

Review of the Santa Cruz County Main Jail

Background

The Santa Cruz County Main Jail is located on Water Street in the City of Santa Cruz. The Main Jail is a maximum and medium security facility, with a rated capacity of 311 inmates. The inmates are either un-sentenced (awaiting trial, in trial, awaiting sentencing) awaiting transport to a State or Federal prison, or serving sentences of up to one year. The Jail population is primarily male; the majority of female inmates are housed in the Blaine Street Jail, a minimum-security women's facility.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office DISAGREES

At a ratio of almost two-to-one, the majority of female inmates are unsentenced and housed within the Main Jail.

Because of their low number, violent or high-risk female inmates requiring medium or maximum security are housed in a separate section of the Main Jail segregated from male inmates. The Main Jail is the booking center for all of Santa Cruz County. Each city pays booking fees to the county. These fees are reimbursed by the State. The primary goals of the Main Jail are safety and security, for both staff and inmates.

Findings

1. At the time of the Grand Jury reviews, August 9, 2002 and Feb 7, 2003:
 - The facility was exceptionally clean and well maintained.
 - The staff was very professional and at each level was able to provide immediate, detailed answers to questions posed by Grand Jurors.
 - The facility appeared well organized and the staff well versed in operational policies, rules and procedures.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

2. At the time of the February 7th Grand Jury visit the inmate population was 359, in a facility with a rated capacity of 311. Approximately two thirds of those incarcerated were un-sentenced. According to staff, the Main Jail population varies but is generally over capacity.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

3. Approximately 13,000 to 15,000 individuals are arrested and processed each year. According to staff:

- 90% are male
- 80% are repeat offenders
- 80% are substance abusers
- 25% suffer from some form of mental illness
- 90% of repeat offenders will average a total of seven jail or prison terms
- 80% of individuals booked are released on their own recognizance, or on bail, pending disposition of charges

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

4. According to senior Jail staff, the statistics in Finding 3 are anecdotal because the Sheriff's Department has very limited electronic means to produce statistical data. (See Appendix below.) Conversely, law enforcement in the City of Watsonville uses a very comprehensive system of tabulation and analysis. The Watsonville system was demonstrated for members of the Grand Jury.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors AGREES

Plans to improve management reporting in the Sheriff's Office are underway.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

The City of Watsonville does not have a Detention Management Computer System, which is what is used to process, track, manage, and classify those individuals arrested and brought to the County Jail for booking, housing, court appearances, etc. The Sheriff's Office currently is using a Main Frame DMS, which has been in use since the 1980's. It was not designed or intended for statistical analysis. The Sheriff's Office is currently working closely with the County Information Services Department to develop a modern replacement for our current system.

5. The present cost of the booking process is \$118 per arrestee.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff DISAGREES

The present "booking fee" charged to the Cities is \$168.83, as authorized by State law.

6. The busiest time of year for arrests is summer, when the number of individuals booked ranges from 30 to 80 per day. The number booked ranges from 20 to 30 during the rest of the year.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

7. The booking process includes:
- detoxification (if needed) with restraint (if needed)
 - fingerprinting and 'mug' photo

- cataloging and retention of personal effects
- a visual 'strip' search for weapons and drugs
- showering and decontamination
- issuing of jail garb
- a health screening

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

The showering, issuing of jail clothing and a complete health screen interview occurs only to those inmates that require housing in the facility. The majority of bookings are either released on a promise to appear (O.R.) or make bail and do not require housing.

8. After booking, the housing requirement for each individual is determined by classification according to stipulated criteria:

- gender, transgender
- age
- physical, medical and mental state**
- risk of violence -- from others and to others
- nature of charge(s)
- potential for escape

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

9. Experience, skill and judgment in classifying inmates is crucial to maintaining safety and security, for example:

- identifying and separating members of rival gangs or other hostile factions is necessary
- homosexual, transgender or individuals charged with physical crimes against children may be targets for attack
- some inmates are suicidal, or become suicidal once confined
- mentally ill inmates can be perpetrators or targets of violence

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

10. Mental state is an assessment based on behavior. There are no on-site qualified professionals at the Jail for psychological evaluation.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors PARTIALLY AGREES

The mental health assessment is based upon an interview with the inmate as well as behavioral observations. It includes a review of available mental health records, relevant history and treatment, and may involve talking with others to gather pertinent information for treatment or disposition.

