate in training and document their declination. Defendants and the Receiver's office continue to consider additional incentives to encourage staff-10 particularly those who work in the prisons—to voluntarily accept the vaccine. 11

12 In a May 21, 2021 email, the Receiver encouraged the parties to discuss their views 13 regarding a mandatory COVID-19 policy for staff in the May 25, 2021 case management conference statement. Defendants did this (See ECF No. 3592 at 8:10-11:1), and are 14 considering Plaintiffs' views as set forth in their June 14, 2021 letter. In light of the 15 additional measures the Receiver's office is implementing, the continuing low number of 16 confirmed active COVID-19 cases in custody (and around the State), the high vaccination 17 18 rate among incarcerated persons, and because a mandatory staff vaccination policy would 19 have implications for a variety of congregate and other settings across the state, and not just CDCR facilities, Defendants believe it is premature to mandate the COVID-19 20 21 vaccination as a condition of employment at this time.

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II.

POPULATION REDUCTION

Plaintiffs' Position: CDCR's population continues to slowly increase. As of June
25, per the CCHCS Vaccine Registry, 98,500 were incarcerated, an increase of
approximately 1,500 from May 21. We acknowledge the current population is more than
20,000 fewer than pre-pandemic levels in March 2020, but remain concerned that the
population now continues to steadily increase.

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As of mid-June, according to information received in the *Coleman* case,
 approximately 5,000 people in county jails were pending transportation to CDCR. CDCR
 Reception Centers were receiving approximately 900 new arrivals per week.

CDCR continues the early release program, begun approximately a year ago,
applicable to some who have 180 days or less to serve. In recent months, this program has
resulted on average in approximately 85 people each week paroling or being released to
community supervision earlier than they otherwise would have.⁷

We continue to believe that efforts to reduce population remain necessary given the
risk from COVID-19. *See* ECF No. 3579 at 9:21-11:1. We appreciate that these efforts
now include new credit rules implemented on May 1, which permit some incarcerated
persons to receive increased good conduct and other credits. Unfortunately, those new
rules mean that some people designated minimum custody—including fire-fighters—will
serve more time in prison, because the rules change how credits are calculated for that
group.

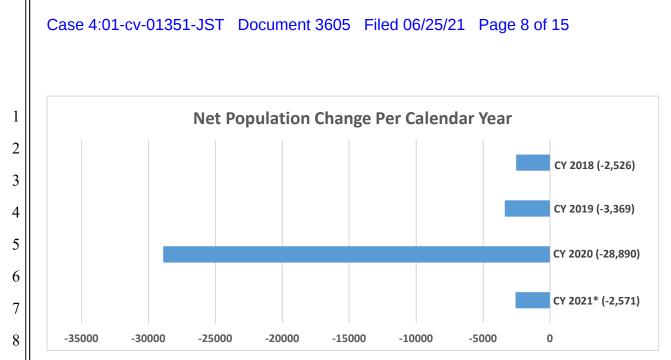
Defendants' Position: As Plaintiffs acknowledge, CDCR reduced its population as
an emergency measure in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to people who
were released in accordance with their natural release dates, approximately 9,586 people
have been released early through CDCR's COVID-19 early-release programs since July
2020. The extent of CDCR's significant population reduction efforts in response to the
pandemic, and its current population as compared to historical levels, is most clearly
demonstrated in the following graphic:^{8, 9}

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- Average determined based on total statewide releases under the program as of May
 15, 2021 (the most recent date for which data is available), compared to the number of
 such releases as of December 30, 2020.
- ²⁷ ⁸ The source of this data comes from CDCR's Division of Correctional Policy Research and Internal Oversight, Office of Research, June 9, 2021.

 $28 \parallel^9$ *CY 2021 includes all admissions and releases through May 2021.



With a robust COVID-19 mitigation framework in place, including quarantine,
testing, and transfer protocols, CDCR is focusing on alleviating the backlog of people
currently awaiting transfer in county jails to CDCR custody. As a result, CDCR is
experiencing a slow and modest population increase. CDCR continues to release
incarcerated people through the 180-day early-release program, which has resulted in
approximately 8,942 early releases since July 2020.

