



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2017-2018

California Medical Facility Inquiry

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I. SUMMARY

California Penal Code § 919(b) reads "The Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county." Pursuant to this statute, the 2017-2018 Solano County Grand Jury (SCGJ) conducted inspections, performed research and inquiries to determine the efficiency and effectiveness of operations at the California Medical Facility. The SCGJ identified operational deficiencies including staffing issues and enforcement of existing regulations.

II. INTRODUCTION

The California Medical Facility (CMF) is located at 1600 California Drive in Vacaville, California. This medium security prison was established in 1955 by the State Legislature. It was designed to provide a centrally located facility to address the medical, dental and psychiatric needs of male felons incarcerated within the prison system of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). In 2012, the California Department of State Hospitals (DSH) was created and began operating within the boundaries of CMF to augment mental health care. On July 1, 2017, the DSH was shifted to CDCR.

CMF provides a range of medical services such as minor surgery, radiology, pharmacy, laboratory, respiratory, and outpatient clinical needs. Other services include HIV care, ambulatory care, occupational and physical rehabilitation as well as emergency and palliative care for inmates.

CMF also provides unique services in religion, hospice, and recreation for disabled and special needs inmates including:

- The Blind Project/CMF
- PCS Hospice
- National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, (Quality Guidelines for Hospice and End-of-Life Care in Correctional Settings)
- Disability Placement Program
- Developmentally Disabled Program
- Physical Education and Recreation Activities for the Disabled
- Bicycle Refurbishing Project

CMF also provides educational programs, vocational classes and access to general library and law library services.

At the time of the first SCGJ tour, 2,550 inmates were housed in a variety of settings. CMF is comprised of four (1-4) levels of security housing. Level (1) is the lowest security; it is dormitory housing and includes typically white collar crime inmates, some of whom earn the privilege to participate in work projects outside the prison. Levels (2), (3) and (4) are higher security inmates. However, Level (2) is also dormitory style and houses a larger population of inmates. Level (3) and Level (4) are standard prison cells. The facility has a bed capacity of 2,873 including:

- General population (GP)
- Outpatient Housing Unit (OHU)
- Licensed Correctional Treatment Center (CTC)
- The first Prison Elder Care Unit in the United States
- Licensed Mental Health Crisis Beds
- Licensed General Acute Care Hospital (GACH)
- Outpatient Psychiatric Facilities
- First licensed Prison Hospice in the United States

III. METHODOLOGY

Toured:

California Medical Facility

Reviewed:

CDCR Environmental Health Survey

California Medical Facility 2017 Annual Survey Report

California State Fire Marshal's Inspection Report

California Medical Facility Handbook

ILTAG Self Help Groups Current Programs (2017)

Pamphlets provided by CMF for review

Inmate Canteen Shopping List

The Blind Project/CMF

Pastoral Care Service (PCS)

Self-Care for Caregivers

PCS Hospice

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization, (Quality Guidelines for Hospice and End-of-Life Care in Correctional Settings)

California Senate Bill 26 (2011)

Internet websites:

www.dailydemocrat.com/article/zz/20140702/NEWS/140707428

<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Contraband-Cell-Phones/index.html>

<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Contraband-Cell-Phones/docs/Contraband-Cell-Phone-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Contraband-Cell-Phones/K-9-overview.html>

<http://californiacorrectionalcenter.blogspot.com/2010/02/operation-disconnect.html>

www.therealchit.com/2011/03/disconnected-operation-disconnect.html

<https://www.policeone.com/.../6401497-Calif-prisons-aim-to-disconnect-unwanted-cal...>
<https://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Contraband-Cell-Phones/index.html>

Interviewed:

