

Blaine Street Women's Facility

Background

The Blaine Street Women's Facility was established in 1984 at 141 Blaine Street to incarcerate non-violent minimum-security women. Women serving time at Blaine Street are sentenced and fulfilling sentences of up to a year.

Findings

1. Currently there is no medium security facility for women only. Medium and maximum security women are incarcerated at the Main Jail, where the majority of women fit medium security criteria.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

There are currently 39 women inmates housed in the Main Jail. Nine of those 39 inmates are sentenced and therefore eligible for housing at a medium facility. Although the majority of female inmates are housed in the main jail because they are either un-sentenced or classified as maximum-security inmates, the Sheriff's Office recognizes the need for a Women's Medium Security Facility to provide alternate housing opportunities for our medium security women inmates.

2. The Board of Corrections rated capacity for Blaine Street is 32. At the time of our visit on August 9, 2002 there were 30 women incarcerated at the facility. The accepted officer-to-inmate ratio is one to fifty/sixty inmates. Therefore, only one officer is required to be on duty at all times.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Only one duty officer is needed per shift to adequately supervise the inmates.

3. Inmates are interviewed by the Blaine Street Supervising Correctional Officer after sentencing. If an inmate qualifies to be housed at Blaine Street she is informed of house rules, behavioral expectations, work assignments, and class attendance requirements. These expectations must be met in order to maintain one's assignment at the facility.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Since this jail is a minimum-security facility, the cooperation and participation of all of the inmates is necessary to provide for the safety and security of everyone housed there. Self-improvement through a variety of available programs is essential to better the lives of the women housed at this facility.

4. The majority of women serving sentences at Blaine Street are substance abusers. Proposition 36 the Substance Abuse and Crime Prevention Act of 2000 requires treatment in lieu of incarceration for minor drug offenders. Once a third drug treatment program violation occurs, a jail sentence is mandatory. Proposition 36 offenders will likely be sent to the Blaine Street facility.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

A conviction for drug offenses does not mean they would automatically serve their sentence at the Blaine Street Facility. Each woman receiving a sentence from the court must also meet the minimum-security criteria and housing standards established by the Sheriff's Office.

5. The facility is dormitory-like and adjacent to the Main Jail. Staff and inmates are dedicated to keep the environment clean and well maintained. The facility consists of 21 rooms and a backyard which includes a sandbox and vegetable garden.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

The sandbox was originally built for the play use of the inmate's children during visiting hours. Unfortunately, the sandbox was removed because the neighborhood cats used it as their litter box. The sandbox was also located in a portion of the yard that was difficult to supervise.

6. Each inmate is assigned chores that may include kitchen duty, cleaning, and various other tasks around the facility.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Since this is a minimum-security facility, and there are no employees to perform housekeeping tasks, the inmates must cook, clean and perform other chores in order to maintain the facility.

7. The facility contains a small kitchen in which meals are prepared by inmates under the supervision of the Food Service Manager.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

The daily menu is the same as the Main Jail; however, the actual ingredients are provided to the inmates so that they can learn to prepare their own meals.

8. Inmates are allowed to move freely inside the facility and its grounds. There are no locked doors and inmates are able to walk away at any time. Staff reported three recent walk-aways and stated that addiction is the main reason women walk away.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Addiction is a powerful drive that unfortunately causes some people to not weigh the consequences of their actions and therefore they make poor choices. The majority of women housed at Blaine Street successfully complete their sentences.

9. Inmates have access to television, exercise equipment, videos, board games, and a library. Blaine Street inmates have smoking privileges and use the backyard as the designated smoking area.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Women housed at Blaine Street have more privileges and take care of the equipment because of their housing status.

10. Doctors from the Main Jail attend sick calls in the morning on weekdays. The County's Health Service Agency provides medical, pharmacy and diagnostic services.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

The women inmates actually visit the doctor at the Main Jail located next door. The County's Health Services Agency provides a nurse for sick call and pharmacy services on a daily basis at the Blaine Street Facility.

11. Classes are offered at the facility, many times by volunteers, in job training and high school education. Some of the programs offered include:

- computer classes
- narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous
- smoking Cessation
- career and job development
- GED preparation
- art classes
- parenting classes
- knitting and crocheting classes

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Inmate programs are important to the inmates and to the community. They are assessed regularly and added, deleted or changed to meet the needs and demands of the inmates.

12. Some inmates are able to participate in various work release programs. These programs allow participants to work during the day and return to the facility in the evening. This arrangement can allow inmates to continue a job they had before incarceration.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

The Work Release Program is administered from the Main Jail. Select Blaine Street inmates participate in the Work Furlough program from this facility, which is supervised by the Probation Department as described above.

Conclusions

1. The Blaine Street facility was exceptionally clean and appeared to be well managed.
2. The full implementation of Proposition 36 should result in fewer women serving sentences in minimum-security facilities.
3. Creation of a medium security wing at Blaine Street would reduce over-crowding at the Main Jail and provide a more secure space for potential walk-aways who otherwise do not fit Main Jail criteria.

Recommendations

1. The Board of Supervisors should allocate adequate funds to create a medium security wing at Blaine Street.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

A facility or portion of a facility to house medium security female inmates is desirable in order to provide detention for women who pose a walk-away risk at Blaine Street and who do not meet the Main Jail criteria. The County has considered the housing needs of this inmate population. Due to lack of available funding for new construction, the Rountree facility has been considered. However, this was not a viable option due to logistics and other detention programming, housing and facility needs. At such a time as funds become available, the County can explore the possibility of housing for female inmates who meet medium security criteria.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff’s Office AGREES

There is a need for a Medium Security Women's Facility. Female Inmates comprise an increasing percentage of the total jail population. The Main Jail continues to house sentenced women who do not qualify for minimum security and must remain incarcerated at the Main Jail for the length of their sentence. Current budget constraints will most likely preclude any capital projects such as a women’s medium facility at this time.

Responses Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
County Board of Supervisors of Santa Cruz County	1-12	1	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Sheriff	1-12	1	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)

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