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III. OIG SENTINEL CASE REPORT NO. 21-01

Plaintiffs' Position: Last December, we informed the Court that we had forwarded
CDCR a log kept by a San Quentin resident detailing numerous instances of staff not
wearing face-coverings at the prison, and that the Warden had said the allegations would
be investigated via the prison's "inquiry" process. *See* ECF No. 3520 at 15:2-16:4.
Defendants acknowledged that the matter would be reviewed, and emphasized that "the
complaining party is not entitled to the details of the outcome of an investigation into
allegations of employee misconduct." *Id.* at 17:10-23.

Earlier this month, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) issued a lengthy report regarding the CDCR's inquiry. *See* OIG Sentinel Case 21-01 (June 3, 2021) (attached hereto as Exhibit B). The report concludes that prison investigators conducted a biased and inadequate inquiry into the allegations, and that the investigator's determination that the allegations were not sustained was meritless and without basis. *Id.* at 3, 8. With regard

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1 to the latter conclusion, the OIG commented:

What we find most troubling, however, is the conclusion that there was "no evidence" to prove staff members did not comply with the facecovering order. This is not true. The incarcerated person who submitted the letter spelled out 19 specific incidents of staff members not wearing face coverings and noted the specific places and times of those incidents. *That is evidence.*

Id. at 8 (emphasis in original). According to the OIG, "the prison investigators conducted
a woefully inadequate and biased inquiry and made incorrect findings," and "the inquiry
was not conducted in order to gather information relevant to the allegations made, but . . .
was conducted in such a way as to reach a conclusion that the allegations were not true." *Id.* at 9. The OIG further reports that its efforts to have departmental executives and an

11 undersecretary take different action were futile. *Id*.

In a letter, the CDCR Secretary took issue with several matters in the report,

13 || including the key conclusion that the investigation was woefully inadequate. *Id.* at 10-12.

14 The OIG's reply to the Secretary's assertions on this latter point, is, we believe,

15 compelling and entirely persuasive. *Id.* at 17.

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As a result of orders entered by Judge Wilken in the *Armstrong* case, CDCR is
revamping its "inquiry" investigations. The OIG's Sentinel Case report shows that these
changes cannot come soon enough, and the CDCR's dismissive response to the report
shows well why court orders were necessary.

The CDCR's unwillingness to accept the word of an incarcerated person¹⁰ suggests
it will never be able to fully enforce face-covering mandates, even though such are an

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10 23 The OIG concluded the incarcerated person's letter should have been sufficient to establish "reasonable belief" that misconduct occurred, and the matter thus should have 24 been referred to the Office of Internal Affairs for investigation. See OIG Sentinel Case 21-01 (June 3, 2021) at 3 (attached hereto as Exhibit B). In her letter responding to the OIG's 25 report, the CDCR Secretary stated: "The complaint did include dates and times; however 26 providing dates and times in and of itself is not always sufficient evidence to open an internal affairs investigation. While the letter is evidence and the details add credibility to 27 the incarcerated person's statement, treating any single accusation as the only source 28 required to establish reasonable belief is not appropriate." See id. at 11.

1 effective means to reduce COVID-19 transmission. The inability to fully enforce face-2 covering mandates ultimately supports a requirement that all staff be vaccinated against the 3 virus.

