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Report

Yuba County's At-Risk Youth

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YUBA COUNTY'S AT-RISK YOUTHS

YUBA-SUTTER JUVENILE HALL

MAXINE SINGER YOUTH GUIDANCE CENTER

SUMMARY

The Yuba County Grand Jury conducted an on-site visit of the Yuba – Sutter Juvenile Hall (YSJH), the Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center (Camp Singer) and the Secure Housing Unit (SHU) located at 1023 14th Street, Marysville. Members of the Grand Jury met with senior staff and were given a tour. During the tour, the members of the Grand Jury were able to visit with staff and youths and enjoyed having lunch with the youths from Camp Singer.

The Grand Jury found the facilities to be in compliance with accepted standards. In these uncertain economic times, funding for the facility is questionable, and in order to continue to operate, the facilities are well-positioned to lease space to other counties. Due to budget constraints, California's Division of Juvenile Justice may be closing, giving way for an excellent opportunity to provide additional housing to outside counties and increase revenue to maintain current programs.

GLOSSARY

Camp Singer	Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center
PASS	Probation and Schools Success
SHU	Secure Housing Unit
YSJH	Yuba – Sutter Juvenile Hall

BACKGROUND

California Penal Code mandates that the Grand Jury annually inspect all prisons and jails located in the county. The Grand Jury is required to report any and all findings to determine the facilities' compliance with acceptable standards. Under a joint agreement between Yuba and Sutter counties, the YSJH and Camp Singer were established in 1976 and 1996 respectively. The Yuba County Probation Department is the responsible administrative agency.

APPROACH

Members of the Grand Jury inspected the Juvenile Hall and Camp Singer. The visit was a scheduled mid-morning and afternoon tour of all the facilities that was led by a senior staff member. Because of the bi-county arrangement, this facility is inspected by the State of California and both the Yuba County and Sutter County Grand Juries.

DISCUSSION

The tour included the intake area, visiting area, general housing units, secure housing unit, kitchen, dining hall, classrooms, Camp Singer dorms and the indoor recreation area. During this inspection, Grand Jurors observed classroom instruction in session and joined the youths from Camp Singer at lunch. During the tour there were shoes and boots in the laundry area that are donated for the youths and appeared to be handed down from youth to youth. The Juvenile Hall's surveillance system was found to be below industry standards. The current system does not have recording capability. In addition, cameras are needed to provide observation in high security / high liability areas. Visiting is very limited (two hours per week), thereby reducing any potential negative family influences.

There are three separate facilities at the Marysville location; Yuba Sutter Juvenile Hall, the Secure Housing Unit, and Camp Singer. The YSJH is a 45-bed detention facility for offenders under 18 years of age. This self-contained facility is comprised of three wings: a common area, visiting room, classrooms and an outdoor recreation area. The detainees are housed according to gender and only intermingle during school hours and at meal time. The YSJH also includes a separate 15-bed SHU for the detention of serious and violent juvenile offenders. This SHU is a single building with its own outdoor recreation area, classroom, shower and bathrooms.

Camp Singer is a minimum security facility for 48 male offenders and 12 female offenders. The primary objectives of Camp Singer are community protection and the redirection of delinquent behaviors. Unlike the Juvenile Hall, there are no cells. The minors are segregated by gender, but are housed in a dormitory setting with individual cubicles. Camp Singer has its own classrooms, in addition to indoor and outdoor recreational areas. The philosophy of the program is to assist each juvenile and their family in developing a sense of achievement and personal responsibility through exposure to, and mastery of, a wide variety of experiences. The youths work closely with local schools and civic groups in community service work projects.

The dining hall located between Juvenile Hall and Camp Singer provides three hot meals per day. Menus are routinely reviewed for nutritional content and quality. Since the Hall and the Camp have separate mealtimes, the residents do not come in contact with each other.

Upon entering the Juvenile Hall, the youths undergo medical, psychological, and educational profiles. The youths at both facilities are offered counseling, which is provided by the staff, contract personnel and trained volunteers on substance abuse issues. The staff is committed to promoting a positive change that will instill values that will last a life time. All minors must receive 240 minutes of classroom instruction daily. (See Cal. Ed. Code sec. 48645.3 and Cal. Code of Regs., Title 15, sec. 1370.) Those having a high school diploma and choosing not to attend school remain locked down. Minors in the Camp are encouraged to participate in community projects outside the facility. Camp Singer and the Juvenile Hall both utilize a point system; points can be exchanged to gain privileges. Points are awarded by teachers and staff for positive and desirable behavior.

