



SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2012-13

**SOLANO COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION
FACILITY COMPLEX**

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2012-13 Solano County Grand Jury

I. SUMMARY

California Penal Code §919(b) provides that the “Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.” California Penal Code §925(a) further states the “Grand Jury shall investigate and report on the operation, accounts and records of officers, departments, or functions of the county.” Pursuant to these statutes, the 2012-13 Solano County Grand Jury toured and inspected the Solano County Juvenile Detention Facility Complex (JDFC). The JDFC is operated by the Solano County Probation Department.

Areas of concern identified by the Grand Jury included:

- Lack of tracking statistical data and incident reports
- Inadequate video surveillance equipment
- Inadequate video surveillance recording
- Cost and security of transporting juveniles
- Escape of juveniles from JDFC on March 14, 2013

II. INTRODUCTION

The Juvenile Detention Facility Complex (JDFC) is located at 740 Beck Avenue, Fairfield, California. JDFC is a 118-bed facility. There are three separate units within JDFC. The units are the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF), New Foundations (NF) and the Challenge Unit (CU).

The Juvenile Detention Facility is a locked facility with a total capacity of 60 beds for juveniles who have been arrested and awaiting court proceedings or convicted juvenile offenders who have been sentenced by the Court.

New Foundations is a 30-bed unit within the JDFC. Juveniles who have been sentenced by the Court may be placed at NF for up to 120 days. NF focuses on family reunification and drug abuse intervention. Programs consist of education, anger avoidance, self-esteem building, self-discipline and personal accountability.

The Challenge Unit is a 28-bed unit also within the JDFC. Currently, CU is closed due to the low number of juveniles at JDFC.

III. METHODOLOGY

- Toured the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex
- Interviewed staff from Juvenile Detention Facility and New Foundations
- Reviewed incident reports
- Reviewed 2011-12 Grand Jury Report on Juvenile Detention Facility
- Reviewed Solano County Sheriff's Crime Report CR13-1315

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

JDF is a locked facility operated by Solano County Probation Department. JDF houses juveniles (male and female) who are awaiting court proceedings or are convicted offenders. The length of stay for juveniles awaiting court proceedings typically range from 28 days through two years.

Within JDF, there are four separate dormitories called "pods." The pods are referred to as Palo Verde, Sequoia, Sycamore and Redwood. Each juvenile is interviewed to determine which pod is appropriate for their housing. The criteria depends upon the type of crime committed, gang affiliation, gender, age, behavior, and medical/mental health requirements.

The Palo Verde pod houses juveniles with serious health or medical issues. The Sequoia pod houses female and younger males. The Sycamore pod houses older juvenile males. The Redwood pod is a maximum security unit housing juveniles being prosecuted as an adult and for juveniles committed for 90 days or more.

Upon the arrest of a juvenile and arrival at JDF, each juvenile is medically evaluated. Unless there is a medical problem necessitating hospitalization, the juvenile is placed in the intake pod, Palo Verde. After medical clearance, the juvenile is assessed for placement into a pod. If a juvenile is detained for a period of 30 days or more, an action plan is developed. JDF has programs to meet the needs of juveniles, such as substance abuse counseling, educational and vocational training, mental health counseling, medical needs and family reunification issues.

Staff stated educational programs within the JDFC operate under the authority of the Solano County Superintendent of Schools in compliance with the State Education Code and County Board of Education Policy. Each juvenile is tested upon arrival at JDF to determine their grade level. Each juvenile attends school 240 minutes a day, five days a week, with teachers credentialed by the State of California. Teachers are assisted by paraeducators (teacher assistants). Classes taught include English, mathematics, social studies and science. Pursuant to California Code of Regulations Title 15, no more than 15 students are allowed to be present in each classroom.

The JDF is required to transport juveniles to Fairfield and Vallejo courts for proceedings. Transportation of the juveniles requires a minimum of two accompanying staff members. This process is time-consuming, incurs extensive transportation costs and presents possible safety issues to the community. The 2011-12 Grand Jury identified the transportation procedure as an issue to be examined. The recommendation was to explore an alternative to transporting

juveniles from JDFC to the Fairfield and Vallejo courts. Solano County Probation Department and the Board of Supervisors (BOS) agreed with the 2011-12 Grand Jury the transportation procedure needed to be examined. The BOS indicated the only viable solution to this problem is to construct a court facility within JDFC. BOS also indicated without funding from the state courts or extensive county resources, this remedy appears unlikely in the foreseeable future. The 2012-13 Grand Jury identified space within JDFC that could accommodate court hearings and eliminate the transportation costs and risks.

Each juvenile housed at JDFC has a personal file which includes booking information, incident reports, disciplinary actions and educational records that are not computerized. Currently, incident reports and disciplinary actions are created as a WORD document, printed and stored in a paper file with no computer ability to compile statistical data. Grand Jury members manually reviewed incident reports written by JDF staff. The reports documented disturbances, mental health issues, injuries, illnesses and use of force at JDF. The reports were clear and concise and indicated medical and mental health issues were handled quickly and professionally in the facility.

The Grand Jury learned the JDF's computer system lacks an "institutional module". This institutional module is used to document, track and organize information including incident reports and disciplinary actions within a detention facility. This module is extremely important to maintain accurate statistics of various events occurring at the facility. It would also aid JDFC staff in classifying juveniles for placements within the facility. Staff acknowledges this module would improve efficiency of the JDFC.

During the 2012-13 Grand Jury visit, the Grand Jury noted there was a lack of surveillance cameras around the perimeter fence line. It was noted there are many "blind spots" the current surveillance cameras cannot capture. The 2011-12 Grand Jury report identified this same problem. Solano County Probation Department's response to the report was, "The security system design continues to meet the existing security needs of the facility". The 2012-13 Grand Jury was informed that JDFC does not record or store images on their video system. JDFC staff acknowledged this as a security issue and informed the Grand Jury a video consultant has been hired to evaluate upgrading the video system after the escape of two juveniles in 2013.

On March 14, 2013, two juveniles escaped from the JDF while in the exercise yard. The Grand Jury was informed by staff the escape was from a "secured" exercise yard. JDF staff also stated that when juveniles are in the exercise yard a counselor must be present per JDFC policy. The Grand Jury reviewed the Sheriff's report on the escape and noted that no counselor was present in the exercise yard and the video security system was incapable of viewing and recording the escape. This is the second consecutive Grand Jury that has identified the video security system as being inadequate.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 – Juveniles are transported from the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex to the Vallejo and Fairfield courts. This process is time-consuming, costly, and a safety concern to the community.

Recommendation 1 – Solano County Probation Department explore alternatives to the current juvenile transportation issues, such as holding hearings in existing vacant space within the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex.

Finding 2 – Juvenile Detention Facility Complex does not have the “Institutional Module” to document, track and organize statistical information on incidents within the facility.

Recommendation 2 – Solano County Probation Department upgrade its computer system to include an “Institutional Module” which allows the documentation, tracking and organization of this statistical information.

Finding 3 – Juvenile Detention Facility Complex security surveillance system is inadequate and contributed to the escape. The camera placements cannot monitor all secured areas. The Juvenile Complex does not record or store images on their video system.

Recommendation 3 – Solano County Probation Department upgrade its security surveillance and recording systems.

Finding 4 – Two juveniles were allowed in a recreational area unsupervised by staff, violating stated Juvenile Detention Facility Complex policy.

Recommendation 4 – Juvenile Detention Facility Complex Staff adhere to their stated policy.

COMMENTS

None

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Chief Probation Officer, Solano County Probation Department
Solano County Board of Supervisors

COURTESY COPIES

None