Defendants' Position: Consistent with the Secretary's response to the OIG's June 4 5 2021 sentinel report, CDCR continues to stand by the investigation. CDCR takes allegations of rules violations seriously and, contrary to Plaintiffs' assertion that it is 6 7 "[unwilling] to accept the word of an incarcerated person[,]" CDCR launched an 8 investigation in response to the incarcerated person's allegations, interviewed a number of 9 incarcerated people and supervising officers, and produced a detailed report with its findings. The allegations were properly investigated by CDCR, as opposed to the Office 10 11 of Internal Affairs, because the consequence for noncompliance with the mask-wearing policy was corrective action, and not adverse action. See Exhibit B at 13. CDCR properly 12 13 initiated a local inquiry because the allegations were not submitted through the grievance process. Id. CDCR continues to prioritize the safety of those who reside and work in its 14 15 institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic and, as the OIG noted, even though the incarcerated person's claims were not substantiated, San Quentin State Prison's Warden 16 nonetheless issued a policy ordering that letters of instruction would be issued to any staff 17 member observed not wearing a face covering. Id. at 9. Separately, the parties in the 18 19 Armstrong class action have been meeting and conferring regarding the Armstrong remedial plan since October 2020. As part of these ongoing meet-and-confer sessions, the 20 21 parties are working collaboratively with the help of the Armstrong court-appointed expert 22 to create a new investigation process that complies with the court's remedial-plan order.

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IV. HOUSING UNIT VENTILATION

Plaintiffs' Position: On June 24, CDCR counsel provided an update regarding 25 MERV-13 filter installation in prison housing units, of the kind included by us in the most 26 recent Case Management Statement. See ECF No. 3592 at 15:12-25. According to 27 information provided, three additional prisons completed the filter installations since last 28 Case No. 01-1351 JST -10month, meaning 11 of 34 prisons slated to incarcerate people next winter now have them.¹¹
CDCR further reported that four other prisons' housing units do not recirculate indoor air,
so MERV-13 filters will not be installed,¹² and that filters cannot be installed in another
prison's housing units because the ventilation system design does not allow for it.¹³
MERV-13 filter installation is estimated to occur variously between July and October at 15
of the 18 remaining prisons, with an estimated installation date still to be determined for
the three others.

8 We also on June 10 asked for a list of which prisons have completed and submitted 9 ventilation system inspections, the schedule for completing any that remain, and a copy of completed inspection results. These inspections are a key part of CDCR's plan to evaluate 10 and improve housing unit ventilation. See ECF No. 3566 at 19:5-20:12 and ECF No. 3592 11 at 4-11. On June 25, CDCR counsel responded. Unfortunately, no update was provided as 12 13 to the status of inspections, other than a statement that CDCR is working diligently to upload results to an internal website, and that once that was completed, a high-level 14 15 summary would be prepared, "probably not until late July," for the Receiver and CDCR Secretary. CDCR counsel said this summary could be shared with Plaintiffs' counsel at 16 that time. No completed inspection results were provided. No reason was given for not 17 providing an update as to the status of inspections at each prison, or completed inspection 18 19 results. We replied on June 25, again asking for the information. We will inform the Court if we are unable to resolve this apparent dispute. 20

Defendants' Position: Defendants continue to provide Plaintiffs with updates
regarding CDCR's ongoing efforts to inspect prison ventilation systems. CDCR is making
good progress with this project. Currently, approximately 42% of the housing units in
CDCR's institutions use MERV-13 filters or filters with higher efficiency. This is an

 $26 \parallel 11$ Deuel Vocational Institution is scheduled to close this fall.

27 ¹² Those prisons are California Institution for Women, California Rehabilitation Center, California Training Facility, and San Quentin.

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 $28 \parallel^{13}$ That prison is Sierra Conservation Center.

increase since Defendants' report in the previous CMC statement, when approximately one
third of housing units were using MERV-13 or higher-efficiency filters. Approximately
48% of housing units use 100% outside air. MERV-13 or higher-efficiency filters will not
be installed in certain housing units at the California Institution for Women, California
Rehabilitation Center, Correctional Training Facility, and San Quentin State Prison where
interior air is not recirculated. The MERV-13 filter installation schedule set forth in
Plaintiffs' position above is consistent with Defendants' records.

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V.

