

Jails in Transition

2015-2016 Jail Inspection Report

Summary

The Grand Jury toured and inspected four detention facilities in Santa Cruz County: the Main Jail, Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility, Juvenile Hall Detention Center, and Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility. We found all to be well run and generally in good physical condition, with some signs of wear from their years of service.

The Grand Jury recommends increased security around the Main Jail kitchen door and the area beyond, improved utilization of cells in the Main Jail Medical Unit and Observation Unit, more detailed treatment plans and quicker medical response for at-risk inmates, and a minor upgrade to one cell.

The Grand Jury is encouraged by the vocational and rehabilitation programs at Rountree and Blaine Street, and the number and variety of exceptional programs at Juvenile Hall.

Background

The California Penal Code 919(b) provides: "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county."^[1] Santa Cruz County has four jails: the Santa Cruz County Main Jail, Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility, Juvenile Hall Detention Center, and Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility.

Scope

In meeting its responsibility to inspect the county's detention facilities and report on conditions and management provided by the Sheriff's Office, the Grand Jury toured each physical property; questioned management and personnel regarding inmate care and services, diet, availability, and access to chaplains, rehabilitation programs and opportunities for community engagement; reviewed policies and procedures;^[2] interviewed inmates; and reviewed logs and other documentation to ascertain compliance with stated policies and procedures.

Investigation

Water Street Main Jail, Inspected on December 14, 2015

Inmate Populations and Intake Statistics

The Main Jail has a maximum capacity of 400 inmates. On the day of the Grand Jury inspection, the population was 311. The required annual fire, medical, mental health, and environmental inspections were all up to date for 2015. There are approximately 1,000 arrests each month. Since the 2014-2015 Grand Jury Inspection Report, the Sheriff's Office has established an alcohol sobering facility adjacent to the jail. This facility has been outsourced to Janus of Santa Cruz, a drug and alcohol recovery center.

Everyone arrested who is 65 years old or older is first sent to Dominican Hospital for medical screening before jail intake.

Crisis Intervention Team

There is a Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) that meets five days a week. The team consists of the mental health staff, medical staff, Chief Correctional Officer, and other supervisory jail personnel. During the meetings daily assessments are made about the current jail population and inmates' special needs are identified and addressed.

On the days that CIT^[3] meets, it issues a Facility Risk Report for staff providing necessary alerts for the inmates deemed at-risk for suicide, escape, assault, medical issues, and other destabilizing behaviors, all of which are constants in this environment.

The Grand Jury found the implementation of CIT successfully addresses many of its objectives to coordinate care and anticipate and avert potential adverse events. We found the program lacking in these significant ways:

- CIT meets only on weekdays. On weekends, when members are off duty, crises occur in the absence of this coordinated care model. CIT should meet daily.
- The Facility Risk Report is helpful but more specific recommendations for jail staff could improve overall care and inmate management.
- CIT meetings directly impact jail operations and should be documented. Minutes should be required.

Intake Screening and Evaluation

Properly assigning inmates to a housing unit emphasizes health and safety for the newly incarcerated. Intake processing consists of layers of screening detainees. Initially an arrestee receives an at-risk assessment performed by the arresting officer. This assessment becomes part of the individual's booking record to assist other personnel.

The at-risk assessment is accompanied by a health screening before the arrestee is assigned to a housing unit. This assessment, performed by a health-trained Corrections Officer (CO), ascertains physical or mental limitations posing potential hazards to the arrestee or other inmates if placed in the general population.

Delivery of Medical Services

Since 2012, all medical services for the correctional facilities have been contracted with the California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG). Medical care at the Main Jail is available 24/7. There is a certified Physician's Assistant (PA) available five days a week. There is a medical doctor on-call who is available to see at-risk inmates within 72 hours. Mental health services are provided by the County Health Services Agency.

The Medical Unit is an area with two holding cells for inmates waiting for a medical appointment. Generally they are accompanied by a Corrections Officer (CO), however when there is a staff shortage, which is often, the inmate is left alone. These rooms are inside the Medical Unit which houses all medications, medical equipment, and medical staff. The Grand Jury feels these rooms could be put to better use by transforming them into critical care units for seriously ill inmates.

Infirmiry Operations and Utilization

The Observation Unit, frequently but inaccurately referred to as the infirmiry, is in another area a distance from the Medical Unit. It consists of 13 cells that are centrally monitored by non-medical personnel, both directly and via video surveillance. This is also referred to as the "direct observations" area and is managed by the CO on duty. It is the responsibility of the CO to contact nursing staff if he or she recognizes a medical need. The CO monitors each occupied cell by observing the inmate through a small window when making rounds, which can range in frequency from every 15 minutes to one hour. The Grand Jury observed that all the windows are the same size other than for cell 13, which is smaller. We question how effective a check can be if an inmate is covered by a blanket: most of the time these checks are strictly visual, from outside the cell door. In prior Grand Jury inspections, it was noted there were irregularities discovered involving inmates covering these windows with various items to block the view; this is no longer a problem and has been corrected.

