



PLACER COUNTY GRAND JURY

Mental Health Care of Placer County Jail Inmates

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Summary

More than half of the inmates in Placer County jails have some form of mental illness. The County's responsibility is to ensure the physical and mental health care of inmates is met. The Placer County Health and Human Services Department manages the contract with California Forensic Medical Group (CFMG) to provide medical staffing and care in the Placer County jails. Correctional staff is continuously trained in the signs and symptoms of mental illness.

After implementation of the Public Safety Realignment Act, hereafter referred to as AB109, certain convicted felons, many with severe and chronic conditions, are sentenced to longer terms to be served in the County jails. If a defendant charged with a felony is deemed incompetent to stand trial, they are sent to a State hospital for return to competency treatment. If space is unavailable in mental health facilities, defendants may be held in County jail. Placer County, the Sheriff's Department and CFMG are attempting to ensure the physical and mental health care of the inmates. The Placer County jails need additional resources for mental health programs and treatment.

Background

During the mandated annual inspection of Placer County holding facilities and jails, the Grand Jury learned that over 50% of jail inmates have some form of mental illness. The County's responsibility is to ensure the physical and mental health care of inmates is met. Placer County Health and Human Services Department manages the contract with California Forensics Medical Group (CFMG) to provide medical care and staffing for the Placer County jails and Juvenile Detention Facility¹. A contract is maintained with Telecare for inpatient psychiatric care at Placer County Mental Health Services (aka Cirby Hills) and Cornerstone Psychological Center. Mental health care is imperative for the safety of inmates, deputies and jail personnel.

¹ The focus of this report is adult care and jails only.

Methodology

Grand Jury methods of investigation included

- the annual inspection of the Auburn Jail and Santucci Justice Center facilities;
- interviews with personnel from the Department of Health and Human Services, Medical service providers and jail management;
- a review of various documents:
 - Placer County Organizational Chart
 - Placer County Sheriff's Office Corrections Division Policy Manual
 - Jail intake forms
 - Corrections Standards Authority (CSA) Jail Survey Data
 - CSA Quarterly Report Data
 - Institute for Medical Quality Corrections and Detentions Health Care Accreditation for both Auburn and South Placer jails, dated June 29, 2016 through June 29, 2018
 - Board of State and Community Corrections bi-annual inspection report dated January 17, 2017
 - Inmate grievances

One member of the Grand Jury was recused from this investigation in order to avoid the appearance of any possible conflict of interest.

Facts

- The Placer County Health and Human Services Department manages the contract with CFMG to provide medical care in the Placer County jails.
- A separate contract is maintained with Telecare for inpatient care at the Cirby Hills and Cornerstone facilities.
- The CFMG medical director oversees three Placer County jails: Santucci, Auburn and the Juvenile Detention Facility. The director oversees recruitment and retention of medical staff, patient care and follow-up care.
- Prior to AB109, county jails housed convicted misdemeanor and felony inmates for up to one year. After implementation, certain convicted felons were sentenced to longer terms to be served in the county jails instead of California State Prison.
- Inmate classification reports and staff interviews indicate at any given time over 50% of inmates incarcerated in the County jails have mental health issues.
- High risk, mentally ill inmates are segregated from the general jail population.

- During the booking process, the booking or arresting officer goes through an extensive checklist which includes physical and mental health issues. If an arrestee is not cooperative, has obvious impairment or exhibits questionable behavior, a nurse is called to do intake.
- “Sheriff’s Department staff consults with health service staff to determine the condition and special needs of medical developmentally disabled, and/or psychiatric inmates prior to housing assignment, program assignment, disciplinary measures, or transfers.”²
- Correctional officers and staff are trained in the signs and symptoms for referral to CFMG staff, including
 - mental illness;
 - developmental and physical disabilities;
 - emotional disturbance;
 - chemical dependency;
 - alcohol and drug withdrawal.
- When an inmate says they have a certain diagnosis and/or is taking medications, CFMG obtains a release of information and checks with the inmate’s doctor to get their history and list of medications. CFMG will also check with the inmate’s pharmacy of record to confirm the medications stated by the inmate.
- A toxicology screen is performed. An evaluation by a CFMG doctor confirms inmate’s current medications and develops a treatment plan. Medications in the inmate’s possession at the time of booking are stored with their personal property and returned upon release.
- Arrestees often arrive under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol. CFMG monitors the inmate’s vital signs and the inmate is started on withdrawal medication, if needed.
- Evidence shows that drug use is more pervasive and has a greater impact on the physical and mental health of inmates than in the past.
- According to the accreditation reports, there are protocols for the identification and treatment of individuals at risk or undergoing withdrawal from alcohol or other drugs.³
- When an arrestee or inmate is placed on suicide watch, their clothing is taken and they are provided with a wrap that cannot be torn or used to hurt themselves. Officers and

² Placer County Sheriff’s Office Corrections Division Policy Manual, Chapter 7-5 “Developmentally Disabled/Mentally Disordered” pg. 1 of 2.

