



**SOLANO COUNTY GRAND JURY
2011-12**

**SOLANO COUNTY JUVENILE DETENTION
FACILITY COMPLEX**

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2011-12 Solano County Grand Jury

I. SUMMARY

The Solano County Grand Jury is required by Penal Code §919(b) to inquire into the operations of the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex. 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. The Juvenile Detention Facility Complex is operated by the Solano County Probation Department.

Pursuant to these Penal Code sections, the 2011-12 Solano County Grand Jury investigated the County Juvenile Detention Facility Complex.

Areas of concern identified by the Grand Jury: transportation of wards, lack of perimeter fence surveillance cameras, and underutilization of the garden area.

II. INTRODUCTION

California Penal Code §919(b) provides that the “Grand Jury shall inquire into the condition and management of public prisons within the county.” Pursuant to the statute, the 2011-12 Solano County Grand Jury toured and inspected the Solano County Juvenile Detention Facility Complex (JDFC) on January 12, 2012, March 3, 2012 and March 8, 2012.

The JDFC is located at 740 Beck Avenue, Fairfield, California. The JDFC consists of a 4.7 acre site with three units that make up the detention facility. There are three separate facilities within JDFC. The units are the Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF), New Foundations (NF) and the Challenge Unit (CU).

A. Juvenile Detention Facility (JDF)

The JDF is a locked facility for juveniles that holds both non-sentenced and convicted juvenile offenders. The ward¹ population varies between 75 and 80. Each juvenile participates in programmed activities, which includes courses of study for school credits.

Within JDF there are four separate dormitories called “pods.” After being interviewed and classified, a ward is transferred to the appropriate pod. The criteria for transfer depend upon the type of crime, gang affiliation, gender, behavior, and medical/mental health requirements.

¹ The term “ward” is identified as all juveniles housed in JDFC.

The Palo Verde pod houses wards 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 wards being prosecuted in adult court and for wards committed for 90 days or more.

B. New Foundations (NF)

New Foundations is a 30-bed camp/ranch, a minimum-to-maximum secured facility for sentenced juvenile offenders (wards). NF focuses on family reunification and drug abuse intervention. Programs consist of education, anger avoidance, self-esteem, self-discipline and accountability. Placement of wards in NF is determined by the court.

C. Challenge Unit (CU)

The Challenge Unit is a 28-bed facility. The CU replicates NF. Currently the unit is closed due to the low number of wards at JDFC. When the population at JDFC increases the Challenge Unit can be opened and utilized to accommodate wards.

III. METHODOLOGY

Interviewed the following JDFC staff:

- Superintendent, Juvenile Detention Facility
- Educational Supervisor
- Supervision Counselors
- Supervising Medical Staff
- Counselors
- Teachers

Toured and inspected the following JDFC facilities and grounds:

- Juvenile Detention Facility
- Medical facility
- New Foundations
- Challenge Unit
- Kitchen
- Court yards
- Surrounding open fields
- Garden
- Classrooms

Received and reviewed the following JDFC documents:

- Grievance reports within the last year

- Incident reports within the last year
- Juvenile Detention Facility manual
- Food service menus
- Organizational charts
- Court transportation numbers from September 1, 2011 through February 28, 2012

IV. STATEMENT OF FACTS

JDF is a detention facility operated by Solano County Probation Department. JDF houses wards ranging in age from 12 through 18. The wards are non-sentenced or convicted juvenile offenders. The length of stay for a ward can range from 28 days through two years.

Upon the arrest of a juvenile, law enforcement agencies are responsible for coordinating any required medical care prior to transport to JDF. Wards arriving at JDF are medically cleared and placed in the intake pod, Palo Verde. Sycamore, Sequoia and Redwood are used to separate wards depending on crime, gang affiliation, gender, behavior, and medical/mental health requirements.

If the ward is detained for a period of 30 days or more, they will have an assessment and an action plan developed by a JDF staff assigned to them. The JDF staff member will meet with the ward to identify problem areas that can be addressed while in detention such as substance abuse, educational problems, vocational counseling, mental health issues, and family reunification issues. If the ward is developmentally disabled, their individual treatment plan will be referred to the Regional Center that provides services for wards with developmental disabilities.

