

From Supervisor Mike Wasserman, replying to inquiries about the Muriel Wright Center:

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Muriel Wright Center.

As you are probably aware, County Government is repurposing many existing facilities, and opening new facilities throughout Santa Clara County to address the ever-changing needs of our residents. The Muriel Wright Center is one of many existing facilities being adapted to address a small part of these needs.

I have prepared some history and background information on the Muriel Wright Center (included below) in response to some frequently asked questions from the community. I have been updating this information periodically to reflect additional questions, and to address community concerns as I am made aware of them. As noted in the Q & A below, specific operational guidelines and participant restrictions are continually being developed to mitigate concerns raised by the community.

Please know that as Chair of the County's Public Safety Committee, the safety of our community is always on my mind.

### **The Muriel Wright Center Q&A**

**What is the Muriel Wright Center and where is it located?** The Muriel Wright Center, expected to re-open in March of 2018, is a County facility providing treatment for individuals with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders. The Center is located within Santa Teresa County Park in South San Jose.

**Who will be treated at the Muriel Wright Center and how long will they stay?** The Center will provide services to Santa Clara County residents with mental illness and/or substance abuse disorders who have been convicted of low-level, non-violent crimes, and ordered into treatment by the Superior Court. A maximum of 45 men and women will be housed at the site at any one time. All Individuals receiving treatment will be screened by the Santa Clara County Behavioral Health Department to determine if they are appropriate candidates for treatment, and will stay from 21 to 40 days.

**What County Departments and staff will be located at the Center, and what specific services will be provided?** A County Sheriff's sub-station, used by the Sheriff's Park Unit, will remain at the site. The volunteer center previously located on site will move to another location. Staff at the treatment facility will include medical professionals, mental health clinicians, and counselors. Clients will receive either mental health or substance abuse treatment, behavioral therapy, and employment/vocational training.

**Will the Muriel Wright Center be a secure facility and will it make the community safer?** Yes. The building design, upgraded perimeter fencing, the number of staff, and operations, are all designed to make the Center a secure site. While it is against State law to lock a treatment facility, individuals will not be allowed to leave during their treatment. If they attempt to leave the facility, they are in violation of a Court order, and law enforcement will be contacted immediately. Individuals receiving treatment will not

be allowed visitors. Participants will be highly motivated to successfully complete the program, and success in the program will reduce crime and homelessness in the community.

**Will individuals receiving treatment be tested for drugs and/or alcohol?** Not everyone at Muriel Wright Center will be there for substance abuse, but those with Court-ordered drug and alcohol testing will need to comply while in the program. Violations will be reported to the District Attorney and the Court.

**Do residents of the Muriel Wright Center have convictions for violent crimes?** No. The design and focus of the programs at the facility is to provide intensive treatment for individuals with substance abuse or mental health issues. Individuals receiving treatment are only those convicted of low-level, non-violent crimes.

**Why was the Muriel Wright Center transitioned from a correctional facility to a treatment facility?** Historically, the Center was used as the County's Probation Ranch for girls up to 18 years of age, and boys up to 15½ years of age. Changes in the juvenile justice system led to a decision to stop using the Center as a correctional facility, and in late 2015 the County began considering a transition of the Center to a treatment facility. The Board of Supervisors have discussed changes at the facility at multiple meetings over the last two years, including the 2016 Budget hearings.

**In the past, did the County notify the community as the uses changed at the Muriel Wright Center?** Programs housed at the site have changed multiple times over the years and no specific outreach occurred. The location (2 miles from the nearest neighbor), and the change from the historic use as a large corrections facility to a smaller treatment facility likely contributed to the decision not to conduct more extensive noticing for the current change.

**Have the specific details related to the operation of the Center been finalized, or are there ongoing refinements to further mitigate community concerns regarding the facility?** Development of the specific operational guidelines and participant restrictions to mitigate concerns raised by the community are on-going. When the detailed operational guidelines are finalized they will be provided to the public.

**Will there be a process for the community and/or the County to report any concerns regarding the Muriel Wright Center?** Yes. The community can report concerns directly to the Behavioral Health Department, who will oversee the operation of the program. Additionally, the community can work with the District Attorney's Community Prosecutor Program and report any concerns to their local community prosecutor. There will also be Board of Supervisors meetings, Public Safety Committee meetings, and other Board Committee meetings where updates on the Muriel Wright Center will be given, and where the public can raise any concerns they may have with the operation of the facility.

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