



SOLANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Thomas A. Ferrara, Sheriff-Coroner

530 Union Avenue, Ste. 100, Fairfield, CA 94533
(707) 784-7000

July 17, 2023

Honorable Wendy Getty
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
Solano Superior Court
600 Union Avenue
Fairfield, CA 94533

**Re: Sheriff-Coroner's Response to 2022-2023 Solano County Grand Jury Report –
230703 Sheriff Report, Assessment of Sheriff's Custody Division Operations**

Honorable Judge Getty:

Under Penal Code Sections 933 and 933.05, I am responding to the following recommendations contained in the 2022-2023 Grand Jury Report that pertain to matters under my control as the Solano County Sheriff-Coroner:

FINDING 1 – The bed rate calculation, which include custody expenses used by the Sheriff's Custody Division, has increased from \$178/day in 2017 to \$382/day in 2022. Budget patterns and metrics do not reflect steps being taken to reduce custody expenses.

Response to Finding 1 – I disagree partially with the finding. Budget patterns and metrics do not reflect steps being taken to reduce custody expenses for the following reasons:

- In the table on page 4, the number of SC Custody Employees represents allocated positions and not true staffing levels in any given fiscal year. The Sheriff's Office routinely has 20-25 vacancies as well as 10-15 Custody staff out on various forms of extended leaves (i.e., injuries, FMLA, etc.) at any given point in time.
- Custody Division expenses related to inmate medical - dental, and mental health services, inmate food services, the expansion of inmate programming, increases in the cost of services and supplies mandated to be provided to inmates while in our Custody, and staff salaries and benefits due to contract negotiated cost of living increases - all have contributed to the uncontrolled increase in the annual cost to house inmates in Solano County jails.

RECOMMENDATION 1A – The County continue re-evaluating operations to assess how to control costs with a currently declining inmate population, including consulting with other jurisdictions and reviewing best practices and efficiencies achieved in other counties.

Response to Recommendation 1A- Recommendation will not be implemented. These recommendations are already in practice. We continually review the best statewide practices and are always looking to improve our efficiency in accordance with continually changing state laws and regulations.

RECOMMENDATION 1B – The County needs to develop a plan to reduce the number of Custody Officers through attrition, including retirements, a hiring freeze, expanding duties, and increased training and promotions to deputy positions.

Dedicated to Community Service

Response to Recommendation 1B- Recommendation will not be implemented. State laws, standards, and practices have increased requirements for staffing levels of Correctional staff. Most recently, the State of California Board of State and Community Corrections (BSCC), the regulating body over jails, revised the standards by which jails operate. Specifically, these revisions increased mandatory time out of the cell, National Medical Accreditation standards, and expanded mandatory mental health programming. The current and new BSCC mandates require extensive time and staffing to provide a safe environment for incarcerated individuals. Therefore, reducing staffing as recommended would not allow us to provide mandated services in Custody and expose the County to liability.

FINDING 2 – The County Custody Division is not taking advantage of opportunities to internally address some of the diverging trends with respect to detainee management, such as leasing bed space, better use of the Rourk facility, etc.

Response to Finding 2 – I disagree partially with the finding. The Sheriff’s Office has leased beds to Napa County, Sonoma County, and Yuba County. I plan to continue this practice for counties on an as-needed basis. The Solano County Sheriff’s Office is continually researching and exploring new opportunities with respect to detainee management.

RECOMMENDATION 2A – The County revisit leasing available detention facility beds to other jurisdictions. Leasing bed space can improve facility occupancy and workload metrics that have minimum staffing requirements.

Response to Recommendation 2A- This recommendation has been implemented on several occasions. We continue to be open to leasing beds to other counties, as staffing and space allow, in accordance with BSCC standards and law.

RECOMMENDATION 2B – The County explore expansion of high demand community services vocational classes at Rourk. Classes could include hospitality training, landscape services, tree trimming, truck driver training, pest control, food service certification and cooking. Create class lengths that are commensurate with detainee retention.

Response to Recommendation 2B – Recommendation has been partially implemented. Just in the last year, the Sheriff’s Office has successfully provided fourteen vocational training programs and trained 85 students. The students consisted of 51 incarcerated individuals and 35 individuals supervised by the Probation Department. The training programs provided were: Laborer’s Pre-Apprenticeship, Welding, Forklift Certification, Scissor Lift Certification, Warehousing Employment, and Powered Pallet Jack Certification. The Sheriff’s Office will be adding Stick Welding, Industrial Welding, Tire Maintenance and Repair, along with Carpentry Readiness by the end of 2023. We continue to evaluate the job market, establishing training partnerships and looking to expand opportunities for all incarcerated/justice-involved individuals.

RECOMMENDATION 2C – When the type of detainees allows, the County reinstate food services by inmates.

Response to Recommendation 2C – This recommendation will not be implemented; it is not reasonable. Currently, there are very few low-risk incarcerated individuals, which does not allow us to use inmates in food services. If this dynamic changes in the future, allowing more low-risk individuals to be incarcerated, then we would further analyze the recommendation.

RECOMMENDATION 2D – Evaluate the use of new technology, including video and body cameras, website visitations, and other information technology updates, to generate cost saving efficiencies and improve safety for officers and inmates.

Response to Recommendation 2D – Recommendation has been implemented. Video visitation has been live since 2014, body-worn cameras were implemented in 2022, and facility cameras and security systems were recently upgraded at the various facilities.

FINDING 3 – Custody Division occupancy rate continues to decline. They are not efficiently addressing how to incorporate advances in detainment policies and changes in state laws.

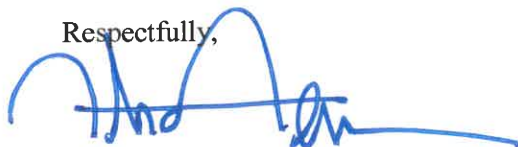
Response to Finding 3 – I disagree with this finding. Solano County Sheriff’s Office continues to address advances in detainment policies and state laws on a regular basis. This is evidenced in the current BSCC inspections of our facilities, which have shown that we are in compliance. As an example, we have had to implement the newest legal mandates regarding incarcerated individuals and increased time out of the cell. We were challenged with evaluating our practices of how we classify incarcerated individuals. Sheriff’s personnel developed a system that accomplished the state mandates but also balanced keeping our staff and incarcerated population as safe as possible. In fact, the leading state agency (BSCC) has used the Solano County Sheriff model as an example for other counties to follow.

RECOMMENDATION 3 – Custody Division evaluate alternate use of their facilities for less restrictive alternatives. Consider an electronic monitoring center, increase work furlough programs, and the use of less restrictive community-based Adult Residential Facilities or transitional housing.

Response to Recommendation 3 – Recommendation partially implemented. The Sheriff’s Office has an alternative to custody program/electronic monitoring, as well as work furlough and work release. Less restrictive community-based facilities and transitional housing are under the direction of Probation and the Courts.

I would like to thank the Solano County Grand Jury for their time invested in this matter and for their report of findings and recommendations. As always, the recommendations and comments of the Solano County Grand Jury are appreciated.

Respectfully,



Thomas A. Ferrara
Sheriff-Coroner

cc: Solano County Grand Jury
County Administrator’s Office