** Mental state is an assessment based on behavior, no clinical evaluation is performed.

In addition, the County partially disagrees with the statement “there are no on-site qualified professionals at the Jail for psychological evaluation.” Although there are no Psychologists at the Jail, there are the following on-site professionals for assessment, intervention, and medication services: Psychiatrist 25 hours weekly plus 24 hour on-call availability, a Licensed Clinical Supervisor 10 hours weekly, and Licensed or License-eligible Crisis Workers 36 hours weekly.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff DISAGREES

The Sheriff’s Office contracts with the Health Services Agency of Santa Cruz County for mental health services at the Main Jail. A psychiatrist and trained Mental Health Crisis Intervention Team members provide the following clinical services on a weekly basis. A licensed psychiatrist provides services for 20 hours a week. There is also an on-call psychiatrist for those times when the psychiatrist is not at the Main Jail.

There is a Crisis Intervention Team that provides 40 hours of clinical services a week. All these team members hold Masters Degrees in either Marriage Family Therapy or Licensed Clinical Social Worker categories. Approximately 18.5% of the Main Jail population is currently prescribed psychotropic medications by our medical staff. Those individuals with mental health issues are closely monitored by the mental health, medical and jail staff and appropriate measures are taken to ensure their welfare and safety while incarcerated.

11. The total cost (jail overhead, staffing, equipment, etc.) to house an inmate was approximately \$72 per day at the time of the Grand Jury review.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

(Simpson's figures again.)

12. The County operates a Work Release Program, administered from the Main Jail, intended to provide selected, minimum-security inmates with a means of transition from incarceration to gainful employment. These inmates are permitted to work outside (sometimes inside) county detention facilities at paid jobs while fulfilling their jail time. Participants in the program pay fees to help offset program costs.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

Work release participants are not in-custody inmates. They serve their sentence by performing various tasks and jobs around the County for governmental agencies. They do not work inside the secure portion of the jail facility. The activities the work release defendants perform are not paid jobs and the tasks usually involve physical labor. This program provides a value savings to the taxpayers while lowering the total jail population. The defendants benefit because if they are employed they can keep their full time job while serving their sentence over a period of time.

13. Because there are not enough dedicated treatment facilities yet for beneficiaries of Proposition 36, the Main Jail is providing space until more Proposition 36 facilities are created.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

In addition, those individuals who have failed in their opportunities to participate in the available out-of-custody treatment programs are now being incarcerated.

14. As in past years, according to senior Jail staff, personnel turnover of correction officers continues to be a problem:

- Approximately 14% leave each year for other locations (primarily Santa Clara County) where reportedly pay for equivalent responsibilities is about 30% more.
- The accumulated costs to the county of recruiting, training and other turnover expenses are approximately \$60,000 or more per officer.
- County correction officers believe the excessive accumulated cost is greater than an improved pay range with the resulting benefits of a stable workforce.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors PARTIALLY DISAGREES

At the request of the Sheriff's Department and the employee labor organization, the Personnel Department created a promotional track within the Sheriff's department. In particular, previously, employees in the Correction Officer classification were not as competitive as other outside candidates for promotional opportunities to the Deputy Sheriff classification. The Correction Officer classification was changed to address this issue thereby making the correction officers more competitive candidates for deputy sheriff positions. Therefore, as a result, more correction officers are promoting to the deputy sheriff positions, which naturally results in vacancies at the lower classification of correction officers.

Based upon the County's turnover statistics for the period of January 2002 – January 2003, a total of 15 correction officers separated from the County of Santa Cruz. The reasons varied. Based on the actual turnover statistics, most of the turnover was not due to individuals leaving for higher wages in other locations.

The County made great strides to address the issue of pay during the negotiation of the current contract between the Correction Officers Unit and the County of Santa Cruz. The then nine comparable county salary and benefit survey conducted for this unit at the beginning of the contract negotiations, which includes Santa Clara and San Mateo, showed the Correction officers 13.79% behind the market. The County's wage only increase during this contract is over 27.5%.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff AGREES

Throughout the year, the Sheriff's Office averages one employee per month who leaves for a variety of reasons

Conclusions

1. The Main Jail facility is kept in excellent condition and is well managed by its staff.
2. The Main Jail is significantly overcrowded. The Sheriff's Department should consider ways in which to relieve overcrowding.
3. Clinical evaluation by a qualified professional would be valuable for identifying mentally ill inmates and recommending appropriate housing placement and treatment.
4. The existing pay structure and high turnover of qualified correction officer personnel may be creating excessive costs to the county.
5. A comprehensive, electronic data management system, linked to other agencies as appropriate, would effectively serve the needs of the County Detention Bureau.

Recommendations

1. Funding and staff should be sought to evaluate and recommend proper placement and treatment for mentally ill inmates.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

The County has implemented this recommendation and will continue to seek funding and staff to increase mental health evaluation, intervention, and disposition services for inmates with serious and persistent mental illness.

