

Correctional Facilities Inspections
Civil Grand Jury Case No. 10-47GJ
2009 – 2010

SUMMARY

The 2009-2010 Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury conducted inspections of four correctional facilities: the Stanislaus County Main Jail, 1115 H Street; the Stanislaus County Safety Center, 200 E. Hackett Road; the Stanislaus County Juvenile Detention Center, 2215 Blue Gum Avenue; and the Stanislaus County Honor Farm, 8224 Grayson Road. The Civil Grand Jury is required to conduct these inspections by California Penal Code, Section 919(b).

Individual reports regarding each facility are included below, together with findings and recommendations for each facility.

INTRODUCTION

Section 919 (b) of the California Penal Code requires the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury to “inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.”¹ This requirement fulfills an overall need to ensure that public agencies are operating as efficiently as possible in order to properly serve both Stanislaus County and its citizens.

Upon completion of its inspections, the Civil Grand Jury identified one particular need within all of the facilities. While each facility utilizes a video monitoring system, the systems vary in terms of their features and capabilities. The Civil Grand Jury believes that all of the facilities should make it a priority to upgrade their video monitoring system. Each system should be capable of continuous recording. The Civil Grand Jury sees this as a serious safety issue not only for the inmates housed in each of the facilities but also for the employees of each of the facilities. Modern video monitoring/recording systems in each of the facilities would serve as a general deterrent to poor behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Members of the Civil Grand Jury:

- Conducted unannounced visits at all facilities.
- Toured and inspected each facility independently.
- Interviewed a variety of people including managers, supervisors and staff.
- Interviewed inmates, where possible.
- Reviewed records and reports.

¹ California Penal Code Section 919 (b)

FACILITY DISCUSSION, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STANISLAUS COUNTY MAIN JAIL

BACKGROUND

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury made an unannounced jail inspection on November 2, 2009, and received an escorted tour by the Operations Sergeant and a deputy. Both were very knowledgeable and answered all of the members' questions. The Civil Grand Jury also spoke with additional deputies and inmates during the visit.

The Civil Grand Jury concludes that the Stanislaus County Main Jail facility is old and rundown and needs to be replaced. The facility appears as clean and as well kept as possible, considering its age. The inmate capacity is 396 and the facility is generally run at capacity. Some cells in the jail hold as many as eight inmates.

Medical services are supplied by Correct Care Solutions (CCS), which is a new provider for correctional facilities. The medical clinic area at the jail is small and cramped, but it appears to provide adequate services. There are licensed nurses on duty 24 hours per day and physicians are on 24-hour call.

The law library has been dismantled, but law books are still available to inmates upon request. A dental treatment area is being built where the law library used to be.

Inmates are classified upon incarceration and their classification is reviewed every 60 days thereafter.

There are security cameras located throughout the facility, but the video monitoring/recording system needs to be updated and modernized.

The Civil Grand Jury members noted that inmates hose down their cells in the jail. The water from this activity runs into drains located in the main walkways and through ceilings to lower floors. This practice, in combination with other normal hygiene activities, makes the jail almost unbearably humid.

The 2008-2009 Civil Grand Jury found that there were no citizen complaint forms available upon request. This deficiency has been corrected and citizen complaint forms were readily available at the time of this Civil Grand Jury's visit.

FINDINGS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following findings:

- F1. This facility needs to be replaced.
- F2. The humidity in the jail was overwhelming.
- F3. The video monitoring/recording system needs to be capable of recording continuously.
- F4. The medical and dental service appears to be adequate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

- R1. Replace the existing jail facility with a larger, more modern facility.
- R2. Upgrade the video monitoring/recording system.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department.

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

PUBLIC SAFETY CENTER

BACKGROUND

On February 18, 2010, the Civil Grand Jury made an unannounced visit to the Stanislaus County Public Safety Center. The facility is well lighted and airy. On the date of the Civil Grand Jury's visit, the facility had a number of empty desks and equipment in the administrative area due to lay-offs caused by the current economy as well as some decentralization. There appears to be a lack of adequate staffing, but those who remain seem to be making the best of a bad situation.

The Public Safety Center was opened in 1992 at least in part as the result of a lawsuit challenging overcrowded conditions at the Main Jail. At the time of the Civil Grand Jury's visit, the Center housed 586 inmates, with a total capacity of 725. It provides minimum to maximum security housing. At the time of the inspection, there were 96 staff members at the Safety Center.

When entering the Center, each inmate is placed in a particular classification for housing purposes. Classification officers conduct the screenings which determine where an inmate should be housed. There are several different types of housing, including special needs, special handling (which is high security), regular housing and temporary housing.

Males and females are housed separately in several different incarceration areas. Each area is made up of pods, which are large rooms that contain a number of cells around the outer edge. There are windows instead of bars on cell doors. In addition to the cells in the pod, there is a common area, like a day room, in the center of the cells in which the inmates can socialize, read, watch TV, etc. Each cell in a pod houses one to two inmates.