CMF Administrative Staff

CMF Medical Staff

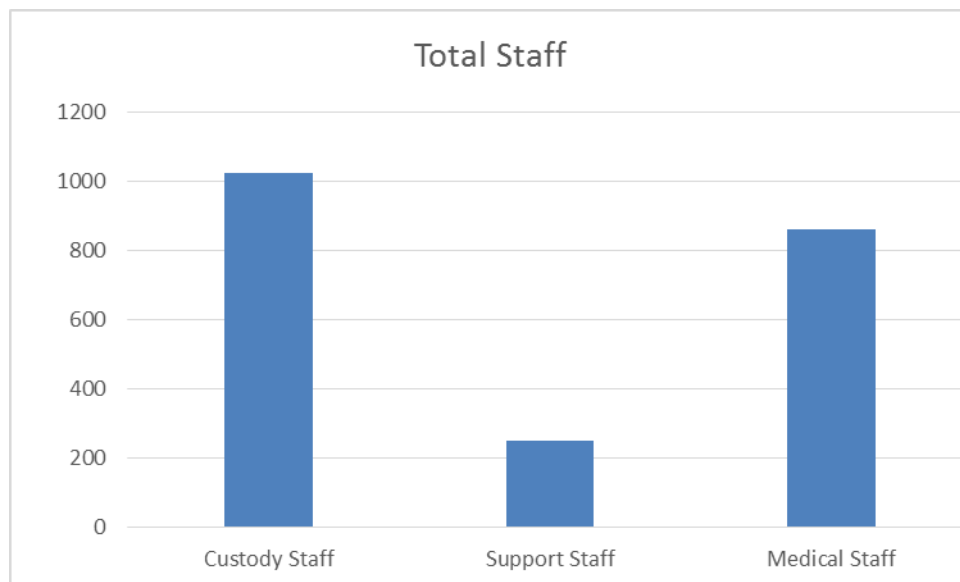
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation Staff

CMF Inmate (Inmate Advisory Council member)

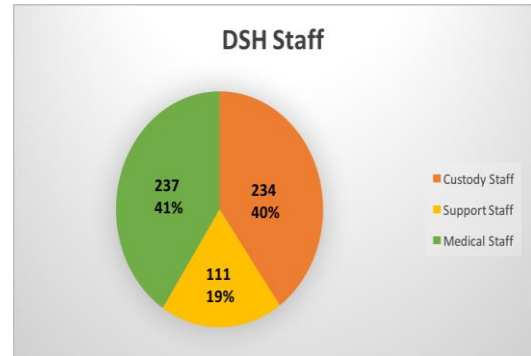
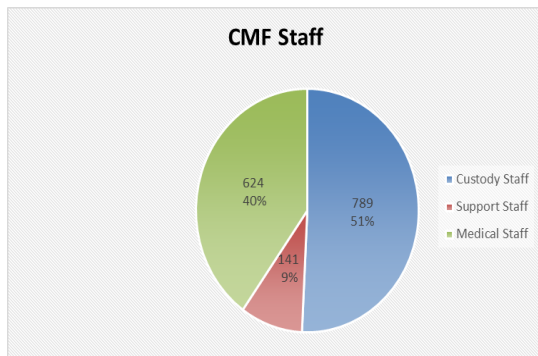
IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

Staffing Issues

CMF currently has a staff of 2,136 CDCR and DSH employees providing security, medical and mental health services. CMF employs six hundred Correctional Officers (COs) from CDCR on a ratio of one CO to four inmates.



The Department of State Hospitals current operation within the boundaries of CMF has required the blending of DSH employees with existing CMF employees, a process named “Lift and Shift”. The “Lift and Shift” undertaking is difficult and extremely time consuming for the administration which has to negotiate with twenty-six unions. To facilitate blending of staff, important details such as job titles, job descriptions, qualifications, shifts, hours, and compensation, must be negotiated with and agreed upon by all twenty-six unions and administration. This process is still ongoing.



According to CMF executives, medical personnel, specifically for mental health, represents the largest understaffed department at CMF. Competitive recruiting and compensation programs from other facilities have caused qualified local candidates to accept positions outside Solano County. CMF administrators stated that this situation contributes to CMF’s current staffing deficiencies.

Contraband Cellular Phones

The 2017-2018 Solano County Grand Jury reviewed the 2009-2010 Solano County Grand Jury report which disclosed: “CMF staff indicated to the Grand Jury that cellular phones pose a potential serious security problem for the facility. Prisoners who possess illegally obtained unmonitored cell phones have the capability to communicate and coordinate escape plans and other illegal activities...Despite all efforts, prisoners still obtain access to cellular phones. Staff members have been terminated for providing cellular phones to inmates. It is the opinion of prison administrators however, that most cellular phones in the possession of inmates have either been smuggled in by visitors or have been tossed over the perimeter fence from the outside by confederates of inmates.” The current Grand Jury was advised that contraband cellular phones remain a problem at CMF.

The CMF staff has worked to be proactive to eliminate and manage access to cell phones and other wireless devices. Administrators have tried to intercept service but have difficulty keeping up with the evolution of technology.

When questioned about how the cell phones are being introduced into the population, administrators answered, “Where there is a will there is a way.” They added that, “Most of the contraband comes from the staff. Minimal support staff has a lot of access so they can bring in contraband.”

