

GENERAL OFFICE MEMORANDUM 19-006

TO: ALL DEPUTY DISTRICT ATTORNEYS

FROM: JACKIE LACEY 
District Attorney

SUBJECT: CREATION OF PRISON CRIMES UNIT

DATE: JANUARY 14, 2019

Defendants sentenced through the Los Angeles County criminal courts comprise between 40% to 45% of the total California prison population. Nearly all counties, except Los Angeles County, with a state prison within their jurisdiction have a special unit dedicated to prosecuting inmates who engage in criminal activity in a prison setting. Inmates who continue to commit crimes while incarcerated demonstrate that they continue to be a danger to others. Their conduct also negatively impacts inmates seeking to engage in programs to enable successful return to the community. To address the influx of crimes committed in prison facilities within Los Angeles County, the Prison Crimes Unit will be instituted to adequately prosecute such crimes.

The Prison Crimes Unit will operate under the Bureau of Prosecution Support Operation's Parole Division and will consist of one Deputy-in-Charge (DIC), three Deputy District Attorneys, two Senior Investigators and support staff. The Unit will be based in the Antelope Valley Branch because of its proximity to the state prison, from which it is anticipated that the highest volume of cases will be presented for filing consideration. However, the Unit's deputy district attorneys will be required to travel throughout the county, most notably between Antelope Valley, Foltz Criminal Justice Center, and Norwalk courts, to vertically handle these cases. The Unit's personnel will receive mileage compensation for all work-related travel. As the Unit will be based in Antelope Valley, attorneys assigned to the Unit will be eligible for the 5% bonus while assigned to the Antelope Valley Branch. Considering CDCR will reimburse the office for the expense of prosecuting these prison crimes, the Unit's personnel will be required to log their time and correlate their work-related expenditures to specific case work-up, investigations, court appearances and trials.

The Unit will handle all crimes committed in any prison setting governed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). CDCR administered facilities within Los Angeles County include: (1) the California State Prison, Los Angeles County, located in Lancaster; (2) the Department of State Hospitals, Metropolitan, located in Norwalk; (3) fire camps located in Los Angeles County; and (4) community reentry facilities located in Los Angeles County. The venue for filing these cases will depend on where the crime occurred. Therefore, any crime committed in a CDCR administered facility shall be referred to the DIC of the Prison Crimes Unit for filing consideration.

The Unit's trial attorneys will be required to handle all crimes arising out of the enumerated prison settings. These crimes may include minor offenses, such as possession of contraband, to more serious and violent felonies, such as sexual assault and murder. The Unit's attorneys will work closely with prison personnel to develop subject matter expertise to aid in the successful prosecution of prison crimes cases. Additionally, training will be provided to the Unit's attorneys in areas that encompass more complex litigation issues that arise in these cases.

I have selected Louis Avila to assume the duties of DIC of the Prison Crimes Unit. His assignment will be effective February 1, 2019. Lou is a University of Southern California graduate who joined our Office in 1999. He has excelled as a trial deputy in a variety of assignments, including Organized Crime.

pkb