Inmates at the Public Safety Center are offered the opportunity to perform chores such as mopping floors or doing laundry. Inmates who perform chores receive points that may result in their early release for good behavior. However, if an inmate refuses to perform chores when asked, or otherwise behaves inappropriately, he or she loses points and will not have the opportunity to shorten the duration of their sentence.

The Civil Grand Jury noted that the Public Safety Center utilizes the availability of arraignments via closed circuit television, thereby eliminating the need to transport detainees to the courthouse in central Modesto for their arraignment. Because they do not need to transport detainees to arraignments, more deputies are available to provide security when needed by medical personnel or other staff.

The medical staff at the Public Safety Center is contracted by Correct Care Solutions (CCS). Medical personnel are on duty at all times at the Center. There are two psychiatric nurses, and one psychiatrist. The psychiatrist is available on an as-needed basis.

Inmates can access medical care by way of:

1. The sick call list. This list includes inmates who have requested medical care by submitting a medical request form. They are taken from their pods to a multi-purpose room where an examination takes place. Although a guard is required to be nearby during the exam, he or she must not be able to hear the conversation between the inmate and the medical provider due to privacy requirements.
2. Acute care. Inmates needing care for an acute condition are seen by nursing staff or a doctor as needed.

There is annual training for staff on mental health issues, which has resulted in a reduction of the number of incidents of inmates assaulting staff in the past five years. Recent reductions in the facility's operating budget have not resulted in a reduction in this training.

The facility keeps a detailed log on every discharge of any type of weapon. The log includes diagrams of the location of the incident and a narrative containing specific details of the incident.

Inmates who have a grievance with regard to policies, procedures or conditions at the facility can file the grievance using forms that are readily available to them. Grievance forms and complaint forms are also readily available to the public.

There are security cameras located throughout the facility, but the video monitoring/recording system needs to be updated and modernized.

FINDINGS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following findings:

- F1. The Public Safety Center is a clean facility.
- F2. The inmate grievance procedure is adequate.
- F3. Inmates are separated and housed by appropriate classifications.
- F4. The medical staff is adequate and appears to display a caring attitude.
- F5. The use of closed circuit television for arraignments is both a cost-savings and safety benefit as it keeps more deputies available for security purposes at the Public Safety Center.

F6. The annual mental health training appears to be beneficial.

F7. The facility keeps appropriate records regarding any discharge of weapons.

F8. The video monitoring/recording system needs to be capable of recording continuously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

R1. The current level of staff should be maintained or increased.

R2. The annual mental health training should be maintained.

R3. Upgrade the video monitoring/recording system.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department.

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

PROBATION DEPARTMENT'S JUVENILE FACILITY

BACKGROUND

On March 19, 2010, the Civil Grand Jury made an unannounced visit to the Stanislaus County Probation Department's Juvenile Facility, also known as "Juvenile Hall", at 2215 Blue Gum Road.

Juvenile Hall has a rated capacity of 158 minors. The original building was opened in 1978. Two additional modules were opened in 2000. Juvenile Hall is a maximum security detention facility for juveniles who have committed offenses prior to their 18th birthday. Minors detained in Juvenile Hall are provided with a generally safe environment. Juvenile detainees are also provided with educational, recreational, counseling, health and religious programs. In general, the Civil Grand Jury noted that the staff has implemented creative and relevant programs in each of these areas and appears to execute them with a high level of commitment. To reach this conclusion, the inspecting members of the Civil Grand Jury interviewed members of the medical, mental health and other staff at the facility.

All minors arrested by law enforcement agencies in Stanislaus County are referred to the Probation Department, either by issuance of a citation in their name or by being booked into Juvenile Hall. A probation intake officer investigates the minor's delinquent behavior and other circumstances and may dispose of the referral by counseling and releasing the minor, referring

the minor to a community counseling agency, placing the minor on informal probation for up to one year, or referring the minor to the District Attorney for formal charging in Juvenile Court. There are two judges assigned to Juvenile Court.

In dealing with juveniles under their jurisdiction, the Probation Department continues to emphasize mental health and substance abuse awareness. A juvenile's mental health is assessed for purposes of classification and treatment. Various grants provide for staff to attend training in areas like "Anger Management, Moral Reasoning, and Substance Abuse."

Grievance forms are available for all juveniles held in the facility. Grievance forms are placed in locked boxes for collection and review. Upon entering the facility juveniles are informed of the grievance policy through their orientation packets. Complaint forms are also available for members of the public. The director of the facility reviews all grievance and complaint forms personally.

There are security cameras located throughout the facility, but the video monitoring/recording system needs to be updated and modernized.

The facility is inspected periodically in accordance with requirements imposed by the State of California. The Civil Grand Jury reviewed the records of the most recent inspections and there were no reportable problems.

