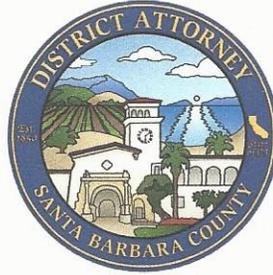


OFFICE OF THE
DISTRICT ATTORNEY
COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA
JOYCE E. DUDLEY
District Attorney



DA 10-277

RELEASE NUMBER

December 4, 2014

RELEASE DATE

APPROVED BY *Joyce E. Dudley*, DISTRICT ATTORNEY

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***** PRESS RELEASE *****

December 4, 2014

Re: *The People of the State of California v. Nicholas Anthony Bendle*: Case No. 1312283

Santa Barbara County District Attorney Joyce E. Dudley announced today that 24-year old Nicholas Bendle will be released from Patton State Hospital to a California Department of Mental Health ("DMH") residential treatment program known as the Conditional Release Program ("CONREP").

On August 1, 2009, 19-year old Nicholas Bendle randomly murdered a pedestrian with a hatchet. This murder was adjudicated to have been the result of a psychotic break due to the rapid onset of previously undiagnosed paranoid schizophrenia. On December 15, 2011, he was admitted to Patton State Hospital for treatment.

In the months following the murder he was extremely delusional, suffering from hallucinations due to his mental illness. He was then being treated with psychiatric medications. On July 7, 2012, at the recommendation of his treating doctors, he was taken off all medications; since then he has remained symptom free. On January 3, 2014, Patton State Hospital stated that Mr. Bendle was in complete remission and was suffering from no symptoms of his mental illness. It was then the unanimous decision of his entire treatment team that he "will no longer pose a threat to the health and safety of others, including himself, while under the supervision and treatment in the community. At that time Patton strongly recommended that he be released from the hospital and enter the CONREP program (currently undergoing a name change to MHN). They consider Mr. Bendle to be one of the most "model patients" they have ever treated at the State Hospital. In the words of one of his treating doctors, "He shows no symptomology at all in conversation and could easily be mistaken for staff if he were not wearing the khaki uniform of a patient."

This past week our office had an extensive conversation with Mr. Bendle's treating psychiatrist, Dr. Duwal, who indicated that she currently has approximately fifty patients that she is treating at Patton. In the average year she recommends only one patient or no patients for the CONREP program. She added that Mr. Bendle is currently one of the most stable patients she has had under her care in her ten years working at Patton State Hospital. She is very confident in her recommendation that he is ready to transition into the CONREP program. She also indicated that patients are closely supervised and monitored in the CONREP program and if there are any problems they will be returned to Patton State Hospital. After his successful completion of the Gateway program in Los Angeles, Bendle will be transferred to a board and care facility in Ventura County where he will report regularly and be closely monitored by DMH representatives.

Bendle will remain legally committed to DMH while on CONREP and could remain committed to DMH for the remainder of his life.

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