

In-Custody Death of Gregorio Figueroa

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Deputy Daniel Tapale, #643735

Deputy Richard Parham, #658321

J.S.I.D. File #22-0280



NATHAN J. HOCHMAN

District Attorney

Justice System Integrity Division

July 16, 2026

MEMORANDUM

TO: CAPTAIN ARTURO R. SPENCER
Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
Homicide Bureau
1 Cupania Circle
Monterey Park, California 91755

FROM: JUSTICE SYSTEM INTEGRITY DIVISION
Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

SUBJECT: In-Custody Death of Gregorio Figueroa
J.S.I.D. File #22-0280
L.A.S.D. File #022-14859-1365-496

DATE: July 16, 2026

The Justice System Integrity Division of the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office has completed its review of the July 29, 2022, in-custody death of Gregorio Figueroa. We conclude Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) Deputies Daniel Tepale and Richard Parham used reasonable force against Figueroa, and their actions did not cause his death.

On July 29, 2022, LASD informed the District Attorney Command Center of Figueroa's death. Because Figueroa died at a hospital 13 days after being in LASD custody, the District Attorney Response Team (DART), concluding there was then no scene to investigate, did not respond to any location.

The following analysis is based on body worn video camera (BWV), witness interviews, medical reports, and investigative reports, submitted to this office by the LASD Homicide Bureau on March 25, 2025.

FACTUAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

On July 16, 2022, LASD Lakewood Station Deputies Tepale and Parham responded to a family disturbance call in the city of Paramount. Arriving at the location, they contacted Figueroa inside a residence. He displayed symptoms of being under the influence of a central nervous system stimulant. Figueroa cooperated as deputies handcuffed him, placed him into a patrol vehicle, and transported him to LASD Lakewood Station on suspicion of being under the influence of a controlled substance. On the drive to the station, Figueroa became agitated, banging his head several times on the patrol car window and yelling, "They're going to get me!" At the station, Figueroa refused to exit the vehicle, requiring several deputies to lift him out and lay him on the ground.

Deputies observed Figueroa's lips were blue/purple, he was foaming at the mouth, and his eyes were rolling back in his head. Deputies physically restrained Figueroa to prevent him from thrashing and injuring himself and summoned paramedics.

Paramedics transported Figueroa to Coast Plaza Hospital, in the city of Norwalk, where he was admitted with respiratory failure and was immediately intubated. On July 29, 2022, he died of cardiac arrest. Urine toxicology at the time he was admitted revealed the presence of cocaine and opiates. The Los Angeles County Medical Examiner ascribed the cause of death as "the sequelae of reported effects of cocaine and opiates." Police custody was not found to be a contributing factor.

Body Worn Video Camera Footage

Tepale and Parham arrive to the front of a large two story apartment complex, where Figueroa's girlfriend flags them down. She tells them Figueroa is inside of her apartment and does not live at the location. She wants him to leave because he is "under the influence," identifying no particular intoxicant or symptoms. She provides a description of Figueroa and confirms her apartment number.

Deputies walk to the front door of the apartment, where they find the door open and Figueroa in plain view kneeling inside the living room with his hands on his head. Figueroa cooperates as deputies handcuff him behind his back, walk him to their vehicle, and seat him inside. Figueroa tells them multiple times that "she" put something in his drink. Parham checks Figueroa's pulse but is unable to check his pupils for drug symptoms because Figueroa refuses to face him. When questioned by Parham, Figueroa tells him he used to use "coke" but had taken none that day. Figueroa is fidgety as he talks to deputies, constantly turning his head, avoiding eye contact, staring off in different directions, with his eyes open unusually wide.

When the deputies arrive at the station, Figueroa is lying supine across the rear bench seat of the vehicle with his hands cuffed behind his back. He sporadically moans and appears to be in distress. Several deputies remove him from the vehicle by holding his torso and legs, sliding him out of the vehicle, and lowering him onto the ground in the prone position. Figueroa does not resist but repeatedly says, "My chain!" For approximately one minute, deputies hold Figueroa in the prone position. Two deputies kneel over him, each holding an arm and resting a knee on his lower back/buttock area. Deputies tell him they are going to get him help. Seconds after placing him on the ground, a deputy says, "He might be overdosing—he's foaming from his mouth, and his hands are turning purple. Get fire." Figueroa is silent and appears momentarily unconscious as deputies ask him whether he can breathe. They confirm he has a pulse and roll him onto his side.

After several seconds, Figueroa appears to regain consciousness, speaking in a slurred voice about his "chain," prompting a deputy to say, "Your chain is on your neck."

For the next thirteen minutes, until paramedics arrive, Figueroa lies on his side handcuffed behind his back. Deputies hold his shoulders, arms, and legs. Figueroa grows progressively more distressed during this time, sporadically moaning, foaming at the mouth, and later

thrashing/convulsing on his side. Deputies struggle to hold him still to prevent him from injuring himself. Despite their efforts, Figueroa scrapes his face on the pavement, causing visible abrasions. After paramedics arrive, as deputies are placing him on a gurney, Figueroa continues convulsing and foaming at the mouth, and his eyes roll back in his head. The footage of Figueroa ends when paramedics take custody of him.

Deputy Parham's Incident Report

According to Parham's report, Figueroa appeared to be under the influence of a stimulant at the time deputies contacted him inside the apartment: Parham observed Figueroa sweating profusely, acting "frantic," and grinding his teeth. During the drive to the station, Figueroa repeatedly yelled, "They're going to get me!" and "started to throw himself around the back of the patrol vehicle" and "bang the back of his head on the backseat window."

Figueroa was cited and released to paramedics before they transported him to the hospital.

Interview of Registered Nurse Janine Ruiz

Ruiz treated Figueroa upon his admission to the hospital. She told investigators he was intubated during his entire stay at the hospital and died on July 29, 2022, of cardiac arrest.

Autopsy Report

Los Angeles County Deputy Medical Examiner Richard Ou, M.D., conducted a post-mortem examination of Figueroa's remains, on August 17, 2022, ascribing the cause of death to "the sequelae of reported effects of cocaine and opiates, clinical" and deeming the manner of death accidental.

LEGAL ANALYSIS

A peace officer may use objectively reasonable force to effect the arrest, to prevent escape, or to overcome resistance. Penal Code section 835a(b). The decision by a peace officer to use force "shall be evaluated from the perspective of a reasonable officer in the same situation, based on the totality of the circumstances known to or perceived by the officer at the time, rather than with the benefit of hindsight, and that the totality of the circumstances shall account for occasions when officers may be forced to make quick judgements about using force." Penal Code section 835a(a)(4).

An act causes death if the death is the direct, natural, and probable consequence of the act and the death would not have happened without the act. CALCRIM No. 582.

Application

The deputies lawfully arrested Figueroa with probable cause to believe he was under the influence of a controlled substance while trespassing in his girlfriend's apartment.

There is no evidence deputies used unreasonable force against Figueroa. After Figueroa refused to exit the vehicle and instead lay across its rear bench seat, deputies lifted him out of the vehicle and laid him prone on the ground with his hands cuffed behind his back. Approximately one minute later, realizing he was in medical distress, they rolled him on his side and held him in that position, attempting to restrain him from thrashing and convulsing on the ground as they waited approximately 13 minutes for paramedics to arrive.

The force consisted of control holds, the minimum amount of force necessary to safely remove Figueroa from the vehicle and restrain him for his own safety until paramedics arrived to render aid and provide transport to a hospital. This minimal force was therefore reasonable.

Furthermore, there is no evidence the deputies' actions caused Figueroa's death. Rather, all available evidence indicates Figueroa died of cardiac arrest as a result of ingesting drugs. Deputies responded initially to a report from Figueroa's girlfriend that he was "under the influence." On the drive to the station, Figueroa began to suffer paranoid delusions, banging his head on the windows and thrashing his body in the back seat. After being removed from the vehicle, BWV shows Figueroa convulsing on the ground, foaming at the mouth, and his eyes rolling back in his head. Deputies quickly called paramedics, who arrived approximately 13 minutes later. Deputies released Figueroa to their care for transport to a hospital, where he died 13 days later of reported cardiac arrest. Ascribing the cause of death to the "effects of cocaine and opiates," a deputy medical examiner did not conclude LASD custody played any role in Figueroa's death.

CONCLUSION

Based on the foregoing, we find the deputies used no unreasonable force against Figueroa and did not cause his death.