

**Correctional Facilities Inspections
Civil Grand Jury Case No. 09-18
2008-2009**

SUMMARY

Annual inspections of custodial facilities are mandated by the *California Penal Code, Section 919(b)*. The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury did not initiate these investigations as a direct or an indirect result of a complaint filed by any person.

INTRODUCTION

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury is mandated by *California Penal Code Section 919(b)*, to inquire into the condition and management of the detention facilities within the county. The mandate for these inspections is a part of the overall need to ensure that public agencies are properly serving the County and its citizens.

This mandate has been widely interpreted by past grand juries to range from visits to one or more facilities within their jurisdiction with a brief report as to the condition of those facilities. Sometimes detailed inspections of specific aspects of a facility's operation is included. This is, of course, in addition to the need to conduct investigations brought to any California Civil Grand Jury by a citizen, a person in custody, or a custodial staff member *California Penal Code Section 919(a)*.

The Grand Jury would like to comment on a practice that the Jury believes ultimately contributes to the continuing deterioration of certain custodial facilities and loss of programs within the County.

Financial savings from facilities' operating budgets that are the result of creative management are returned to the County General Fund and are not available to the facility itself. This practice inhibits incentives to create the most cost effective methods of operation. Unit managers should be empowered to redirect some or all of the funds saved for the benefit of their programs and facilities, enabling improvement in overall operations. This applies in particular to facilities with the greatest need.

Past Stanislaus County Grand Juries have criticized the physical condition of certain custodial facilities for nearly 25 years, with virtually no effect. In the meantime, the incarceration rate in this county per capita has grown to one of the highest in the world.¹ Budgetary challenges call for a more creative approach to managing facilities and existing resources.

¹ Source: U.S. Justice Department, The International Center for Prison Studies; **National Institute of Corrections**

The Grand Jury is concerned by the decrease in rehabilitation programs in certain facilities such as the Juvenile Detention facility and the Stanislaus County Honor Farm. In addition, the underutilization of detainee manpower at the Honor Farm for the benefit of the County should be addressed. The Grand Jury believes this to be a waste of sorely needed resources. These three issues coupled with incentives to save by individual units could produce positive results for the County.

The Grand Jury recommends that administrators determine how these custodial units can be empowered to streamline and improve their operations. Steps should be taken to make changes their managers can embrace.

METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

Members of the 2008-2009 Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury met and discussed the extent to which the facilities within Stanislaus County should be inspected and evaluated. The members then refined the scope and level of detail to which those inspections should extend:

- On-site visits with tours through each facility by members of the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury
- Communication between the Grand Jury and the supervisors of the various facilities in the county
- On-site conferences with selected members of each facility's staff
- Examination of County of Stanislaus Public Safety Services Master Plan, June, 2007, Executive Summary. This plan refers to the 1988 Jail Needs Assessment and Master Plan
- Examination of County of Stanislaus Sheriff Department's Jail Needs Assessment, June, 2007, Executive Summary
- Examination of Stanislaus County Probation Department's Juvenile Commitment Facility Needs Assessment, April, 2008, Executive Summary
- Review Policies and Procedures of the Sheriff's Department

Members of the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury made multiple announced and unannounced visits to the four facilities located within the county.

Stanislaus County detention facilities were inspected in January, February, and March, 2009: The Main Jail at 1115 H Street; Public Safety Center, 200 E. Hackett Road; Probation Department Juvenile Facility, 2215 Blue Gum Avenue; Stanislaus County Honor Farm, 8224 Grayson Road,

The following non-correctional facilities were also visited: Modesto Police Department, 600 10th Street; Ray Simon Training Center, 3805 Cornucopia Way; Coroner's Office, 939 Oakdale Road; Office of Emergency Services (OES), 3705 Oakdale Road, Administration Building, 424 E. Hackett Road.

FACILITY DISCUSSION, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STANISLAUS COUNTY MAIN JAIL

The entire facility should be replaced. Replacement of this facility has been recommended since the *1988 Jail Needs Assessment and Master Plan*.

Paint storage room is a fire hazard.

There does not appear to be clear written guidelines and standards for classification of inmates to determine their housing. The process as it exists appears to be an Ad Hoc process, which does not provide inclusion of qualified custodial staff specifically trained to make these decisions.

