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REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF DETENTION FACILITIES IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

SUMMARY

In accordance with its statutory authority, the Contra Costa County Grand Jury completed inspections of county detention centers and court holding cells. It also completed inspections of several local police agency jails.

Overall, the grand jury found the facilities met or exceeded the minimum operational requirements as set forth by the California Corrections Standards Authority. The facilities' condition, procedures, and polices appeared to be generally consistent with grand jury expectations with regard to the needs and safety of both detainees and staff.

The grand jury noted isolated instances at the county detention centers that should be addressed. They involve the need for improved security, more efficient procedures, and to complete delayed maintenance.

The complete grand jury report is available on the Contra Costa County Grand Jury web site: www.cc-courts.org/grandjury.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY GRAND JURY REPORT 0804

REPORT ON THE INSPECTION OF DETENTION FACILITIES IN CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

**TO: Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors
Office of the Sheriff, Contra Costa County**

BACKGROUND

The California Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) is required to complete comprehensive, bi-annual physical inspections of detention facilities throughout the state. Inspections include verification of compliance with local building, fire, and health and safety codes.

The Contra Costa County Grand Jury is required by statute to conduct inspections separate from those completed by the CSA. California Penal Code section 919(b) states: *“The grand jury shall inquire into the condition and management of the public prisons within the county.”* By past practice in Contra Costa County, such inspections have also included temporary holding facilities in Superior Courts and selected jails within the county.

California Penal Code section 925 also allows the Grand Jury to investigate the operations of the county’s juvenile holding and detention facilities, the Probation Department, and the Custody Alternative Facility.

INSPECTIONS

1. Facilities inspected by the Grand Jury included:
 - a. County Detention Facilities—Martinez, West County (Richmond), and Marsh Creek (Clayton).
 - b. Superior Court Temporary Holding Facilities—Martinez, Pittsburg, Richmond, and Walnut Creek.
 - c. Probation Department—Juvenile Hall (Martinez), Chris Adams Center (Martinez), and the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility.
 - d. City Jails—Richmond, Pittsburg, Concord, Pleasant Hill, and Walnut Creek.
 - e. Custody Alternative Facility—Martinez.

2. Grand Jury inspections of the above-mentioned facilities were conducted in compliance with California Corrections Standards Authority guidelines. California Corrections Standards Authority regulations are contained in Title 15 and Title 24, California Code of Regulations.
3. County detention facility inspections (Martinez, West County, and Marsh Creek) included a review of common incident reports, grievance procedures, inmate requests for information, medical care practices, telephone and visiting procedures, and adherence to the “72-hour requirement” for court hearings. Site visits also included selected interviews with detainees to identify any areas of concern.

FINDINGS

1. All the facilities inspected were found to meet or exceed the minimum inspection standards established by the State of California Corrections Standards Authority (CSA).
2. Fees charged to detainees that qualify for the work-release program substantially support the Custody Alternative Facility in Martinez. In 2006, fees collected from detainees totaled more than \$1 million, nearly 50% of the cost of operating the facility.
3. In 2006, detainees served approximately 118,000 custody alternative days. Had the detainees been obligated to serve their sentences in a detention facility, the additional cost to the county would have been approximately \$13.5 million.
4. The entrance road leading to the Marsh Creek Detention Facility lacks a security gate and entrance monitoring security cameras. Such security devices would reduce the opportunities for contraband to enter the facility.
5. The design of the sewage drainage systems at the Martinez and West County Detention Facilities makes them vulnerable to inmate sabotage.
6. The orientation video shown to new inmates in the Martinez and West County Detention Facilities is recorded in English only.
7. The Martinez Detention Facility is the sole operational intake (i.e., processing) center for all County inmates. The area designed to handle West County Detention Facility processing of new inmates is not staffed. West County sheriff’s deputies and West County police department officers are required to transport detainees to the Martinez Detention Facility rather than the West County Detention Facility for processing.

8. The West County Detention Facility has limited medical services as compared with the Martinez Detention Facility.
9. Classrooms in Juvenile Hall lack security cameras. The cameras would allow the staff to more closely monitor the classroom activities and reduce the number of disruptive incidents.
10. The Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility is not an option for juveniles undergoing psychotropic drug therapy due to the lack of qualified, on-site, round the clock medical staff to monitor and manage such detainees.

CONCLUSION

While the facilities inspected were found to meet or exceed minimum CSA inspection standards, the preceding Grand Jury findings serve as the basis for the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The 2007-2008 Contra Costa County Grand Jury recommends:

1. That the Sheriff expands wherever possible the use of the Custody Alternative Facility.
2. That within six months of this report, the Sheriff works with the General Service Department to accomplish the installation of an electrically operated gate and security cameras at the entrance to the Marsh Creek Detention Facility.
3. That within six months of this report, the Sheriff works with the General Services Department to complete a feasibility study and to secure proposals that cover the available alternatives to alleviate the Martinez and West County Detention Facilities' sewage drainage systems' vulnerability.
4. That within six months of this report, the Sheriff obtains and uses additional copies of the Martinez and West County Detention Facilities inmate orientation videotape to include any other languages that account for a significant percentage of the inmate population.
5. That within six months of this report, the Sheriff completes a full evaluation of the costs and benefits of making the West County Detention Facility intake area fully operational.
6. That within six months of this report, the Sheriff works with the County Health Services Department to complete a full evaluation of the costs and benefits of providing West County Detention Facility medical services similar to those available at the Martinez Detention Facility.

7. That within six months of this report, the Probation Department works with the General Services Department to install security cameras in the classrooms at Juvenile Hall.
8. That within six months of this report, the Probation Department works with the County Health Services Department to complete a full evaluation of the costs and benefits of making specialized medical services available around the clock to detainees being treated with psychotropic drugs at the Orin Allen Youth Rehabilitation Facility.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Findings:

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors: 1-10

Office of the Sheriff, Contra Costa County: 1-8

Recommendations:

Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors: 1-8

Office of the Sheriff, Contra Costa County: 1-6