The Juvenile Detention Facility School operates under the authority of the Solano County Superintendent of Schools in compliance with the State Education Code and County Board of Education Policy. The County Superintendent of Schools annually certifies the program at JDF. Wards at JDF receive credits for course work while in juvenile court school. The County Superintendent of Schools provides the public school district information for credits earned by wards while at JDFC.

Classes taught at JDF include English, Mathematics, Social Studies and Science. Each ward is tested upon arrival at JDF to determine their grade level in the four core subjects. Pursuant to Title 15 no more than 15 students are allowed to attend each classroom. Teachers are credentialed by the State of California and "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), a federal accreditation. JDF utilizes authorized State text books for the level dictated by the classroom curriculum.

State and Federal laws are adhered to for individuals with special education needs, if so assessed. JDF has a Special Education Resource Specialist and parents are involved in each ward's individualized educational program.

JDF has a fully equipped kitchen that is underutilized. The Grand Jury observed the kitchen to be exceptionally clean and food safety standards maintained. The Probation Department has

contracted with Aramark Food Services for meals. The wards' nutritional needs are mandated by Title 15 of the California Code of Regulations. Aramark delivers food daily by refrigerated truck. The menu is reviewed by both the Aramark dietitian and County Nutritionist. Meals have a total calorie count of 3,000 calories per day. The Grand Jury had lunch with the wards in their pods to sample food served.

The Juvenile Detention Facility is required to transport wards to Fairfield and Vallejo courts for hearings. This process absorbs a considerable amount of time, manpower, transportation costs, and presents possible safety issues to the community. Transportation requires a minimum of two staff members. During the five-month period September 1, 2011 through February 28, 2012, JDF transported 1,063 wards to court, 16 to medical facilities, and 19 out of County.

JDF staff was reluctant to comment on the reasoning for not having a court hearing room at JDF. Staff commented that a hearing room would need to be constructed if the decision were made to conduct court hearings at JDF.

At the time of the first Grand Jury visit, the current ward population was 79 with a capacity of 118 and the staffing level was 58.

During each of the three visits, the Grand Jury noted there was a lack of security surveillance cameras around the perimeter fence line. The staff acknowledged this is a potential security issue.

JDF allows wards to garden within the property. Certified Master Gardeners provide guidance and instruction to the wards and staff. An assortment of lettuces, other vegetables, and flowers are grown by the wards. All items produced from the garden are donated to local food banks. JDF does not incorporate the foods grown within the garden into the daily meals. The Grand Jury inquired as to whether there was any code or contractual impediments to serving the food grown in the garden at JDFC, and the food staff could not cite any.

V. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Finding 1 – Wards are transported from the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex to the Vallejo and Fairfield courts utilizing a minimum of two Juvenile Detention Facility escorts. This process is time consuming, costly, and a safety concern to the community.

Recommendation 1 – Solano County Probation Department explore an alternative to the current juvenile transportation issues.

Finding 2 – Juvenile Detention Facility Complex has no perimeter fence line security surveillance cameras.

Recommendation 2 – Solano County Probation Department install security surveillance cameras to observe the perimeter fence line.

Finding 3 – The products grown in the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex garden are not used for the benefit of the wards.

Recommendation 3 – Solano County Probation Department explore expanding the gardening program for the benefit of Juvenile Detention Facility Complex and the wards.

COMMENTS

The staff at Juvenile Detention Facility Complex reflects a high level of dedicated professionalism. The facility was observed to be well-managed.

It should be noted that Finding and Recommendation 1 are similar to numerous past Solano County Grand Jury Reports.

The Probation Department managed the closure of Fouts Springs Youth Facility, the relocation, and integration of wards and staff to the Juvenile Detention Facility Complex without any adverse impacts.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

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

COURTESY COPIES

Solano County Superintendent of Schools