

SONOMA COUNTY MAIN ADULT DETENTION FACILITY INMATE SUICIDE

The Sonoma County Civil Grand Jury reviews all deaths in custody in Sonoma County. Once the involved law enforcement agency completes its investigation, and the Sonoma County District Attorney (DA) reviews the incident and makes a ruling, the Grand Jury begins its investigation.

One such critical incident received by the 2011–2012 Grand Jury involved the suicide of an inmate in the Main Adult Detention Facility (MADF) on September 8, 2010. All documents from the Sheriff's Office investigation and the report received from the DA were reviewed by the Grand Jury. These reports included statements by inmates who witnessed the suicide and subsequent life-saving attempts and statements from the mental health team who were present at the incident.

The Grand Jury also did a walkthrough of the MADF facility, viewing the areas where the inmate was confined during his incarceration. We were able to see all modules (housing sections) the inmate was in, and we were informed of what took place in each module/each cell. Furthermore, we were able to interview MADF deputies and MADF mental health staff who were present during the inmate's incarceration and were participants in the life-saving efforts of the inmate.

The Grand Jury found that the MADF mental health department is fully staffed at all times and fully prepared to handle inmates with mental health issues. We also found that MADF deputies and mental health staff took the appropriate action by calling paramedics and continuing resuscitation efforts while waiting for the paramedics to arrive.

After our investigation of the inmate's suicide, the Grand Jury agrees with the DA's determination that there was no criminal negligence. MADF deputies and MADF mental health staff took appropriate action to not only care for the inmate, but also to provide life-saving attempts.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury.