



## **CAADPE Calls on Los Angeles Jails to Reverse Restrictions on Lifesaving Opioid Treatment in Jails**

***Statewide association of treatment providers urges county to end waitlists  
and fully restore access to medication-assisted treatment behind bars***

**SACRAMENTO, Calif.** – The California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, Inc. (CAADPE) strongly opposes Los Angeles County’s Jails recent decision to scale back access to medication-assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder in its jails and urge county leaders to immediately reverse course.

According to new reporting from *CalMatters*, Los Angeles County Jails implemented a policy this fall that restricts how quickly and broadly jail physicians can prescribe buprenorphine, prioritizing people only at intake and placing everyone else on a waitlist. Between September 15 and October 31, the number of people on that waitlist more than doubled—from 363 to 835—with an average wait time of 25 days for treatment.

“This is exactly the wrong direction in the middle of an overdose crisis,” said **Robb Layne**, Executive Director of CAADPE. “Medication-assisted treatment is the single most effective, evidence-based intervention we must prevent people from dying of opioid overdose, both in custody and after release. Creating long waitlists and shutting people out of treatment after intake is a policy choice, and it is a deadly decision.”

The policy change comes during what officials have described as one of the deadliest years on record for Los Angeles County jails, and just one week after California Attorney General Rob Bonta filed suit against the county over “inhumane” jail conditions, citing a “shocking rate of deaths,” including overdoses. A recent memo from Correctional Health Services to the Board of Supervisors noted that overdose deaths now account for at least 28% of in-custody deaths—up from 9% in 2016.

“Los Angeles County was rightly praised for being an early adopter of jail-based MAT. Since 2021, roughly 25,000 incarcerated people have received treatment through this program. Rolling back access now, when overdose deaths are at historic highs, is unconscionable,” said **Albert Senella**, President of the CAADPE Board of Directors and President/CEO of Tarzana Treatment Centers, Inc. “People in custody are still people. They deserve medical care that meets basic standards of ethics and law. You don’t ‘pause’ a lifesaving treatment in the middle of a public health emergency. The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Office of Substance Abuse Prevention and Control has been a county and statewide leader in the expansion of and for MAT services LA County jails systems should embrace these same County goals.”

The new jail policy also coincides with a substantial increase in the jail population—about 700 more people per day—following the passage of Proposition 36, a ballot measure that increased sentences for certain drug and theft offenses. While Los Angeles County reports that overall funding for jail health care has grown, including an additional \$8 million from opioid settlement funds, those dollars did not ultimately increase funding for the MAT program itself.

CAADPE called on Los Angeles County Jail leaders to take the following immediate actions:

CAADPE called on Los Angeles County Jail leaders to take the following immediate actions:

1. **Eliminate the MAT waitlist** and restore full, same standard clinical access to buprenorphine and other evidence-based medications throughout a person’s incarceration, not just at intake.
2. **Ensure continuity of care** so people who start MAT in the community can continue treatment upon booking, and those who initiate MAT in custody are connected directly to community providers at release.
3. **Use opioid settlement funds as intended**—to expand treatment capacity and staffing, not to backfill other needs at the expense of lifesaving care.
4. **Partner with community providers** across L.A. County to build a true “no wrong door” system that connects jail-based treatment to residential, outpatient, and recovery support services after release.

“Every overdose behind bars is a policy failure,” Layne added. “The Attorney General’s lawsuit underscores what providers have been saying for years: denying or delaying evidence-based treatment in custody is not just bad health care; it may violate people’s constitutional rights. CAADPE stands ready to work with Los Angeles County Jails, Correctional Health Services, and community partners to fix this—but the first step is simple: stop tightening access to MAT and start expanding it.”

### About CAADPE

The California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives, Inc. (CAADPE) is a statewide association of community-based nonprofit substance use disorder treatment agencies. CAADPE members provide services at more than 400 sites across California, bringing the field’s best thinking to the State Capitol, Congress, and regulatory agencies to advance policies that support prevention, treatment, and longterm recovery.