

# DETENTION FACILITIES REVIEW

## SUMMARY

The Sonoma County detention facilities were reviewed according to the guidelines provided by the Corrections Standards Authority (CSA). It was found that inmates with mental health issues are the most rapidly increasing population in the County detention facilities and many would be better served by expanded county mental health facilities and services. The detention facilities were clean, well lit and well run. The inmates were treated humanely and all incarceration conditions appeared to be excellent.



## REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The Grand Jury, as mandated by the state, proceeded to investigate the conditions and management of two adult detention facilities. They are the Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF) located at 2777 Ventura Ave., in Santa Rosa and the North County Detention Facility (NCDF) located north of Santa Rosa at 2254 Ordinance Road, near the Sonoma County Airport. Sections 919 (a) and 919 (b) of the California Penal Code, authorizes the Grand Jury to inquire into the jail conditions and to investigate the management of all detention facilities in Sonoma County. As a result of this investigation, the following report was filed.

## BACKGROUND

Sonoma County Jail is a detention facility for sentenced and pre-trial adult criminal offenders. It is administered by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department. The total housed capacity of both facilities is 1400 inmates, with a budget of approximately \$50 million/year. The CSA is a state regulatory agency that establishes the standards for the operation and administration of detention facilities. These standards are found in Title 15 and Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR).

It is the responsibility of the Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury to investigate all detention facilities, to assure that they comply with state laws and that adequate medical and mental health care are provided. Medical care is currently provided by the California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG) which is contracted to the County, and Sonoma County Mental Health. CFMG is under the auspices of Title 15 and provides standard medical care. AWS (Alcohol Withdrawal Syndrome) care is also provided. Approximately 78% of inmates have some type of addiction. In the event of serious inmate illness, the County contracts with local Hospitals. Inmates with mental health issues require special attention and the expansion of existing facilities to treat and house this population. Mental health inmates currently comprise 21% of the detention population over the past six years.

The Jail is divided into Modules that offer different types of supervision, such as, Infirmary Mod (special- health needs inmates), R-Mod (Alcohol/Drug Withdrawal/Behavioral Problems), H-Mod (women inmates), E-Mod (Protective Custody and young inmates), ADSEG-Mod (High Risk Offenders) Mental Health-Mod, and Booking.

During their incarceration, inmates are offered training programs, drug and alcohol counseling, religious/spiritual activity and educational opportunities.

The most common crimes are assault, battery and substance abuse offences which collectively average 66% of all the bookings in the MADF over the past six years. The inmates serve one year or less unless there are additional charges.

## INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES

Ten Grand Jury members were given tours of the two adult detention centers in October, 2009. Correction Deputies (CDs) guided the Jury through several modules. The Jury members were able to ask questions and observe the CD's while making rounds and interacting with the inmates. The modules that house inmates with health needs or behavioral problems are checked four times/hour, to determine whether any were in crises. Inmate checks were increased in number-in the last two years-due to a previous inmate death where cell checks were not as frequent. All module checks are electronically confirmed (RATS Logs) by protocol.

A special visit, on the evening of December 10, 2009, was made by three Jury members to observe booking procedures. During booking some offenders are kept isolated from other inmates, due to intoxication, gang conflicts, or drug withdrawal indications and are held in special cells. After the booking process, each new inmate is assigned a module, until trial, reclassification, sentencing or release. Inmates are able to request medical, mental health or dental attention by filling in a formal request on paper that is picked up daily in each module.

Meals are provided by inmates assigned to the kitchen, where they are trained in food services. This training could provide them with skills, to benefit job hunting, when released from detention. The jury members were allowed to visit these facilities.

The level of supervision in the two centers differed due to time of incarceration. The MADF has much more restrictive security than the NCDF. NCDF is a minimum security facility that allows work release programs. The Jury members spent time in both and were equally impressed by the dedication and compassion of the officers who supervise and care for the men and women inmates.

A review of all statistical data, earlier Grand Jury reports and mandated reports were assessed.



## FINDINGS

F-1 A Review of the detention statistical data since 2004 indicates that the Sonoma County detention facilities have not reached capacity. The future of the aging NCDF will need to be reviewed in terms of ongoing obligations. The increase in the number of beds (1400) over what was stated in the Grand Jury Report 2003-2004 (1286) is due solely to the reorganization of the facilities by the correctional staff. Physical limitations of both facilities will require serious consideration in the near future.

F-2 Although the carrying capacity of the Sonoma County detention system is not yet full, the type of beds needed to meet future demands is wanting and the needs of mental health inmates is clearly increasing at a rapid rate (Figure 1). Provisions for these inmates under the current space allocation will soon reach a crisis point unless budget allocations are seriously considered. In a recent Grand jury report, it was indicated that an increasing mentally ill inmate population would need to be served. The non-incarceration options are limited, which has forced the detention system to house and treat inmates with mental health issues that would be better off in less restrictive environments. Jail is not a good substitute for a mental health facility.

F-3 Females comprise an average of 14% of the jail population and males average 86% over the past six years. The racial characteristics of the inmates are Caucasian (56.1%), Hispanic (30.8%), African - American (8.9%), and Native American (2.6%) over the six year sampling period. The other ethnic breakdowns comprise less than 2% of the total population. Most of the criminal behavior (53.2%) occurs between ages 26-45.

F-4 The overall facility, in terms of both management and care of the inmates, was deemed highly professional and humane. The conduct of the correctional staff was professional, compassionate and secure. The environment of both facilities was clean, well lit, sanitary, well organized, and a concern for the safety of both the correctional staff and the inmates was evident. The correctional staff was keenly aware of the possibility of improving the organization and operation of both facilities and were amenable to changes in the future that would benefit both the County and the facilities. No indication was found during this investigation of the mistreatment of inmates.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

R-1 Inmates with mental health issues are the most rapidly increasing population in the Sonoma County detention facilities and many would be better served by expanded county mental health facilities and services. The issue of mental health inmates was addressed at length in the 2003-2004 Grand Jury report and little has been done to correct the problem. In the absence of state or federal programs, long term support should be extended to programs that would allow the transference and treatment of mentally ill inmates to alternative facilities.

#### Required Response to Findings:

Sonoma County Sheriff's Department F-1, F-2, F-3, F-4

#### Required Response to Recommendations:

Sonoma County Board of Supervisors R-1

#### Investigative Interviews and Procedures:

- Sonoma County Sheriff's presentation to the Grand Jury
- One Sonoma County Sheriff's Lieutenant, two Correctional Sergeants and four Correctional Deputies.
- The Grand Jury reviewed the statistical data on the detention facilities for the past six years.
- The current Grand Jury also visited broad jail issues raised in the 2003-2004 Grand Jury report. This report provided statistical data through 2003.
- A tour of both the MADF and the NCDF was conducted for the Grand Jury and the booking procedures were observed by members of the Law and Justice Committee.

#### Reference Documents:

- Sonoma County Grand Jury Report with responses 2003-2004 (July 2004)
- Statistical data on the Sonoma County Detention Facilities provided by the Sonoma County Sheriff's Department 2004-2009
- Jail Inspection Handbook from the California Grand Jury Association, Corrections Standards Authority.
- Title 15 and Title 24, California Code of Regulations (CCR)
- Sections 919(a) and 919(b) California Penal Code
- California Standards Authority report to the Sonoma County Sheriff-January 2010.