Escape Incidents

The Main Jail experienced an escape in 2015 through an open door in the kitchen. This door leads to an unrestricted and unfenced area and the inmate simply walked away. It was observed that this same door was open during the Grand Jury inspections. The Grand Jury was told that the inmate who walked away was a minimum security detainee. We learned that funding has been allocated to build a fence surrounding this door. Construction is scheduled to begin this year.

Food Service

In December 2015 a new food-serving protocol was instituted for faster service, higher compliance with nutrition standards, and cost control. Inmates now receive their meals fully served in specialized serving trays. Nutritional content and cost of \$1.29 per meal are carefully monitored. This is a reduction from \$1.49 per meal from last year.

Kitchen employees are supported by up to four inmates per shift. Minimum security

inmates who are interested can apply for kitchen duty. The Grand Jury noticed that the morale of the kitchen staff was particularly positive.

Facility Condition

The general physical condition of the jail building is showing some age and could use updating. In particular, the linoleum in the Observation Unit has severe buckling and may pose a hazard for foot traffic. For a kitchen originally designed to provide meals for 100 people, the staff do an amazing job feeding 300 people daily. All service areas were clean; floors were buffed to a high shine, and considering the age of the building, it continues to be functional.

Staffing

It was also noted the staff is consistently rotated to experience the duties of all personnel. This has shown to be valuable in offering a fresh look at situations by staff as they “walk in each other’s shoes.”

Rountree Men’s Medium Security Facility, Inspected on February 1, 2016

Rountree is located in Watsonville, California. This is an all male adult facility which can house up to 96 inmates. Since this is a medium security facility, incarceration here only happens if the offender is guilty of a low level or first time offense. The inmate classification system here is based on a profile established by the Main Jail. Rountree is frequently called “The Farm.”

The focus of “The Farm” centers around inmate rehabilitation. There is strong emphasis on compliance while they are in custody. This is promoted by a weekly meeting every Monday to acquaint inmates with the rules and procedures for a successful stay. Consequently, they are reminded on a regular basis what it means to cooperate and build a better life.

There are over 30 different classes available, such as substance abuse issues, anger management, parenting, gang activity, and financial education. The goal is to redirect their lives toward healthy self-management and functionality without the prior influences that got them into trouble in the first place. This is accomplished by an incredibly devoted staff who are qualified to teach these critical life skills. The response from the inmates the Grand Jury spoke with was overwhelmingly positive. For many of these inmates this is their first exposure to life skills training. It is the impression of the Grand Jury that the inmates have sincere gratitude for what they are learning. The long term goal for the staff is to be influential enough to prevent inmates returning to their old lifestyle.

A new program that has proven to be highly successful is the “Jail to Jobs Fair.” The director of the facility enlists a number of prospective employers who come to the jail, make a presentation about their employment opportunities, and encourage inmates to work toward applying for jobs once released. This boosts morale and creates a sense of hope in these men. Once apprised of their opportunities they are motivated to engage in programs with a goal in mind. An additional motivating factor is the knowledge that if they are uncooperative or under performing they are returned to the Main Jail.

Santa Cruz Probation Department – Juvenile Hall Detention Facility, Inspected on December 7, 2015

Since 1968 this facility has consistently garnered accolades for its successful programs. The Grand Jury learned that this facility is recognized as a nation-wide model for reducing incarceration of juveniles.

This facility houses up to 42 young offenders. The population on the day of the inspection was 17. This is a coed environment. The average stay for the youths is 12 to 14 days and then they are returned to their families. If they stay longer and reach their 18th birthday, they are transferred to the Main Jail. What the Grand Jury found to be impressive was the attitude shared by the staff, who are committed to helping these youngsters build a better life for their experience in the real world. The Grand Jury observed a level of dedication which is so obvious that it becomes infectious when hearing their success stories and the continuous flow of new ideas for improvement.

There are numerous programs available to assist in the transition from incarceration to life at home. There are educational classes to accomplish a GED or high school diploma, mental health classes to help with self sufficiency, anger management, gang affiliation, financial management, and basic living skills. There is a focus on literacy; the local library makes new books available to the youth on a regular basis so they are not relegated to reading the same things over and over. The onsite library is available to them everyday.

A recent successful objective has been the staff decision to incorporate a culinary program for the juveniles called the “Seed to Table” program. The plan calls for remodeling the kitchen so it can perform as a teaching and learning environment, planting a garden area to complement the menu, and adding an agricultural component to the educational opportunities. This is coming to fruition through a portion of three grants. This program provides an opportunity for Juvenile Hall to offer a more diverse curriculum while simultaneously improving the quality of the food service.

The physical condition of this facility was clean and orderly. It is showing signs of age but the staff does a more than adequate job of maintenance. The kitchen was very clean, neat, and functional. With the coming improvements for the “Seed to Table” program, the kitchen will be able to provide healthier and more appealing meals. The food costs are always considered an important factor and to date, the cost is \$1.49 per meal. This is less than the prior year. When speaking with the juveniles, there was enthusiastic approval of the food served.