In addition to the contraband brought in by staff, some inmates on crews that clean parks, roads and fight fires can predict where they will be working. They will have friends or relatives hide contraband that they can retrieve while they are out on these work assignments.

Prior to 2011, there were no laws forbidding individuals from bringing cellphones into a facility for distribution, even though inmates could not legally have the devices. In 2011, CDCR worked with the state legislature to pass a bill making it a misdemeanor to smuggle cellphones into a correctional facility. Staff, contractors, and visitors caught bringing in cell phones can be fined up to five thousand dollars per device and face up to six months in county jail. The CDCR website states that a prisoner caught with a cellular phone will lose up to ninety days of good time credit; however, the loss of good behavior credits can easily be restored over time. In spite of the efforts to make penalties more stringent, the penalties are still too weak and exacerbate the problem.

2017 CDCR Office of Audits and Court Compliance Audit

In 2017, the CDCR Office of Audits and Court Compliance conducted a security audit of CMF in collaboration with the Division of Adult Institutions. At the same time, the Office of Correctional Safety reviewed the Armory Operations and the Facility Planning Construction and Management inspected the security of the perimeter fencing.

The CMF security and support systems are under the operation and maintenance of the Central Services Division of CDCR which is responsible for:

- The Armory
- The Tower
- Electrified Fence System
- Key Control and Inmate Count and Movement
- Transportation
- Inmate Program Assignments
- Peace Officer Assignments
- Processing Receiving and Release of Inmates
- The Mailroom
- Visiting
- Inmate Records
- Health Care Access Unit
- Investigation Services Unit

CMF states that it has addressed six of eight security deficiencies noted in the above audit. The corrective plan includes placement of a razor wire perimeter fence which has not been funded. The audit report indicated that the perimeter wire fence does not meet specifications for security. CMF is waiting for clarification from the state on how to proceed with the repair or replacement of the fencing. CMF currently has three fences separating its grounds from the community, one of which is an electrified fence between two chain link fences.

Recently, there have been various incidents within CMF concerning safety. Emphasizing that staff safety is a priority at CMF, Administrators outlined some of their safety measures which

includes controlling and tracking inmate movement. When an inmate has an appointment within the prison, he is given a card (similar to a hall pass) which reflects who he will be meeting with and what time the appointment is. The inmate must carry the pass at all times while he is out of his cell.

CMF utilizes low-tech, disparate systems as a safety measure for employees. COs are trained in the use of chemicals i.e. pepper spray two hours annually and four hours annually for use of batons. All staff members carry a radio, have a whistle or use “off the hook” as communication devices. “Off the hook” is used by mobile personnel and entails leaving a phone off the hook. After a prescribed amount of time the phone sets off an alarm. All staff is required to carry a whistle. However, only administrative staff is assigned a personal alarm. Two-hundred-twenty staff members are issued CMF cellular phones, to be used in the facility. No personal phones are allowed in the facility. Other staff members carry two-way radios. CMF administrators are currently discussing the use of body cameras with multiple employee unions.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FINDING 1 – The process of the blending of DSH employees with existing CMF employees, “Lift and Shift”, requires negotiations between various unions and departments.

RECOMMENDATION 1 – The Department of State Hospitals and CDCR expedite negotiations for the “Lift and Shift” procedure.

FINDING 2 – Attracting qualified medical care employees is difficult due to successful recruitment by competitive facilities.

RECOMMENDATION 2 - CDCR revise compensation and employment contracts to allow CMF to be more competitive.

FINDING 3 – Administrators admit that some of the contraband found in the facility is brought in by employees.

RECOMMENDATION 3a –Everyone entering the facility (including employees) be stringently screened to prevent the introduction of contraband into the facility.

RECOMMENDATION 3b – CDCR continue to work with legislators to strengthen penalties for introducing contraband in the prison facilities.

FINDING 4 – Administrators pointed out that some contraband is brought into the facility by inmates who participate in off-site programs.

RECOMMENDATION 4 – Administrators curtail the release of location information to inmates. The information be kept secure until the inmate arrives at his work location.

FINDING 5 – The perimeter fencing does not meet the state standard and requirements for prison security.

RECOMMENDATION 5 – CMF administration address the perimeter security risks identified by the CDCR.

FINDING 6 – Employee safety is jeopardized due to the use of low-tech communication systems.

RECOMMENDATION 6 – CMF invest in an upgraded employee emergency communication system.

COMMENTS

Safety, enforcement of rules, and facility maintenance are all important areas that need attention.

COURTESY COPIES

California State Legislature
California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
California Medical Facility