It was noted that certain inmates, classified as high-risk, were not allowed in the enclosed exercise facilities without wrist and ankle restraints.

The configuration of the rooftop exercise area and the officer's observation station creates a blind spot which may cause a security issue.

There were no citizen complaint forms available when requested.

Inmates were not accessible to Grand Jury members.

PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER

- **Main Kitchen on Hackett Road:**

It appeared that the food procurement procedures were missing opportunities to create greater economies of scale.

It was noted that there were several versions of uniforms worn by custodial and ancillary staff. This could potentially facilitate an escape.

- **Minimum custody housing unit:**

The officer located in the lobby area had an obstructed view of the housing units due to existing window coverings.

Overall the cleanliness of the minimum security housing unit needs improvement.

- **General Population Unit:**

The furniture in this unit is not anchored to the floor and made of flammable materials.

PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S JUVENILE FACILITY

The kitchen area is in need of extensive cleaning; in particular, the overhead vents located over the cooking area are coated with grease. This is a fire hazard.

The entrance to the walk-in refrigerators located in the kitchen area had several floor tiles missing which is a safety and health hazard.

There were no written policies to determine classification of incoming wards.

STANISLAUS COUNTY HONOR FARM

Two of the units in the building that houses the high risk inmates were in such a state of disrepair as to render units uninhabitable.

It was noted that un-sentenced inmates were housed at the Honor Farm which is understood to be a minimum custodial facility.

It was noted that there were previously two types of recycling programs at the Honor Farm. One of them was making compost from green waste; the other was recycling discarded items on County roads. It appears these programs were discontinued because of the lack of funds.

Sections of the property housing the facility had been previously used for growing fruit trees and vegetables. The crop was included as part of the food program for County detention facilities. This program no longer exists.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAIN JAIL

Stanislaus County Main Jail: The entire facility should be replaced. Replacement of this facility was recommended in the *1988 Jail Needs Assessment and Master Plan* and continuously after that. This Grand Jury concurs with that recommendation.

The paint storage room does not meet the *OSHA (Office of Safety and Health Administration) *Standards for Storage of Flammable and Combustible Liquids 1926.152*.

Specific guidelines for inmate classification should be developed by qualified professionals and disseminated as a training document for staff involved in the assignment of housing and programs of inmates.

In certain instances Grand Jurors may choose to speak directly to an inmate. Jail staff should be aware of this prerogative.

High-risk inmates that are currently restrained during their period in the exercise area should be allowed to exercise in their secured and separate enclosure without wrist or ankle restraints.

The officer's observation station located in the exercise area should be moved to a location that provides an unobstructed view of all inmates.

At the recommendation of the current Civil Grand Jury, a directive was issued by the Sheriff, dated May 19, 2009. Citizen complaint forms will now be available in all Sheriff's facilities and on-line, to be issued upon request without questioning.

Main Kitchen (Public Safety Center): The current cost of feeding per inmate approaches \$6.00 per day. The kitchen management is encouraged to seek additional means to create economies of scale in food procurement i.e., joint purchases of commonly used food products with nearby counties.

Applications should be made to the federal government for access to federal food stores if possible, and other mechanisms that would result in the reduction of daily food costs.

It is recommended that all staff interacting with inmates dress in a uniform manner to reduce the potential of prisoner escape.

Minimum Housing Custody Unit: Window coverings in the lobby area should be removed or permanently raised to provide an unobstructed view of the inmate activity area.

It is recommended that the Sheriff's Department utilize inmate workers to achieve and maintain the overall cleanliness of the housing unit.

General Population Unit: The Grand Jury recommends that the furniture be securely anchored to the floor. Furniture purchased in the future should be made of non-flammable materials.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S JUVENILE FACILITY

The kitchen area should be thoroughly cleaned with particular attention paid to the overhead vents that are covered with grease.

Missing floor tiles in the kitchen area should be replaced.

Specific guidelines for ward classification should be developed by qualified professionals. This information should be disseminated as a training document for staff to assign housing and programs for wards.

RECOMMENDATIONS STANISLAUS COUNTY HONOR FARM

The building that houses the high-risk inmates should be condemned and razed.

It is apparent that inmates classified at higher than minimum risk are housed at this minimum risk facility. It is recommended that this practice be reviewed.

RESPONSES REQUIRED

Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors
Stanislaus County Probation Department
Stanislaus County Sheriff's Office