We had the opportunity to sit down, have lunch, and speak with various juveniles. It was during these conversations that the Grand Jury heard the personal reactions to what the facility is providing for them. The majority of those incarcerated only had positive comments to make about the staff and the programs. They all felt the staff “really cared about them” and their acceptance was a key to their motivation to improve their lives.

Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility, Inspected on December 14, 2015

Reminiscent of a dormitory style older home, this facility shows some signs of wear and tear. Much of it is outdated, however the facility adequately meets the needs of the female inmates. While there is room for 32 women, there were 11 women in custody at the time of the Grand Jury inspection.

There is a work furlough program provided for the detainees which allows them to work outside the facility and return each night. The women are encouraged to apply for duty in the kitchen of the Main Jail. Unfortunately, one of the women on kitchen duty walked off the property in 2015 and escaped from the Main Jail through an open back door. As noted earlier, construction is set to begin this year on a fence to enclose the unrestricted area outside the door.

The inmates are offered programs designed to integrate them back into life outside the facility. These programs include drug and alcohol counseling, parenting skills, employment opportunities, and self esteem tutoring through group therapy.

Findings

- F1.** The Facility Risk Report, which is generated from the Crisis Intervention Team meeting, lacks specific recommendations.
- F2.** The Crisis Intervention Team only meets on weekdays, creating potential communication problems by not meeting on weekends and holidays.
- F3.** The Observation Unit does not meet the standard definition of an infirmary.
- F4.** There are two holding cells in the Medical Unit which can be put to better use for inmate medical needs.
- F5.** The Medical Unit (which houses the nurse's station) is several doors away from the Observation Unit contributing to less-than-optimal medical care.
- F6.** Current policy allows 72 hours before an at-risk inmate is seen by a doctor, which we feel is too long for at-risk inmates.
- F7.** The window for cell 13 in the Observation Unit is too small for adequate observation.
- F8.** The Main Jail's unsecured kitchen back door is a security risk.

Recommendations

- R1.** The Grand Jury recommends the Crisis Intervention Team's Facility Risk Report include written concerns and recommendations for inmates identified as at-risk. (F1)
- R2.** The Grand Jury recommends the Crisis Intervention Team meet seven days a week. (F2)

- R3.** The Grand Jury recommends that the Observation Unit be upgraded to an infirmary or that the Sheriff's Office stop referring to the area as an infirmary. (F3)
- R4.** This Grand Jury has concerns about the usage of space in the Observation Unit and the Medical Unit and recommends working with a space planner to redesign the physical access between these two units. (F3–F5)
- R5.** The Grand Jury recommends that at-risk inmates be seen within four hours by medical personnel. (F6)
- R6.** The Grand Jury recommends that the window for cell 13 in the Observation Unit be enlarged to at least the same size as the other cells. (F7)
- R7.** The Grand Jury recommends a fence be built within this year to enclose the unrestricted area outside the kitchen back door. Until it is completed, a temporary solution should be installed immediately and inmates should be personally escorted. (F8)

Responses Required

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Findings</i> | <i>Recommendations</i> | <i>Respond Within/ Respond By</i> |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Santa Cruz County Sheriff-Coroner | F1–F8 | R1–R7 | 60 Days August 15, 2016 |

Definitions

- **Penal Code:** A code of laws dealing with crime and its punishment.
- **CO:** *Corrections Officer.*
- **CIT:** *Crisis Intervention Team.*
- **Janus of Santa Cruz:** A drug and alcohol rehabilitation facility for inpatients and outpatients.
- **CFMG:** *California Forensic Medical Group, Inc.,* a for-profit company.
- **Minimum Security:** (of a jail or prison) designed for prisoners regarded as being less dangerous; having fewer restrictions.
- **Observation Unit** A special housing unit where inmates are visually monitored in 13 specified cells.
- **“Seed to Table” Program:** The newest program at the Juvenile Detention Facility which will incorporate an onsite garden managed by the juveniles and the harvest utilized in the kitchen (by select juvenile participants) in a culinary program.
- **Infirmary:** a building or part of a building for the treatment of the sick or wounded; a hospital; esp.the sick quarters in a religious establishment, a school, workhouse, or institution.

Sources

References

1. California Penal Code. 2016. §919 (b). Accessed on May 19, 2016.
<http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/displaycode?section=pen&group=00001-01000&file=914-924.6>
2. Santa Cruz County *Medical and Mental Health Care Procedures Manual* for Sheriff's Corrections. 2016.
3. Santa Cruz County Health Services Agency. Crisis Intervention Team. Accessed on May 19, 2016.
<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/HSAHome/HSADivisions/BehavioralHealth/AdultMentalHealthServices/CoordinatedCareTeamsandSpecializedServices.aspx>

Site Visits

- Juvenile Hall Detention Facility visited on December 7, 2015.
- Santa Cruz County Main Jail visited on December 14, 2015.
- Blaine Street Women's Minimum Security Facility visited on December 14, 2015.
- Rountree Men's Medium Security Facility visited on February 1, 2016.