The most recent successful example is the four-year grant from the Board of Corrections for the Mentally Ill Offender Program that ended June 30, 2003. This grant provided mental health and probation services to mentally ill criminal offenders designed to reduce all of the following: re-arrests, days of incarceration, and hospital utilization. Additionally, Santa Cruz County has submitted a similar federal grant application that may be reviewed for funding in October 2003.

2. The Sheriff's Department should resolve overcrowding issues at the Main Jail through the following measures:
 - Add a medium security wing to the Blaine Street facility and move appropriate female inmates to that location.
 - Relocate beneficiaries of Proposition 36 to the Rountree facility until appropriate treatment facilities become available.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff PARTIALLY AGREES

A medium security option is needed for the female inmate population. The exact location and design would require study. Unfortunately, there currently are no funds available for new jail construction.

Response: Santa Cruz County Sheriff DISAGREES

The Medium Facility is currently participating in a multi-agency grant involving long-term sentenced inmates who receive extensive in-custody drug education and treatment. (RSAT) Many of the participants in the RSAT program (which started at Rountree June 23, 2003) are individuals who are or were Prop 36 inmates.

3. The County Administrative Office should join the Sheriff's Department in preparing a joint cost analysis that compares the current correction officer pay structure versus total yearly turnover costs for correction officers.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

This recommendation has been implemented. The County compiles salary comparisons and turnover statistics for each new contract with labor groups. This information is shared with affected departments and the labor representatives to facilitate negotiations.

4. The County should implement a data management system as described in Conclusion 5. It will enable accurate tabulating, tracking and analysis and allow county law enforcement, county courts and detention facilities to efficiently share information. It would be very useful for county officials to receive a demonstration of the impressive tracking and analysis system used by the city of Watsonville.

Response: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors

This recommendation is being implemented. For the past several years, the County has maintained a Technology Fund with a significant portion of the fund being dedicated to the Sheriff's Office technology projects, including data management systems. The Sheriff's Office and the County have also applied and received State funding for these technology projects.

Responses Required

Entity	Findings	Recommendations	Respond Within
County Board of Supervisors of County of Santa Cruz	1, 4	1, 4	90 Days (Sept. 30, 2003)
County of Santa Cruz Chief Administrative Officer	10, 14	3	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)
Santa Cruz County Sheriff	1-14	2	60 Days (Sept. 2, 2003)

Note: County Board of Supervisors of County of Santa Cruz responded for County of Santa Cruz Chief Administrative Officer.

Appendix

An attempt was made to obtain valid national and state statistics on the percentage of crimes that were drug related and rates of recidivism, to compare them with the numbers given by the Main Jail staff, but it was found:

- Recidivism ‘actuals’ relative to other jurisdictions within and outside California are difficult or impossible to obtain. According to several studies, good statistics don’t exist in most states. Many are distorted or even manufactured to support various agendas. In others, believed to be more reliable, source data and definitions are frequently absent and information is often outdated. A recidivism rate around 80% has been frequently asserted by many U.S. jurisdictions, but when challenged, it was determined accurate, scientific tracking had rarely been done to support the alleged numbers. A frequently published national average, reported by the U.S. Department of Justice, 2002, is 51% (based on DOJ certified statistics collected from only 21 states). (www.ojp.usdoj.gov)
- According to the U.S. Department of Justice, recidivism statistics have admittedly been suspect, because of faulty or incomplete reporting. Crime statistics are typically listed by type: robbery, assault, rape, burglary, etc., but as shown in crime reports from Santa Cruz County and elsewhere, many, if not most criminal arrests involve multiple types of crimes in a single event. Statistics for drug-related offenses are usually formatted in a way that makes over counting and undercounting virtually inevitable. Reading the statistics, there is no way to know if a single event, for example -- an aggravated assault during a burglary, while under the influence of drugs -- has been treated as one drug related crime or three. The U.S. Department of Justice agrees and has initiated the National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS). As of March 31, 2003, only 21 States were NIBRS certified. California was not one of them. According to the DOJ, (www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/nibrstatus.htm), California is in the Developmental phase: (the state/agency is in the process of designing and implementing various levels of data collection.
- Some U.S. jurisdictions describe programs used to significantly reduce recidivism by 20% or even up to 60%, but the accuracy of those results is unclear. For example, the methods used at “The Toughest Jail in Texas,” result in fewer repeat offenders -- in that jurisdiction -- but leave open the question whether the get-tough program merely moved the problem to less draconian venues. Also, jurisdictions with very harsh sentences (for example, high rates of 25 year terms without parole) guarantee low recidivism for another reason -- offenders are forever locked up at huge financial and social costs. Incarceration figures released by the U.S. Department of Justice the week of March 31, 2003 stated that as of that date one of every 142 people in the United States was incarcerated. Although the U.S. has only 4% of the world’s population, it has 25% of the world’s incarcerated population.

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