

PLACER COUNTY MAIN JAIL AND MINIMUM SECURITY JAIL INSPECTIONS

Background/Summary

California Penal Code § 919 requires the Grand Jury to inspect the Placer County Main and Minimum Security Jails to evaluate conditions and management of these facilities, to inquire about prisoner conditions, and to review any changes implemented since the previous Grand Jury's inspections.

This Grand Jury reviewed the issues of concern noted in previous reports and was pleased to see that some progress was being made. However, there is still a serious need to expand the jails to accommodate the growing inmate population. The latest addition to the present facility is scheduled to be completed in the fall of 2002 when a total of 116 beds will be added. The Board of Supervisors, the Placer County Executive Office, the Sheriff, the Director of Health and Human Services, the Placer County Adult System of Care and the Facility Services Director are aware of housing problems and are collaborating to address them. There continue to be discussions about a South Placer Jail facility, tentatively scheduled to be finished by 2005.

Overall, the citizens of Placer County can take great pride in the operations and management of the jail facilities. The professionalism and dedication of the Commander and staff are outstanding. The Commander and his staff are committed to lowering the recidivism rate of inmates. In addition, they are committed to rehabilitation of inmates and providing custody services. Inspection revealed that the main jail is overcrowded and there is a lack of sufficient inmate classrooms.

Discussion

In August 2000, the Grand Jury inspected the Placer County Main Jail and the Minimum Security Jail, both located in Auburn. For at least a decade, prior Grand Juries have identified certain areas as warranting improvement or correction. The 2000-2001 Grand Jury followed up on these areas during its inspections. The Main Jail facility has three medium security dorms, one maximum-security module and several dormitory housing units resulting in a total capacity of 354 inmates. The Minimum Security facility has a capacity of 160 inmates.

The inspections revealed that there still exists a serious need to expand the jail facilities to meet the County's growing inmate population. The original facility was built for 108 inmates and with expansions now houses at least 440 per day. There are more than 1,800 individuals on probation and more than 500 in Community Corrections programs. People violating probation and conditions of participation in the Community Corrections programs are rarely returned to jail because of the lack of space.

The Grand Jury found that progress has been made and is continuing toward relieving the overcrowding and providing more space, most notably through new housing configurations, such as walls, dormitories, cells and security areas.

Through the efforts of the Sheriff's Department, the Criminal Justice Policy Committee and others, Placer County received a Violent Offender Grant. The jail also received a portion of the Citizens Option for Public Safety (COPS) Supplemental Law Enforcement Fund established by State law in 1996-1997. Construction is underway for a new housing unit.

Although the average time for prisoners in custody is only 16 to 17 days, those facing longer sentences should participate in schooling, job and life skill training and development programs to every extent practical. To accomplish this, an unfinished and unused space between the secure facility and the central kitchen will be used for educational purposes, with construction to begin in 2001.

Unfortunately, there is presently no program space available in the Main Jail for female inmates to participate in drug and alcohol counseling, schooling, job and life skill training, etc.

The California Board of Corrections recently awarded Placer County a four-year multi-million dollar grant for the Mentally Ill Offender Crime Reduction Program (MIOCR). With these funds, an out-of-custody program consisting of 15 beds will be developed by Health and Human Services to house offenders having significant mental illnesses. A team comprised of staff from the offices of the District Attorney, Public Defender, Sheriff, Probation and Mental Health Services will evaluate and classify all persons.

South Placer County continues to grow rapidly. Current estimates indicate that by 2010, 70% of Placer's population will reside in the southern portion of the County. The current Main and Minimum Jails cannot expand to meet this growing population. Placer County is in the early planning stages of a South Placer Criminal Justice facility aimed for completion in 2005.

The Grand Jury inspections also revealed the continuing need for office space for administrators and staff. Currently, eight administrators are working in a space intended for four. An unused elevator shaft is being used as clerical space.