³ Corrections and Detentions Health Care Program Accreditation, Placer County So. Placer Jail, pg. 11.

medical staff continuously monitor the inmate. Only mental health staff can terminate a suicide watch.

- Notification of CFMG staff is required within one hour of inmate placement in a safety cell (a specially designed cell with added measures to prevent self-inflicted injury).
- Psychiatric patients are released with a written treatment plan and, if necessary, prescriptions.
- In the fourth quarter of fiscal year 2016, \$27,774 was expended on psychotropic medication. This is 23% of the total \$123,489 spent for medication for that period.
- Once a doubt is declared as to a defendant's competency under Penal Code 1368, criminal proceedings are suspended. The court appoints an expert(s) to determine whether the defendant is competent.
- If the defendant is found incompetent to stand trial, a plan for the individual to gain competency is developed by Adult System of Care. For a defendant facing felony charges, this oftentimes requires placement in a State hospital.
- If the court orders placement in a State hospital, it routinely taking around 90 days from the date the placement order is made. From the time a doubt as to the defendant's competency is declared until placement in a State hospital is well beyond 90 days.
- The Sheriff has proposed a separate unit at the Santucci Jail for mentally ill inmates to include a Return to Competency section for those inmates not transferred to a State treatment facility.
- For the past two years, the Sheriff's Department, Probation Department, and Health and Human Services have worked to develop an improved protocol for care after an inmate is released.
- Placer County Sheriff's Office of Corrections Division Policy Manual includes
 - Intake/Booking
 - Classification of Inmates
 - Suicide Prevention
 - Developmentally Disabled/Mentally Disordered
 - Postpartum Psychosis

Findings

The Grand Jury found:

- F1. More than half of Placer County jail inmates have mental health issues requiring specialized care.
- F2. The large number of mental health inmates negatively impacts staffing, budget resources and space allocation in Placer County jails.
- F3. Correctional staff is continuously trained in the signs and symptoms of mental illness.
- F4. AB 109 has created significant challenges to the system. County inmates now serve longer terms and have more critical and chronic medical and mental health issues.
- F5. If a defendant is considered incompetent to stand trial and criminal proceedings are suspended, they can be held at the jail for 90 days or more waiting for a bed at a State hospital.
- F6. The inclusion of a Return to Competency unit at the South Placer Jail would be more efficient in the timely treatment of mentally ill inmates.
- F7. Inmates with mental health diagnoses receive services as needed.
- F8. Drug use today has a more severe impact on the physical and mental health of inmates than in the past.

Conclusion

The Placer County Sheriff's Department and the Department of Health and Human Services consider the health and welfare of inmates a top priority. Although there were many bidders, CFMG has been awarded the contract for the past 23 years and is considered to be competent. Sheriff's Department personnel continuously train to recognize the symptoms of mental illness. Despite the burdens placed on jail personnel, they work diligently to innovate and implement programs to help the inmates. When inmates are released, they're given treatment plans and prescriptions as needed. However, they are no longer under the supervision of the jail staff and may opt not to take the medications or take advantage of available resources.

Recommendations

The Grand Jury recommends:

- R1.** Placer County expand the jail facility to include a dedicated mental health unit.
- R2.** Placer County develop a “Return to Competency” program.
- R3.** Continuing education for jail personnel in areas dealing with the mentally ill.

Request for Responses

	<u>Recommendations Requiring Response</u>	<u>Response Due Date</u>
Placer County Board of Supervisors 175 Fulweiler Avenue Auburn, CA 95603	R1, R2	September 30, 2017
Sheriff Devon Bell Placer County Sheriff-Coroner-Marshal Dewitt Justice Center 2929 Richardson Drive Auburn, CA 95603	R1, R2, R3	August 31, 2017
Mr. Jeff Brown Director, Placer County Health & Human Services 3091 County Center Drive #290 Auburn, CA 95603	R2, R3	August 31, 2017

Copies Sent to:

California Forensic Medical Group
c/o Placer County Jail
2929 Richardson Drive
Auburn, CA 95603