RESUMPTION OF SERVICES

9 Plaintiffs' Position: CCHCS now posts information on the re-opening phase of each prison facility, via a tab on the "CDCR Population COVID Tracking" webpage.¹⁴ 10 Information about a facility's re-opening phase is enormously useful, but we have learned 11 that programs-including healthcare services-can be restricted for substantial numbers 12 even if the facility is designated "Phase 3" (which means "normal," per the CCHCS 13 website). This is because a "Phase 3" facility can still have many patients on quarantine 14 for exposure to COVID-19 (with an infected staff person commonly the vector, as we 15 understand it), and thus for at least two weeks greatly restrict movement and services 16 available for that particular set of patients. For example, although as of June 15, Facilities 17 C, D, and E at the California Health Care Facility (CHCF) were all designated "Phase 3," 18 19 there were, according to CCHCS data, 230 people in those facilities quarantined due to 20 COVID exposure on that same date.

The most recent data from CCHCS shows that the previously reported backlogs of more than 6,000 primary care and more than 9,000 specialty service orders statewide (see ECF No. 3592 at 17:18-25) have been only very modestly reduced. We understand it will take time for these overdue appointments to be provided, given that thousands of not yet overdue orders must also be addressed. With regard to specialty services, we asked

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²⁷ See Cal. Dep't of Corr. & Rehab., *Population COVID-19 Tracking*, https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/covid19/population-status-tracking/.

CCHCS about efforts to provide cancer screening ultrasounds for approximately 1,000
 end-stage liver disease patients who as of May were overdue for such imaging.¹⁵ CCHCS
 explained that in May it provided lists of overdue patients to each prison, that a vendor
 provided additional staff to help with the backlog, and that updated lists of overdue ESLD
 patient ultrasounds are being generated for each prison.

We have scheduled site visits at Salinas Valley State Prison (June 29), CHCF (July
1), California State Prison, Solano (July 7-8), and California Medical Facility (July 13-14).
Among other things, we hope during these visits to observe and gain other on-the-ground
information regarding re-opened medical services. The visits to Salinas Valley and CMF,
as well as CHCF if the current outbreak there permits it, will also focus on medical care in
the Psychiatric Inpatient Programs.

Defendants' Position: Now that COVID-19 case numbers are relatively low and a
large percentage of the incarcerated population is vaccinated, CDCR is focusing on
resuming pre-pandemic programming to the extent possible. Even while resuming
programming, quarantine may be necessary in the event of an exposure to COVID-19 to
protect those exposed and prevent an outbreak. CDCR recognizes that quarantine impairs
incarcerated people's ability to program, and therefore carefully evaluates the need for
quarantine in consultation with CCHCS before instituting a quarantine.

19 CCHCS and CDCR revised the "COVID-19 Screening and Testing Matrix for
20 Patient Movement" on June 18, 2021. A copy of the updated Matrix is attached as Exhibit
21 C. The key changes are:

- clarification that neither pre- nor post-transfer quarantine is required for fully
 vaccinated patients who are moving from one location to another;
- clarification that pre- and post-transfer symptom screening and COVID testing
- 25

Timely liver ultrasounds can detect early treatable cancer in these patients. In 2016,
 after five liver cancer deaths of ESLD patients were identified in which ultrasound
 screening guidelines were not followed, CCHCS established tracking mechanisms and
 took other steps to increase timely ultrasounds.

1	applies to all new intakes, regardless of vaccination status;			
2	• addition of overnight offsite sleep study in the "Out for clinical appointment,			
3	same day return" category when screening and testing; and			
4	• clarification that twice weekly testing is sufficient for patients with multiple off-			
5	site appointments with same day return within a week (e.g. chemotherapy or			
6	radiotherapy.)			
7	Additionally, as Plaintiffs note, CCHCS is addressing the backlog of specialty			
8	services that has resulted from the pandemic. CDCR is committed to working closely with			
9	CCHCS to do its part in facilitating these specialty encounters.			
10	Finally, Defendants look forward to resuming site visits, a major step towards			
11	returning to the process of delegating healthcare services back to the State.			
12				
13	DATED: June 25, 2021 HANSON BRIDGETT LLP			
14				
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