

This document is an extract of a larger publication.

civilgrandjury.org is a project of UnGovr.org, a US-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to government transparency and public accountability.





2004 Madera County Grand Jury  
P.O. Box 534  
Madera, California 93639-0534  
(559) 662-0946



**The 2004 Madera County Grand Jury  
Tour of  
The Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility**

## **INTRODUCTION**

Members of the Madera County Grand Jury toured the Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility, on February 20, 2004.

## **FINDINGS**

The Detention Facility is in a new building, less than two years old, located at 28219 Avenue 14. The facility has a capacity for seventy youths and there are now between forty and fifty youths in residence. There is room at the premises to build an expansion that would increase the capacity to 130, if and when needed.

The facility accepts boys and girls from Madera and Mariposa Counties, who are being held while going through the legal system. The youths may be anywhere in the legal process from arraignment through preliminary hearing, disposition, and into additional supervision, through the Juvenile Courts. Any child from as young as five years old may be housed at the facility and, in fact, a nine year old child has actually been received there. The average stay is eleven days. The facility is under contract to receive youths from Mariposa County on a space available basis. Madera County is paid for the expense of housing youths from Mariposa, but does not profit from the arrangement. Youths who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol are not admitted directly to the facility, but are sent to a hospital until they are sober. Half of all youths detained in Madera County come from families who are receiving Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF).

Each housing area of the facility has dormitory rooms, which surround a day room with an adjoining yard. Boys and girls are housed in separate areas. The areas are bright, roomy, and exceptionally clean. The youths do all the cleaning and the facility is in excellent condition. Television, including HBO, may be viewed by the youths at the officers' discretion. There are no telephones for use by the youths, but payphones may be installed in the future in order to raise money to buy more computers for the classrooms. Staff would monitor telephone calls. Youths are allowed to receive visits from grandparents, parents, and siblings only.

Meals are provided through a contract with ARAMARK food service, and other supplies are provided through UNISOURCE. The State provides \$80,000 per year, and the Federal Government an additional \$15,000 for nutritional programs. Last year the facility was budgeted \$120,000 for food service by the Madera County Board of Supervisors. As a result of contract services with ARAMARK, the Juvenile Detention Facility ended its contract year with actual costs of \$92,500. The funds provided by the State and Federal programs are grant-style, and do not require all monies to be used nor any unused monies to be returned.

Each youth is issued three sets of clothing so that one may be worn, one is on the shelf, and one is in the laundry. The laundry has its own industrial size laundry machines. The youth's do their own laundry.

Medical care is provided under contract, and a physician is on duty at the facility one day each week and as needed. Asthma, allergies, and bronchial disorders are the most common ailments among the youths. Staff is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation. They rely on paramedics for medical emergencies.

The detainees' day begins at 6:45am, with attendance at school until 2:30pm. The school day is followed by time in the yard, showers, homework, time in the day room, and dinner.

There are 25 officers at the facility over two twelve-hour shifts, seven days per week. Staff members make rounds of the facility every fifteen minutes. The rounds are documented electronically by use of an electronic key card system wherein the staff member inserts a key card into a scanner at each station on the round to verify a presence at that location. Night shifts consist of five officers.

An administrative segregation unit is closed because there is no staff available to run it. The unit has been used once in the history of the facility. The staff responds to gang fights by locking down the facility for three days.

The Madera County Office of Education provides education by certified teachers with 15 students per class. There are also two teachers of English as a Second Language. The Enterprise School provides education for the learning disabled, as well as specialized classes on the effects of violent crime, and sexual abuse. Classes are also given on life skills and other specialty subjects. Mental health issues are addressed by the Madera County Mental Health Department.

A safety cell is available for those youths who need one. The cell is checked every five minutes. Madera County Mental Health staff members check on youths within one hour of initially being placed in safety cells. Only licensed professionals may touch the youths during strip searches.

The administration at the facility places a heavy emphasis on training for its staff and also offers training to surrounding agencies. Each officer at the facility receives 24 hours of training and sergeants receive 40 hours per year. Training includes beginning, intermediate, and advanced coursework in weaponless defense, use of OC pepper spray, physical restraints, handcuffing, and POST (Peace Officer Standards and Training). Unfortunately, the training program is being impacted because funds received from the State of California for "Standards and Training for Corrections" has been cut entirely from the training program, though the mandate for training in this category must still be implemented. It is also noted that the Superintendent provides training in excess of that mandated by the State and other government agencies.

There is significant turnover among the staff due to low pay and the absence of benefits such as "safety" retirement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The 2004 Madera County Grand Jury found the Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility to be very clean, well run and maintained. The safety and care of the detainees seemed to be a high priority for all of the staff. The facility is under-staffed by eight positions. The Superintendent is to be commended for the high standards at the facility.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. The Superintendent should be granted the funding for adequate staffing.
2. The Board of Supervisors should consider increasing the funds for training to offset the funding cuts by the State of California, without decreasing the funding of the overall current funding provided to the Detention Facility.

## **RESPONSES REQUIRED**

1. Madera County Board of Supervisors
2. Superintendent, Madera County Juvenile Detention Facility