



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2019-2020

Rourk Vocational Training Center
“Big Facility – Few Inmates”

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I. SUMMARY

California Penal Code section 919(b) requires inquiry into the condition and management of penal institutions within the County. Therefore, the 2019-2020 Solano County Civil Grand Jury toured and inquired into the operations of one of these institutions, the Rourk Vocational Training Center in Fairfield, California, on September 17, 2019. The Grand Jury found the facility has neither utilization plans nor performance metrics and no way to gauge inmate interest in vocational training based on future workplace needs. At the time of the tour, Rourk had four inmates in training as fork lift operators.

II. INTRODUCTION

In January 2019, the Solano County Sheriff’s Office officially opened and dedicated the Rourk Vocational Training Center. It was funded with \$23.04 million from Senate Bill 1022 (Adult Local Criminal Justice Facilities Construction Financing Program), a County contribution of \$2.66 million, plus the land value of \$1 million as an in-kind contribution.

The facility, designed to provide more than one hundred inmates the training to develop work-related skills, has 9,940 square feet of classroom space. There are seven classrooms dedicated to computer training, life sciences, vocational training and various other programs. Training bays are available for pre-apprenticeship programs in automotive maintenance, welding, carpentry, diesel mechanics, plumbing, heating and air conditioning, sheet metal work and electrician training. Sixty thousand square feet of the facility is dedicated to driver training and heavy equipment operations. Other programs include substance abuse treatment, anger management and a pathway to obtain a high school diploma. The development of options for training depends on inmate interest and qualifications, as well as available qualified staff. Rourk has on-call staff that also fills positions in other County facilities. Despite the availability of these resources, staff indicated that there were no forward-looking plans which would anticipate projected job market demands.

The training center serves inmates who do not pose a threat to the general public. Participation in facility programs is determined by inmate interest, length of incarceration, background check and staff approval. In order to accommodate the length of inmate sentences, many programs are flexible.

Staff indicated that the goal of this facility and its programs is to reduce recidivism.

III. **METHODOLGY**

Tour of Rourk Vocational Training Center
Interview of staff assigned to Rourk Vocational Training Center
Online research and use of online articles

<https://www.dailyrepublic.com/all-dr-news/solano-news/fairfield/jails-vocational-training-center-should-be-a-go-in-2019/>

<https://www.dailyrepublic.com/all-dr-news/solano-news/fairfield/solano-county-celebrates-new-jail-vocational-center-woman-its-named-after/>

<https://www.kuic.com/celebrating-the-ideals-behind-the-new-rourk-vocational-training-center/>

<https://www.thereporter.com/2019/01/29/solano-sheriffs-facility-named-for-visionary-correctional-lieutenant/>

IV. **STATEMENT OF FACTS**

Staff informed the Grand Jury that the Rourk facility ideally would consolidate training, education and addiction treatment to increase inmate employability and reduce recidivism. In addition to vocational training, other life-skills training components offered include: proper deportment, appropriate dress, time-management and employment readiness skills. Inmates can avail themselves of substance abuse treatment and cognitive behavior therapy. They may also participate in the Five Keys Charter School curriculum that includes English as a Second Language, General Education Development (GED), computer skills and online college learning opportunities. At the time of our tour, the Rourk facility, which has the capacity to train more than one hundred inmates, was training only four individuals; nine had just completed forklift training.

Trained detention staff secures the facility. In addition to an alarm system, a staff member monitors surveillance cameras from a central control room whenever inmates are present at the facility. As of the tour date there had been no security breaches at Rourk.

At the time of the tour, twenty-eight personnel were available to manage the programs. Staff included teachers, substance abuse counselors, an employment skills teacher, women's case workers, parenting skills teachers, general care teachers, mental health counselors, a chaplain and program officers. There were also seven vocational partners available for instructional duty, including local businesses and union representatives.

Rourk had offered forklift operations training to thirteen inmates. Nine completed the course while four were beginning training.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1 – At the time of our tour the Rourk facility was underutilized; it has the capacity to train more than one hundred inmates, but was training only four.

RECOMMENDATION 1a – The Sheriff’s Office fast track the development of plans to utilize the facility to its full potential.

RECOMMENDATION 1b - The Sheriff’s Office use employment data trends for the future to plan and implement offerings.

RECOMMENDATION 1c - The Sheriff’s Office seek additional partners and entities to utilize this facility.

VI. COMMENTS: The Grand Jury members who toured the facility were impressed. It is new, well-designed and clean, with many resources available. It is unfortunate that classrooms are empty and learning/training spaces are not utilized.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

- Solano County Sheriff

COURTESY COPIES

- Solano County Probation Department
- County Administrative Officer
- Clerk of the Solano County Board of Supervisors