



PRESS RELEASE-- For Immediate Release  
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## **Napa State Hospital Workers Protest Department of Mental Health “Safety Summit”** *As Number of Assaults Increase, Workers Object to Slow Pace of Reform within DMH*

“Less talk, more action” — that was the message Napa State Hospital workers sent to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) during a protest today organized by the Safety Now! Coalition. Gathered in front of the main entrance of Napa State Hospital, workers criticized the DMH-run “Safety Summit” that was taking place inside the gates as being an insufficient response to the large number of violent assaults on patients and staff.

Karen Doyle, a registered nurse and member of SEIU 1000, described the frustration felt by his members when they were invited to send a representative to today’s summit. “DMH has done so little to improve safety here, the number of attacks on staff has actually gone up since Donna Gross died. Our members boycotted this meeting because they’re tired of hearing talk about the safety problems. They want to see DMH implement the changes we asked for back in November.”

Statistics provided by the Department of Mental Health from the final quarter of 2010 show that on average, three staff members and seven patients are assaulted each day within the facility. On March 2<sup>nd</sup> a patient was arrested for the alleged attempted rape of a female staff member.

“For five months now we’ve been asking DMH to make changes that will make everyone inside safer,” explained Zach Hatton, a recreational therapist and AFSCME 2620 chief steward. “But it seems like DMH would rather just hold more meetings and write more reports.”

The Safety Now Coalition presented management with a “To Do” list of their demands, which include installing a campus-wide alarm system, stationing hospital police officers inside the locked units, and fencing-off unsupervised areas of the 138-acre campus.

While the coalition criticized DMH’s handling of recent attacks, they praised the efforts of two area legislators to improve safety at the facility. “Assemblymember Michael Allen and Senator Noreen Evans have each introduced bills that we believe will alleviate some of the safety problems at Napa, Atascadero, Metropolitan and Patton State Hospitals,” said UAPD member Dr. Richard Frishman, a psychiatrist at Napa State Hospital, referring to bills AB 366 and SB 60.

The Safety Now! Coalition was created in the wake of several violent attacks on Napa State Hospital employees, including the murder of psychiatric technician Donna Gross. The coalition, which has since expanded to other DMH facilities, is comprised of workers from AFSCME Local 2620, Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 1000, the California Association of Psychiatric Technicians (CAPT), and the Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD).