

Stanislaus County Detention Facilities
Grand Jury Case No. 05-35
2004-2005

SUMMARY

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury toured the four detention facilities of Stanislaus County. The purpose of the tours was to review the inmate/ward accommodations, the operational procedures and the programs related to prison population care. The following locations were visited:

- Juvenile Hall, 2215 Blue Gum Avenue, Modesto
- Honor Farm, 8224 W. Grayson Road, Modesto
- Public Safety Center, 200 E. Hackett Road, Modesto
- Men's Jail, 1115 H Street, Modesto

The Grand Jury met with the administrators and program staff of each penal institution. The staff of each facility led the scheduled visits. Organizational and program information was provided to the Grand Jury. Staff was cooperative and open in sharing their awareness of the issues in organizing and implementing their assigned duties. It was apparent to the Grand Jury that the staff members of all the facilities shared a strong desire to fulfill their mission of custodial care. The observed evidence of thoughtful planning and effective management is indicative of good leadership.

The two older physical plants, the Men's Jail and the Honor Farm, present major challenges in facility maintenance and in meeting mandated services. The Juvenile Hall and the Public Safety Center are of later construction and are better able to offer a wide range of self-help programs, i.e., academic and vocational training, issue-related support groups and special interest activities. All four sites provide above average medical care including mental health diagnosis and treatment. Health services are provided by the California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG), a contracted agency.¹ All meals for the four detention facilities are prepared at the Public Safety Center. The four facilities' laundry is also processed at the Public Safety Center.

The Grand Jury determined that there were no major problems in any of the four detention facilities that would warrant recommendations for change. However, several issues emerged that raised questions.

¹ See Appendix

INTRODUCTION

California Penal Code Section 919(b) mandates that “a grand jury should inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within each county.” Stanislaus County Grand Jury scheduled on-site meetings with the administration and program staff of each detention facility in response to the regulation. Reports of prior Stanislaus County Grand Jury reviews of the prisons offered valuable guidelines for the current investigation.

METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

Staff guided tours of the detention facilities provided the Grand Jury with the opportunity for spontaneous questions and interactive discussion with the staff. Administrative and program staff presented their insight into current and potential management concerns. Informational material regarding the operational procedures and the programs for detainees was provided to the Grand Jury for review.

FINDINGS

Juvenile Hall

The present Juvenile Hall was first opened in 1978. A new wing was added in 2003, expanding the present bed capacity to 158 wards. At the time of the Grand Jury visit, the population average was 147 wards, 82% male and 18% female. The portion of the facility housing the wards consists of eight units, each focusing on a specific need. For example, one unit is responsible for intake/observation of wards and another for intensive care. Older males are housed in one unit and males requiring maximum security in another. The two units of the new wing focus on wards, female and male, having special needs related to substance abuse and/or mental health issues. Health services provided by CFMG are available around the clock. The County Office of Education provides the required four hours a day, five days a week of schooling on site for the minors. Qualified students can take college courses through the Internet. Programs for self-improvement offered to the wards include learning social skills, anger management and developing mature reasoning. Recreational activities are scheduled in a grassy fenced area adjacent to the facility.

Juvenile Hall is a well-maintained and secure facility. It has a central control system that monitors and controls the interior and exterior doors. Staff was observed as capable and responsive to the needs of the ward population.

The Grand Jury found the administration of the Juvenile Hall and the implementation of its programs well managed.

Honor Farm

The Honor Farm is a minimum security, male only facility located in a rural setting. It consists of four wooden barracks, each with an inmate bed capacity of 80. There are adjoining modular buildings providing space for meals, health services, class and vocational instruction, reception area for visitors and administrative offices. Instructional programs focus on training for the GED test, parenting classes, recovery groups, small engine repair and a woodworking shop. A landscape-training program allows inmates to maintain a sizeable vegetable/herb/flower garden that at times supplements the inmate's regular food rations. Inmates who qualify for a work detail program may work in the laundry at the Public Safety Center; do general maintenance/repair at the Honor Farm and assist in clean-up projects in the community, including illegal dumping sites. A law library is available for the inmates.

