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**Disability Rights California investigation finds San Diego County Jail
suicides far outpace other jail systems**

The system has failed people with mental health disabilities

(San Diego, CA – April 25, 2018) An investigation by Disability Rights California (DRC) finds that since 2010, more than 30 people have died by suicide while held in San Diego County jails. This number far outpaces other county jail systems in the state.

The findings are contained in a report released by DRC today, “Suicides in San Diego County Jail: A System Failing People with Mental Illness.” The report follows an in-depth investigation of conditions in San Diego County’s jails. The report is available at: <https://www.disabilityrightsca.org/public-reports/san-diego-jail-suicides-report>.

“Every day hundreds of men and women face solitary confinement, which has contributed to the high number of suicides and suicide attempts each year,” said DRC Litigation Counsel Aaron Fischer. As one woman wrote while locked down in her cell: “This treatment is worse than people treat animals...Being locked in jail inside a box inside of another box can do things to a person’s mental state.”

The investigation identified a number of critical concerns, including:

- The county’s mental health care system has failed, contributing to the dangerous, costly and counter-productive over-incarceration of people with mental illness in its jails.
- The shocking number of inmates dying by suicide demands action by the county. Two prominent experts worked with DRC to identify dozens of deficiencies in the jails’ suicide prevention practices.

- Jail conditions, including insufficient staffing and solitary confinement conditions, subject people with mental health needs to a grave risk of harm.

DRC also found that the county's system of external oversight has failed. DRC's report calls for the creation of a new independent oversight entity to ensure accountability.

"People with mental health needs and their families deserve better," said DRC Staff Attorney Rebecca Cervenak. "Without appropriate community services and improved conditions, people will continue to suffer."

According to DRC, the Sheriff's Department has cooperated throughout the investigation. "We firmly believe the jail system's leadership is committed to addressing the crisis of inmate suicides and improving conditions," said Aaron Fischer. "However, the county needs to step up to provide the resources and accountability necessary to solve what are serious, longstanding problems."

Disability Rights California advocates, educates, investigates, and litigates to advance the rights, dignity, equal opportunities, and choices for all people with disabilities. For more information, visit www.disabilityrightsca.org.