FINDINGS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following findings:

- F1. The facility seems to be well-maintained and orderly.
- F2. The kitchen and dining area appeared clean and adequate.
- F3. The facility is fully staffed, but faces a possible 5% budget reduction and the implementation of employee furlough days. A final decision on these issues will be made at the end of June 2010.
- F4. Drastic reductions in available overtime will present a challenge in furlough implementation, which may lead to early release of minors due to staff limitations.
- F5. Both inmate grievances and public complaints appear to be handled properly.
- F6. The facilities are inspected periodically in accordance with State requirements.
- F7. The video monitoring/recording system needs to be capable of recording continuously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

- R1. The current staffing level should be maintained or increased.
- R2. Upgrade the video monitoring/recording system.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

The Stanislaus County Probation Department.

The Stanislaus County Board of Directors.

STANISLAUS COUNTY HONOR FARM

BACKGROUND

On June 2, 2010, the Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury made an unannounced visit to the Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department Honor Farm facility, met with deputies in charge of the Honor Farm, and received an extensive tour of the facility.

The Honor Farm employs 39 staff members, with at least six working per shift on a 24 hour, 7 day a week basis. The inmates housed at this facility are categorized as "low risk." All inmates housed at the Honor Farm are male. There are several barracks, each of which can house 86 inmates. However, at the time of the visit, the Civil Grand Jury learned that by the end of June, 2010, there may only be one, possibly two barracks still in use. If the Sheriff's Department decides to keep two barracks in use and there are only enough inmates for one, the inmates will be split between the two. These changes may be necessary because of extensive cuts to the Sheriff's Department's budget mandated by the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

Because of cutbacks in the number of Deputy Sheriffs in the custodial division, inmates are being released early. Upon arrest, almost all persons cited for misdemeanors are booked into the County Jail facilities and then released on their own recognizance or on bail to await trial and sentencing. Upon sentencing, most of these persons are immediately released to the Alternative Work Program (AWP).

Unlike other operations within the Sheriff's Department, the Honor Farm receives no grant monies from either the State of California or the federal government. Additionally, any income the Honor Farm generates is deposited in the County's general fund. For instance, if the Honor Farm makes money by implementing a recycling program, that money is sent to the County and spent as the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors sees fit. In addition to losing income, there are costs the County will incur no matter whether they populate the barracks or not. The County

will be forced to maintain the barracks ó providing power and pest control at the least ó or else risk losing the buildings to decay and deterioration.

Pursuant to the budget cuts, many educational programs will be eliminated. However, some of the educational programs at the Honor Farm, such as the literacy program, will continue. Additionally, there are several outside organizations that will continue to be involved at the Honor Farm, such as the Chaplain service, Friends Outside, Alliance Network, and Behavioral Services. Once an inmate completes a program provided by the Honor Farm and is released from custody, he receives a certificate of completion but no assistance in finding employment.

From all indications, because of the budget cuts, the Honor Farm will no longer provide road crews to the Department of Public Works, the Department of Environmental Resources, and the City of Modesto. Road crews will have to be formulated through AWP. Also, because of the budget cuts, the Honor Farm's medical services, now provided 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, may have to be cut back to 16 hours per day, 7 days per week.

If an Honor Farm inmate chooses to work and has the necessary skills, he can work at the wood shop, small engine repair shop, or the metal shop. These shops appear to be fully equipped with the proper tools and necessary parts. If an inmate chooses not to work, he is allowed full use of the exercise yard during the day.

Although not extensive, the staff at the Honor Farm does receive annual training regarding the identification of individuals with medical issues such as mental illness.

If any inmate has a grievance of any type, there are grievance forms readily available to the inmate. Inmate grievances are handled at the lowest level of staff possible but can be taken up the chain of command as necessary.

The Civil Grand Jury members were allowed to talk to any inmate if they so desired. There was no attempt to downplay or minimize any part of the facility or deter the members from seeing anything on the campus. The facility appears to be under the capable hands of the deputy in charge and the rest of the staff appeared to handle their positions capably.

There are security cameras located throughout the facility, but the video monitoring/recording system needs to be updated and modernized.

FINDINGS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following findings:

- F1. The Honor Farm appears to be a well-organized, well-run facility.
- F2. Closing, or significantly reducing the population of inmates housed at the Honor Farm, may have significant negative ripple effects on the community at large. Not the least of which will be fewer available workers to accomplish the duties of the three entities who rely on the road-work

crews provided by the Honor Farm ó the Department of Public Works, the Department of Environmental Resources and the City of Modesto.

F3. Due to the remote location of the Honor Farm, cutting back on readily available medical services could result in a failure to timely treat emergent injuries.

F4. The video monitoring/recording system needs to be capable of recording continuously.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Stanislaus County Civil Grand Jury makes the following recommendations:

R1. The Sheriff's Department should endeavor to keep the Honor Farm fully staffed and all the barracks open. Justice will not be served if all arrestees, except those charged with a felony, are immediately released back into the general population.

R2. The Sheriff's Department should attempt to continue providing road-work crews to the Department of Public Works, the Department of Environmental Resources and the City of Modesto.

R3. The medical service should continue to provide treatment on a 24 hour per day, 7 days per week basis.

R4. Upgrade the video monitoring/recording system.

RESPONSE REQUIRED

The Stanislaus County Sheriff's Department.

The Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors.

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person, or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Civil Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.