The administration of the Honor Farm is confronted with several major challenges:

- The Honor Farm's proximity to the San Joaquin River makes land erosion an on-going concern and necessitates continuous repair.
- Reductions in the budget have limited the offerings for vocational training.
- The minimum- security feature of the facility and the direct contact between inmate and visitor make the control of contraband difficult.

The staff's ability to effectively address such issues was apparent to the Grand Jury. Staff members are experienced and dedicated. The Grand Jury considers the program well managed.

Public Safety Center

Opened in 1992, the Public Safety Center is a state-of-the-art detention facility for approximately 500 male and female inmates. Inmates are assigned to a resident unit based on the intake evaluation of their need for security and services. Each unit functions semi-independently and is designed for a specific focus, i.e., mental health services and maximum-security lockdown. The units for male inmate are comprised of two tiers of cells encircling a common area with an adjacent command center. Women's housing units are referred to as "pods" and are located in a separate building. A central control system monitors all the common areas in all facilities and opens and closes all doors. The CFMG provides full-time health services. A variety of self-help and support group programs are provided. A law library is available to all inmates.

Two Public Safety Center programs service the four detention facilities.

- Nutritional Services

A central kitchen supplies three meals daily for the county detention facilities. A nutritionist plans and supervises the preparation of the food insuring that each inmate/ward receives 2600 calories daily at a cost of \$2.18 per inmate per meal. Overhead is factored into the cost. The service also caters numerous county sponsored events, for which the sponsoring department reimburses it. The work force includes county employee supervisors and a crew of approximately 30 inmates with security clearance.

- **Laundry Services**

A central laundry facility processes all the laundry needs for the four detention facilities.

Twelve inmates from the Honor Farm work in this service.

The Grand Jury concluded that the Public Safety Center, guided by capable staff, functions at a high level of efficiency. Exemplary areas are:

- A prompt intake procedure determines the appropriate resident and program placement for the new inmate based on their legal status and personality/medical profile.
- The Central Control Center utilizes multiple audio/visual screens to monitor the common areas and to operate all the doors of the facility.
- The central kitchen is a logistic wonder feeding all county detention facilities and catering several county sponsored events a month.

Men's Jail

This is a maximum- security facility with a bed capacity of 342. There are three floors of cells with an exercise yard on the roof. The cells are designed to house from one to twelve inmates. The majority of inmates are placed in the twelve- inmate units. The basement includes intake holding cells and a tunnel to the adjacent courthouse allowing the secure transport of inmates to their court hearings. Administrative offices are located on the first floor, as are the visitor reception area and the non-contact visiting spaces. Health services are provided on-site by CFMG. Doctor's Medical Center is utilized when needs can't be met on-site. Friends Outside and other community groups offer support services.

There were concerns that emerged in this Grand Jury investigation regarding the Men's Jail.

- Security of the exercise yard on the roof will be in jeopardy with the presence of the parking structure currently under construction at the corner of "H" and 12th Streets. The structure is three stores taller than the Men's Jail. The extra height may allow a way for inmates to have unauthorized contact with the outside, including the delivery of contraband. The administration of the Men's Jail has recognized this issue and

estimates the cost of securing the roof at approximately \$50,000.00.² The questions that must be asked here are:

- a) Was this issue addressed in the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prior to construction?
 - b) If the issue was considered, what was the resolution or conclusion?
Was the financial responsibility related to securing the roof established?
prior to construction?
- The California Board of Corrections 2005 Biennial Inspection Report for the Men's Jail noted a noncompliance per regulation Section 1062, Visiting.³ The facility lacks an adequate number of non-contact visiting spaces with which to satisfy the allotment of visits per inmate as stipulated in the regulations. This is a long-standing problem with no apparent plan for correction. The Grand Jury questions why the visitation area has not been expanded into the conference space at the corner of "H" and 12th Streets. Could the area be redesigned to accommodate both the visitation area and the need for a staff meeting/training area?

The Grand Jury is impressed with the dedication, resourcefulness and resilience of the administration and staff of the Men's Jail. As described in the Department of Corrections report, this facility is staff intensive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

² See Appendix 3

³ See Appendix

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