

Blaine Street Facility

Background

Blaine Street Facility (Blaine Street) houses minimum and medium security female inmates at 141 Blaine Street in Santa Cruz. Blaine Street has been in operation since 1984 and is adjacent to the Main Jail. There are 19 sleeping rooms with a board rated capacity of 32.

The Grand Jury toured the facility on September 17, 2007 and conducted a follow-up visit on October 1, 2007.

Findings

1. Blaine Street is designed for women inmates who have been screened as minimum security risks. Low risk medium security women may also be assigned to this facility.
2. In 2006, the average inmate population was 24, and in 2007 (through September 26, 2007) was 25. On the day of the initial visit, there were 27 inmates. Approximately 20 percent of the women are Hispanic; the majority are identified as “White.” The average age is 35.
3. On September 5, 2007, the California Corrections Standards Authority recommended that Blaine Street be reclassified from a Type III facility (minimum security only) to a Type II facility, which would allow some medium security women to be moved from the Main Jail, reducing overcrowding there. This reclassification was implemented on September 5, 2007.
4. Most women at Blaine Street are incarcerated for drug and alcohol offenses. Some are there for theft and embezzling offenses, usually related to drug and alcohol addiction. On September 26, 2007, Blaine Street inmates consisted of women convicted of 17 felonies and nine misdemeanors.
5. The average stay is about two months. The maximum is one year.
6. In 2006, only one violent incident was reported at Blaine Street. Gang affiliation has not been a problem in this facility and inmates do not require separation based on gang identity.
7. The California Corrections Standards Authority issued a very positive assessment in a report dated September 5, 2007, stating that Blaine Street “continues to be a well run and clean facility.”
8. The front door is locked to the outside but not from the inside. There is a security camera on the outside of the front door, but nothing prevents an inmate from walking away. In 2006, the superintendent reported six inmates had walked away; all were apprehended and returned to the Main Jail.
9. Telephones are available and can be used with a prepaid account.

10. The meals are fresh and well balanced. The food services manager at the Main Jail prepares the menu.
11. In a report dated July 10, 2007, the Environmental Health report indicated, “The homestyle hood in use is insufficient for use over the commercial range.” According to a phone call to the Supervising Correctional Officer on December 13, 2007, a commercial hood is being considered for future installation.
12. The Blaine Street supervisor is present four days a week. Her time is split between Blaine Street and the Work Furlough program.
13. In addition to the supervisor, there is one corrections officer on duty who works a 12-hour shift. Corrections officers are rotated among all the county jail facilities, so several different officers are assigned to Blaine Street each week.
14. Some staff members speak Spanish, but it is not required. If there is a language barrier, other inmates are asked to translate.
15. A Work Furlough program is available to inmates who meet program requirements. It allows them to leave the facility for a job, but they must return when their work hours are completed. The program will accommodate any work schedule the employer requires. Inmates are responsible for their own transportation, clothing and meals when they leave Blaine Street.
16. Each inmate is required to spend time working in the kitchen, doing laundry, or cleaning the facility.
17. Educational and support programs are offered. Each time one of the women attends a class, group meeting or other program, it is counted as a “unit.” In a typical month there are more than 500 units of attendance counted for all of the classes, groups and programs.
18. Computer training classes are offered to the inmates. The plan is to double the number of computers available from six to 12 and connect them to the Internet. Computers cannot be used by inmates without supervision.
19. In addition to computer training, other programs include:
 - The Santa Cruz City Adult School offers classes for a General Education Degree (GED), job skills and parenting.
 - The Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency (HSA) offers classes on women’s health issues and provides Hepatitis C and HIV testing.
 - The Walnut Avenue Women’s Center offers a support group for domestic violence victims.
 - Pajaro Valley Prevention offers classes dealing with drug and alcohol abuse. The class meets four times a week for 90 minutes each session. Once a week, it is offered in Spanish. From July through September 2007, there were almost 400 units of attendance recorded in these classes.
 - Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) hold regular meetings at Blaine Street.
 - Volunteers teach a popular knitting and crocheting class; yarn and other supplies are donated.

- Volunteer groups offer religious services.
 - Volunteers from Friends Outside bring books for the library and other resources for the inmates.
20. Inmates have access to transitional programs such as Gemma, which serves as a halfway house for women making the adjustment back to civilian life after incarceration.
 21. The non-profit agency New Directions uses state funds to provide counseling and educational services to the children of incarcerated parents. This agency provides services to South County families of women at Blaine Street.
 22. Inmates have free time, which they can spend on the patio or lounging in the building. A small room has exercise equipment, though it was not being used on the day of the Grand Jury visit.
 23. Inmates are allowed to grow fresh vegetables for their meals in an onsite garden.
 24. Inmates may schedule one visit a week on weekends from a pre-approved list of up to eight visitors. Visits can be held in the common room or outside on the patio.
 25. The nurse from the Main Jail is available 24 hours a day and visits three times a week. There is no onsite medical supervision. Inmates can be transported to public medical facilities in an emergency. Recent policy changes allow for dispensing methadone and other medications.
 26. Twelve inmates are randomly drug tested each month. Additionally, if women show signs of behavior that could be drug induced, they are transferred back to the Main Jail.
 27. There is no automated external defibrillator (AED) at Blaine Street although one was recommended by the previous Grand Jury.

Conclusions

1. Compliance with the California Corrections Standards Authority recommendation to allow medium security inmates to be moved to Blaine Street has helped relieve overcrowding at the Main Jail.
2. At the time of the Grand Jury visit, Blaine Street was clean, orderly and had a non-institutional feel.
3. Although the supervisor does a commendable job, Blaine Street would be well served by a full-time supervisor.
4. Because of the policy to rotate corrections officers among county jail facilities, there is little consistency in the staff at Blaine Street.
5. Given the large number of Hispanic inmates, the fact that detention staff is not required to speak Spanish may be a problem.
6. The women are well served by numerous support programs.

7. An automated external defibrillator (AED) would enhance the safety of staff and inmates.

Recommendations

1. The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff’s Department replace the hood over the range with a commercial hood.
2. The Grand Jury recommends that the Sheriff’s Department implement long-term staff assignments, giving preference to correctional officers who are bilingual in Spanish and English. Having a consistent staff, rather than a different corrections officer every few days, would better serve the inmates.
3. The Grand Jury strongly recommends that the Sheriff’s Department install an automated external defibrillator (AED) at Blaine Street, as recommended in the 2006-2007 Grand Jury Report.

Commendations

1. During the tour, the Grand Jury noted that the inmates were treated with dignity and respect.
2. The Grand Jury concurs with the California Corrections Standards Authority that Blaine Street is a “well run and clean facility” and commends the staff’s management.

Responses Required

Respondent	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within / Respond By
County of Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors	11, 27		60 days September 1, 2008
County of Santa Cruz Sheriff’s Office	11, 27	1, 2, 3	60 days September 1, 2008

Sources

Blaine St. Women's Facility - Environmental Health Evaluation, July 10, 2007

Directory of Inmate Programs, September 2007, Volunteer Information

Interviews with Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Personnel

Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office Corrections Bureau Population Analysis Report
(sampling of eleven daily reports)

State of California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation 2006-2008 Biennial Inspection

State of California, California Code of Regulations, Title 15. Crime Prevention and Corrections.

http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Regulations/Adult_Operations/docs/Title15-2007.pdf

Statistical summary of attendance at voluntary programs (July – September 2007) provided by the Sheriff's Office.