YSJH is supported by both Yuba and Sutter Counties; funding is based on which county the population comes from. Currently there is a higher population from Yuba County. The current population is:

Juvenile Hall			
	Male	Female	Total
Yuba County	11	2	13
Sutter County	8	1	9
Camp Singer			
	Male	Female	Total
Yuba County	5	1	6
Sutter County	4	1	5
Placer County	6	3	9
Calaveras County	1	1	2
Colusa County	2		2
Tuolumne County	1		1
Total			47

At full capacity, the facility is capable of housing 137 youths. Yuba County populations are down from previous years, and that may be due to the Probation and Schools Success (PASS) program in Yuba County. This program is aimed at keeping “at-risk” youths in school. A sign this program is working is the number of youths currently on probation in Yuba County. Currently there are only 75 youths on probation.

There are different and higher expectations of the youths at Camp Singer. These standards include: athletic standards, public speaking, academic, and community involvement. Last year, 20 out of 22 youths passed math and English proficiency exams. Community programs such as Friday Night Live and Marysville Music are big supporters of the Camp Singer youth. An adolescent drug and alcohol program is available on site, but only for youths in the programs. The goal is to teach the youths survivor skills, regardless of their family environment. Their common goal is to promote health and safety for the community by creating new programs and emphasizing a “Best Practice” policy. The facility operates an excellent drug / alcohol program.

The youths in the YSJH are held awaiting court proceeding. Each youth is given a complete medical / physical exam within the first two days of arrival. If the youths are sent to Camp Singer, they will usually serve a seven-to-twelve month detention. During this time, the emphasis is placed on education, with teachers hired by the Yuba County Office of Education. The youths were involved in 55 different community service projects last year and donated approximately 2,948 hours. Some of these programs included Coats for Kids and the Linda Clean Up. Additionally, the youths have written, directed, and acted in a play performed at the Friday Night Live event. Several of the youths competed in a contest that was sponsored by the Rotary Club of Marysville. This was a regional contest where participants can advance to the state championship and take home substantial cash rewards. The contest theme this year was “DARE MIGHTY THINGS.” Teaching staff adopted the program and made it a central part of their English classes. Each student was required to compose and present a speech that was judged by the teachers, and the top three participants were advanced to the Marysville Rotary Club contest. The contest included students from the Marysville Charter Academy for the Arts and Marysville High School. One of the Camp Singer youths took second place in the contest and was awarded \$100. This was a remarkable collaboration of public and private enterprises working cooperatively for the betterment of our youth.

Within the facility, there is a tattoo removal program funded by public and private donations. Team sports are available as part of the physical education program. The youths take part in organized games such as softball and play against local teams. The youths are responsible for their living spaces. There is a point system for earning increased privileges and responsibilities. In addition to the academic system, vocational certificates are issued for drywall, structural framing, electrical, use of hand tools for gardening, and culinary arts, enabling these young adults to become an asset to the community.

FINDINGS

- F1. The Security Housing Unit, opened in 2001, is a modern, clean, self-contained single-story building with 15 single cells.
- F2. During the tour there were shoes and boots in the laundry area that are given to the youths and appeared to be recycled from youth to youth.
- F3. The Juvenile Hall's surveillance system does not have recording capability. In addition, cameras are needed to provide observation in high security / high liability areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- R1. Maximize the use of the Security Housing Unit by contracting with the California Division of Juvenile Justice and other counties to offset budget shortfalls.
- R2. Ensure that used footwear is properly cleaned and sanitized before being issued to each youth.
- R3. Seek funding to upgrade and install video surveillance equipment that will cover all areas of the facility.

REQUEST FOR RESPONSES

Pursuant to Penal Code section 933.05, the Grand Jury requests responses as follows:

From the following individual:

- Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center Superintendent: R1 - R3
- Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center Chief Probation Officer: R1 - R3

The governing bodies indicated above should be aware that the comment or response of the governing body must be conducted subject to the notice, agenda and open meeting requirements of the Brown Act.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

California Education Code Section 48645

California Code of Regulations. Title 15. Division 1, Chapter 1, Subchapter 5, Article 6.

Reports issued by the Civil Grand Jury do not identify individuals interviewed. Penal Code Section 929 requires that reports of the Grand Jury not contain the name of any person, or facts leading to the identity of any person who provides information to the Civil Grand Jury. The California State Legislature has stated that it intends the provisions of Penal Code Section 929 prohibiting disclosure of witness identities to encourage full candor in testimony in Civil Grand Jury investigations by protecting the privacy and confidentiality of those who participate in any Civil Grand Jury investigation.

This report of the Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center is issued by the 2010 – 2011 Grand Jury with the exception of one member who is an employee of the Yuba-Sutter Juvenile Hall and Maxine Singer Youth Guidance Center. This Grand Juror was excluded from all parts of the investigation, which included interviews, deliberations, and the making and acceptance of this report. This report is based on information obtained from outside sources with none of the information being obtained from the excluded Grand Juror.

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