The Minimum Security Jail needs to be expanded to house inmates convicted of misdemeanors. The 1997-98 Grand Jury reported there are two buildings in DeWitt Center that could be converted for use by the Sheriff's Department. These buildings appear to be under-utilized by Facility Services. These buildings could be fully utilized by the Sheriff's Department as classrooms for inmate instructional programs, such as drug and alcohol treatment. The goals of these programs are to attempt to reduce the recidivism rate.

There is some funding available through the "inmate welfare fund" (collected from inmates through their telephone usage and commissary expenditures) to pay for a portion of the remodeling of the buildings in question. Where appropriate, inmate labor should be used to lower the cost of remodeling.

The medical facility at the Main Jail appears to be efficient and professional. The facility is exceptionally clean, well organized and adequately staffed. Inmates are charged a \$3.00 co-payment per visit. This facility has received a two-year accreditation, the highest achievement award from the California Medical Association.

The cost of "housing" inmates is allowable by state law and according to information provided by the Sheriff's Department, "inmates sentenced to serve time in the Placer County Jail may be charged fees for their incarceration. Those inmates housed at the Main Jail may be charged a fee of \$79.02 per day. Inmates housed at Minimum Security may be charged a fee of \$35.71 per day. The collection of fees is based on the inmate's ability to pay as determined by the Placer County Revenue Services Division of Administrative Services."

The Grand Jury visited the Main Jail kitchen and food preparation area, operated by the Probation Department and noted that it was clean and orderly. All meals meet the nutritional guidelines required by the state, county and the California Medical Association. All requirements of Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations for the care, feeding and housing of prison inmates in the State of California are followed.

Finding 1

The 2000-2001 Grand Jury is impressed, as were past Grand Juries, with the professionalism and dedication of the Jail's Commander and staff. It is equally impressed with their commitment to rehabilitation and prevention as well as discipline of the inmates.

Jail personnel are professional and do an excellent job of providing basic custody services with available facilities and funds.

Recommendation 1

Placer County officials should provide strong support for this three-part approach (rehabilitation, prevention and punishment) to reducing recidivism. This support should include funding, making space available and remodeling of the facilities, where appropriate.

Finding 2

There still exists a serious need to expand the Main Jail and Minimum Security Jail to house additional inmates, provide program space and provide additional staff space.

Recommendation 2A

The Board of Supervisors, County Executive Officer, Sheriff's Department, Criminal Justice Policy Commission and Facility Services Director should all work together to accomplish the expansion of the Main Jail and Minimum Security Jail.

Recommendation 2B

The 2001-2002 Grand Jury should monitor the progress of the existing and proposed construction at the facility.

Finding 3

The Placer County Sheriff's Department bills through the Revenue Services Division the cost of housing inmates in the Placer County Jails. At present the Revenue Services Division is able to recoup about 1% of the amounts billed, which is enough to pay for one officer per year and the cost of administering the program. Cost of medical care is included in the daily "housing" rate and is allowed by state law.

Recommendation 3

The Placer County Sheriff's Department and the Revenue Services Division should continue to pursue reimbursement of the costs of medical care and the housing of inmates.

Finding 4

Placer County is one of the fastest growing counties in the State of California. By the year 2010, it is projected that 70% of Placer's population will reside in the southern portion of the county, which encompasses the cities of Roseville, Rocklin, Lincoln and the town of Loomis. Obviously, the need for corrections facilities in this area will continue to increase.

Recommendation 4

The Board of Supervisors, County Executive Officer, Sheriff's Department and Criminal Justice Policy Commission should continue to work towards construction of a South Placer Criminal Justice facility.

It is this Grand Jury's desire, as it has been for past Grand Juries, that a South County Facility located in the Roseville-Lincoln-Loomis-Rocklin area be built.

Respondents

Placer County Board of Supervisors
Placer County Executive Officer
Placer County Facility Services Director
Placer County Sheriff-Coroner-Marshal

RESPONSE REQUIRED WITHIN 90 DAYS TO:

The Honorable James D. Garbolino
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
County of Placer
Historic Court House
101 Maple Street
Auburn, CA 95603